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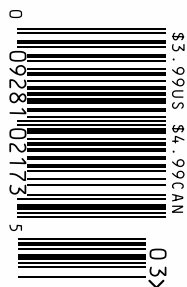
**DONNA
RICHARDSON**

BRINGS SPIRIT
INTO THE GYM

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WAYS
TO TAKE
CHARGE
OF YOUR
HEALTH
IN 2014

BACK TO OUR
ROOTS: HOW
TO **START**
GROWING
A GARDEN



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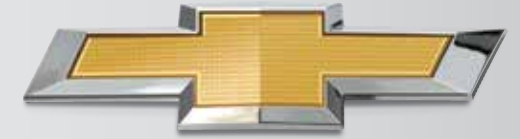
THE **HILL
HARPER**
EFFECT

*CELEBRATE
**MICHELLE
OBAMA'S**
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January 2014



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NIP TUCK: ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

Whether too broad or too narrow; Caucasian, African American, or Asian, if you don't like what you see when you look in the mirror it can affect everything from your confidence to your self-esteem.

By Dr. Michael Jones

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OBAMACARE

Five years later, the country is completely at odds due to both unmatched support and unequivocal disapproval for Obamacare and the changes required to cover nearly half of Americans currently uninsured.

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VISION NIGHT

What do you envision for your life in 2014? What new possibilities, new potentialities are waiting to emerge? What old stories will shape the New Year? What rituals of beginning will you embrace?

By Velma E. Love

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HEALTHY MIND

You think you're healthy, then you are; and if you don't, you're not. It might seem too simple, almost too good to be true, or too bad. The fact is, it all depends on your outlook.

By Dr. Michael Finkelstein

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CELEBRITY FIT: THE HILL HARPER EFFECT

The immensely visionary actor, about to publish his fifth book, has mentored our youth, offered a voice of inspiration to our communities, and triumphed over his own battle against thyroid cancer. By Naja Hill

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COVER: DONNA RICHARDSON'S EXTRAORDINARY LIFE!

From climbing Mount Kilimanjaro in less than 9 days to selling millions of exercise videos to being inducted into the Fitness Hall of Fame, Donna is doing things that many of us only dream of!

By Erickka Sy Savane

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FITNESS CHALLENGE

We think about our current patterns, what is working and what isn't? What can we do to start fresh? How can we best prepare ourselves for the challenges to come? Change can invoke anxiety in some or provide relief- a release of the charged past and embrace of the new. By Latham Thomas

Donna On Our Cover

Health and fitness guru **Donna Richardson lives An Extraordinary Life!** From climbing Mount Kilimanjaro in less than 9 days to selling millions of exercise videos to being inducted into the Fitness Hall of Fame, Donna is doing things that many of us only dream of. And at 51 years old, the Maryland native is just getting started! In her latest book, *Witness to Fitness: Pumped Up! Powered Up! All Things are Possible!*, Donna shows us how a healthy lifestyle can be achieved through a strong faith in God, a philosophy that has helped her connect with millions of fans around the world. Photography By Umoja "Mojo" Turner. Creative Producer: Erica Annise. Make-up: Triphena Johnson. Hair: Bridgett LaDawn. Fashion Styling: Tito Whitfield-Long of ICON Image.



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LET'S TALK ABOUT SOMETHING THAT NOBODY'S TALKING ABOUT.

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Letter From The Editor



RENEWAL AND REJUVENATION

It's that time of year again! Time to release the old and embrace the new. With this New Year, may we reach deep within our souls and discover what it is we truly desire. When we are honest with ourselves and genuinely attuned with our deepest heart desires, the majority of the work is already done. Too often, we attempt to browbeat ourselves with ideals we think we should hold, ideals imposed upon us by others, as opposed to creating space for and exploration of our authentic wishes. Although many resolutions seem to dwindle as the year passes, the collective energy of renewal at the top of the year is a perfect catalyst to begin anew. When we choose our intentions wisely, they will seamlessly become a part of our lifestyle.

Small, attainable steps are the key. Choose intentions and goals that are easy to reach. As you complete each step, you will have the motivation to move on to your next goal. It is also important to remember that you are not alone. There is a higher power at work that wants the best for you as well. Remember to

pray and meditate to align yourself with that energy as you create your intentions. Community is also vital, so make connections with like minded friends and support each other to supercharge the quest for success. As it has been said, "when two or three are gathered in my midst..."

The key to any transformation is to remain in the present moment. Change does not occur in the future...change happens now! Although it may help to make a checklist of goals, the real miracle is happening in the present...in your attitude...in your thoughts...in your deeds.

A colleague of mine introduced me to the practice of writing down all of the goals which were attained during the closing year. Riding on the energy of accomplishment and gratitude, we have an extra boost of motivation in setting intentions for the year ahead. We can also gauge our progress by reviewing those resolutions yet unmet, allowing even the seemingly unresolved to be a tool as we step into a new year. Within this issue, we

have ample tools to assist our readers in finding various ways to start anew. Fitness guru, Donna Richardson, shares her tips on staying fit; Hill Harper discusses how he's making the world a better place; our resident chefs in Soul Kitchen provide healthy and yummy meal ideas.

I leave you with a favorite Apache blessings for the New Year, "May the sun bring you new energy by day, may the moon softly restore you by night, may the rain wash away your worries, may the breeze blow new strength into your being. May you walk gently through the world and know its beauty all the days of your life."

I humbly offer you these jewels from my heart and soul,

AFFIRMATION
From Finding Your Way



"OPENNESS
May divine openness rid my
soul of doubt and may my
true purpose be revealed."
- Anita Kopacz

ANITA KOPACZ
Editor-in-Chief
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Anita

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Dr. Ephraim Singh Atwal
DOCTOR

Ephraim Atwal M.D. specializes in Laser Vision Correction including LASIK and PRK, small incision cataract surgery with premium multi-focal intraocular lenses, functional and cosmetic lid surgery, glaucoma treatment and surgery, corneal transplants, medical retina and other laser procedures. Dr. Ephraim Atwal is the Medical Director at Atwal Eye Care at the 3095 Harlem Road office in Cheektowaga, NY. If you are interested in Laser Eye Surgery (Lasik), you can find more information at atwaleye.com

– RX LASIK pg. 20



Muneeza A. Ahmed
HOLISTIC HEALTH COACH

Muneeza A Ahmed coaches women and children on how to lose weight and stay healthy on a superfood lifestyle. Muneeza lost 65 lbs of postpartum weight after two children within 9 months and has kept it off! She teaches HypnoBirthing (natural birth method) and enjoys creating foods, elixirs and practicing yoga & dance. All her recipes are kid-tested and yummy!

– HYPNOBIRTHING pg. 28

Christyna Pourhabib

WRITER

An English major at University of California, Riverside. With an unwavering passion for writing, this LA native has the ability to transform everyday stories into eloquent and persuasive narratives. To get in the zone, Christyna curls up with her laptop and fills the room with vibrations from her favorite smooth Jazz hits.

– ORA QUIK pg. 22



Dr. Michael E. Jones

DOCTOR

Dr. Michael E. Jones is an honors graduate of Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons and board certified by the American Board of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery and the American Board of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery. He is also a fellow of the American Academy of Cosmetic Surgery. Dr. Jones is the founder and director of Lexington Plastic Surgeons, with a flagship office in NY, NY and satellite offices in NJ, MD and CA.

– NIP TUCK pg. 44



Neycha

NEW MEDIA JOURNALIST

Neycha is a recording artist, author, speaker and new media journalist. Neycha has helped scores of clients reframe ordinary challenges and extraordinary crises into bearable and empowering narratives. Her multi-disciplinary background provides a rich backdrop from which Neycha draws to provide the soundtrack to and catalyst for inspired, authentic living. She is currently working on her third studio album, *The Holy Hell of Hope* slated for release this summer. To learn more about Neycha, visit: www.neycha.info

– REFLECTIONS pg. 80



Esi Evans

ASTROLOGIST

Esi Evans is a master astrologist with more than 15 years of expertise. She envisions a world of magic, passion, and aliveness. Her unique blend of reconnecting to the soul—the spiritual tune-up—incorporates her passions for transformative medicine and the natural healing arts.

– HOROSCOPES pg. 78

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Lead paint poisoning affects over one million children today.

Learning disabilities, hearing loss, speech delays, violent behavior and, in rare cases, seizures and even death: these are just some of the effects lead paint poisoning has on young children. If your home was built before 1978, lead paint on your walls, doors, windows and sills may be dangerous. And it's not just large paint chips that can cause damage. In fact, three granules of lead dust are enough to poison your child. Let's make all kids lead-free kids. To learn more about the simple steps you can take to safeguard your family, log on to LEADFREEKIDS.org or call 800-424-LEAD.





KISS:KEEP IT SIMPLE SEXY! FIVE EASY NEW YEARS RESOLUTIONS YOU WILL WANT TO KEEP

I'm not a big believer in New Year's resolutions. The thought of having to do something that I "should do" feels overwhelming and uninspiring, thus I'm not likely to do it.

By Alex Hadassah Anzalone



01 Eat In Color Eating a rainbow of fruits and vegetables infuses our bodies with nature's full spectrum of health-boosting nutrients. In addition to what you are currently eating, choose 1-2 more colors a day that inspire you.

02 Treat Yourself If you crave sweets, treat yourself to a small high quality treat daily! If you do, you'll notice yourself craving junky treats less often. I love Justin's organic peanut butter cups and Lulu's raw chocolate, both made with simple ingredients.

03 Savor The Flavor Slow down and taste the beautiful flavors of your food! Try to eat one meal a day where you are present, breathing, appreciating how your food looks, tastes, and where it came from. This simple practice will help you absorb the



Soul Kitchen



ITS ABOUT CHOICE!

By choosing small and inspiring goals that nourish your body and soul, you will spark profound transformations in your life. Plus, you'll be better able to love up those around you and spread joy throughout the New Year!

nutrients of your food better, reduce cravings, and make you feel zen-delicious.

04 Enjoy Touch Touch is a powerful and often overlooked form of nourishment. If you're not getting enough, you may be craving junky foods even though that's not what you're actually hungry for. Try incorporating more touch into your life: enjoy a huge hug or swap a mini shoulder massage with a friend or loved one; set a sensual massage date with your partner; schedule a weekly massage for yourself.

05 Ignite The Power Of Gratitude – Giving gratitude each day for the people and things around you has the power to transform your life. When you open your eyes in the morning, take a moment to feel a deep sense of love and appreciation for your body, your life, your loved ones, your cozy bed, mother nature, the new day's infinite possibilities, or anything that you feel grateful for. As your thoughts and words become more become more positive, you will start attracting more positive things into your life.



Minty Choco-Love Latte (SERVES 2)

- 2 Tbsp raw cacao
- 1 Tbsp hemp seeds
- 1-2 tsp raw honey
- Few drops of vanilla extract or 1 tsp vanilla bean powder
- Few drops of mint extract
- 3 cups of unsweetened almond milk

Warm almond milk, add all ingredients to a high speed blender such as vitamix, and blend until smooth. Enjoy!

Alex Hadassah Anzalone is a holistic nutrition, spirituality and sensuality coach. She coaches women via telephone and Skype. alex@alexanzalone.com
www.alexanzalone.com



A TASTE OF HEALTHY IN BLACK, LATINO AND ASIAN DISHES

By Madame Athena Chang

Whether I am in the mood for Caribbean, a little taste of Asia, or want to take dip into Central America, I keep it clean. Many of us walk around with the misconception that eating healthy means consuming dishes that are tasteless and boring and that they have to give up savory dishes to take a walk on the health side. Contrary to popular belief, healthy dishes can leave our mouths watering and our bellies screaming for more. Rather than a death sentence for our taste buds, nutritionally sound foods breathe life into our bodies and arouses all the senses. After consumption, you are left feeling light and energized rather than weighted down and lethargic.

It is not the spice in our foods that wreak havoc on our body, but rather the chemicals, bad fats and de-natured products that place us at risk for diet related disorders. You don't have to give up your favorite dishes if you are on the wellness track. Transitioning to a healthier regime means being open and creative in the kitchen. With a few simple changes you can keep the spice in your life while doing your body good. Patience is key to transformation so allow yourself time for your taste buds to change because there will be a difference in taste from what you have been used to. Here are 7 simple steps to making your dishes healthier:

01 Replace bad fats with good fats. For dishes that are heated, use non-refined, organic cold pressed coconut oil which lowers cholesterol and is good for heart health. For cold dishes, give yourself a dose of powerful omega 9 essential fatty acid by using organic, cold pressed olive oil. Your heart, hair and skin will love it.

02 Use organic whole grain products instead of highly processed, bleached products (brown rice, whole wheat or brown rice pasta, etc.). Whole grain products contain the nutrients and fiber needed to fuel your body and move food effectively through your digestive tract. Gluten free alternatives are great for those who have difficulty processing gluten.

03 Cook with fresh ingredients and stay away from canned products. Fresh ingredients contain nutrients and are free of preservatives and sodium found in packaged goods.

04 Cook with fresh and natural spices and stay away from spices with preservatives and chemicals. Chemically enhanced foods throws off your endocrine system resulting in thyroid dysfunction. Fresh spices add more flavor...so follow the professional chefs and throw out your adobo.

05 Use organic, hormone free and non-genetically modified ingredients. Keep your body free of pesticides, hormones, and chemicals that alter body function and puts us at risk for cancer and other disorders.



06 Use unrefined sea salt as opposed to table salt and keep salt intake to a minimum. Sea salt is not as processed as table salt and contains trace minerals that are beneficial to the body. All sea salts are not created equal; mineral content depends on location. Celtic and Himalayan Pink Crystal Sea Salts contain a full spectrum of minerals.

07 Replace refined sugar with natural sweeteners (fruits, grade B maple syrup, raw honey, stevia, agave). Refined sugar is considered one of the most harmful foods eaten today. It robs your cells of vital nutrients so that your body can metabolize it. Some health experts consider sugar as harmful as a drug.

Here are a few dishes to try out to put you on the path to wellness. To Health with Love... Madame Athena

Michelle Obama's Cauliflower Mac 'n Cheese

* Found in American Grown: The Story of the White House Garden and Gardens Across America, Michelle Obama

½ pound whole-wheat penne
¼ head cauliflower, cut into florets
8 ounces sharp Cheddar cheese, shredded
1 ounce Parmesan cheese, grated
½ cup 1% or 2% milk
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 ½ teaspoons chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

DIRECTIONS

01 Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil and cook the pasta according to the package directions until al dente. Drain and set aside.
02 Bring a medium pot of salted water to a boil, add the cauliflower, and cook for 5 to 7 minutes, or until soft. Drain. Place the cauliflower in a blender and puree.
03 In a medium pan over medium heat, place the pasta, the cauliflower puree, the cheeses, and the milk. Stir gently to combine and continue stirring until the cheese is melted.
04 Season with salt and pepper. Sprinkle the chopped parsley over the mac and cheese and serve immediately.

California Rolls

Short grain brown rice
Untoasted Nori Sheets (Seaweed)
Cucumber (sliced on long 1/4 inch strips)
Hass Avocado (sliced in 1/4 inch strips)
Bragg's Liquid Aminos

DIRECTIONS

01 Spread 1/2 cup of brown rice onto nori sheet evenly.
02 On top of the brown rice, create a vertical row of cucumber slices (USUALLY TAKES TWO SLICES). Leave a 1/4 inch space and create a vertical row of avocado slices. Repeat sequence until you have 4 rows total of alternating avocado and cucumber rows.
03 Roll the sheet tightly and slice into 1 inch rolls.

04 Dip lightly into a small bowl of Bragg's Liquid Aminos.

Mexican Black Bean Soup

1 tbs coconut oil
1 medium onion, finely chopped
3 or 4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
½ lb dried black beans
1 tbs lemon
ground cumin (A FEW SHAKES)
oregano (A FEW SHAKES)
1 tbs finely chopped parsley
cayenne pepper (TO TASTE)
2 cups water (OR TO DESIRED CONSISTENCY)

Optional toppings: Green onions, thinly sliced, low fat plain yogurt or reduced-fat sour cream.

DIRECTIONS

01 Boil beans until tender (SOAK OVERNIGHT TO REDUCE COOKING TIME).
02 Heat oil in a large soup pot and saute the onions and garlic over moderate heat until the onions are translucent (3 OR 4 MINUTES).
03 Add the remaining ingredients, except the toppings, along with the water and bring to a simmer.
04 Mash some of the beans to thicken the liquid base of the soup.
05 Cover and simmer for about 8 minutes.
06 Pour into bowl and top with the optional toppings.



lasik

By Ephraim Singh Atwal, MD

Laser eye surgery has come a long way since its FDA approval in 1995. Laser eye surgery, also commonly referred to as LASIK (Laser Assisted In Situ Keratomileusis), is already the most common and safest surgery currently performed worldwide. Not only has recent technology made LASIK available to more patients, it has also made it a more affordable alternative to daily contacts and lifelong glasses.

Most people have a fear of laser eye surgery. In my experience, the source of their trepidation is often some horror story that happened to a friend of a friend, or the thought of some bright red laser beam that could cut through an inch of steel coming near their eye. Nothing could be further from reality. Hollywood and the grapevine are to blame for these misconceptions.

Whether your surgeon is correcting nearsightedness or farsightedness, LASIK is typically performed in two virtually painless steps. The first step creates a flap in the cornea, or the clear window on the front of the eye. The second step is the actual treatment phase (carving your prescription on the cornea), which is accomplished with the use of a specialized machine called an excimer laser. When the vision correction is completed, the flap is then positioned back into place, and the surgery is completed. These two steps can take anywhere from 5- 20 minutes for both eyes depending on your particular surgeon. The most current LASIK surgeons will have adopted the use of a femtosecond laser to create the flap in LASIK surgery. Having used various methods to create LASIK flaps, I would recommend that patients seek out only those surgeons who use these femtosecond lasers in their practice. The reason being that these lasers have a much more predictable outcome, and are in my opinion, much safer for the patient.

More and more people are now candidates for laser eye surgery, thanks to advances in technology. But there are still those who are not eligible for the surgery. Patients with thin corneas, glaucoma, cataracts, keratoconus, etc. will need to be seen for an evaluation to determine if they qualify for vision correction.

African Americans, specifically, need to be aware of their medical history when considering laser vision correction. Glaucoma is 6-8 times more common in the African American population. Also, diabetes is 2 times more common in African Americans, and eye disease from diabetes is 40-50% more likely in those patients. Certain autoimmune diseases like Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) and Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE) can make the outcome of laser eye surgery less predictable, and even unsafe. A thorough history by your physician is important and necessary to ensure a safe visual outcome from your surgery.

stds

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

By Dr. Sharon K.

In America, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are among the most common contagious infections around. There are many different STDs out there and many people infected- in fact millions of people - are infected each year in America. You are responsible to protect yourself; it is important to not put that power in someone else's hands

A disease is called an STD when it can be spread from one person or another through sexual contact. Sexual contact can be between sex organs, anal, oral, blood, or bodily fluids. Mix and match any of these body parts together with an infected person and an unprotected person, and one may acquire an STD. An STD can be caused by a virus, bacteria, or even parasites.

A few common STDs are Chlamydia, gonorrhea, genital herpes, HPV, certain hepatitis infections, and HIV, trichomoniasis, syphilis and genital warts.

Depending on the type of STD, here are a few possible symptoms. Gonorrhea or Chlamydia may present with Vaginal/Penile itching and/or discharge or bleeding, painful urination, pain during intercourse or foul smelling discharge from the penis or vagina. Genital warts may look like small painless skin tags around the vaginal or anal opening. Genital herpes may look like a blister on or near the vagina, rectum or anywhere nearby. If a woman is pregnant and has active herpes she should have a cesarean section for delivery because the baby has a chance to get a life threatening brain infection if delivered through her vagina.

The problem with some STD's is that they may be transmitted from an infected person to another even if the infected person has no symptoms. Another problem is that while condoms

are very effective they are not perfect. For instance Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) slips over the condom and can cause an infection. This infection is very important because it can cause cervical cancer in women. Another example is herpes because the infected person may not have a lesion and still pass the virus on to another because of the viral shedding. A latex condom can't guarantee protection in this case because, herpes is acquired through skin to skin contact.

WAYS TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Not having sex is the best prevention. When having sex, always always use protection, for example a latex condom or a dental dam. This vastly decreases your chances of contracting an STD. Know the possible symptoms as mentioned above. See your doctor regularly for checkups. If you are between the ages of 9 and 26 get the HPV vaccination. This is so important! With this vaccination you could help prevent yourself from getting cervical cancer. Remember, the fewer sexual partners you have the less chance you have of getting or spreading sexually transmitted diseases. It is also safer to be in a relationship that is monogamous.

If you believe you have been exposed to sexually transmitted diseases and or you have possible STD symptoms, getting checked out by your doctor is important because leaving some diseases untreated can lead to infertility, disabilities or even death.



OraQuick

By Marisha Scott

As I awaken on this morning, June 27, 2013, there is a new addition to my routine. Instead of my usual morning tea set up, I sit before a white box containing a new product called OraQuick. I’ve decided to take the plunge and check on my own status. I thoroughly read the clear and concise materials included in order to ensure that, at 7 months pregnant, I am an apt candidate for this product; I am. Although I feel fairly confident about my status, there is a sense of apprehension as I unpack the contents of the kit. Facts I came upon during my research perform a macabre dance in my mind.

As A Matter Of Fact

Black women — more than any other women in the United States — are getting HIV. Of all the women living with HIV in the United States, approximately 66% are African American. In fact, at some point in her lifetime, 1 in 32 black women will be diagnosed with HIV infection. Most of these women, 87%, got HIV by having unprotected sex with a man.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there are approximately 1.2 million people in the U.S. that have HIV and approximately 240,000 of them are unaware of their status. Those who do not know they are HIV positive are disproportionately responsible for the 50,000 new HIV infections that occur each year.

The roughly quarter of a million people who are unaware of their HIV positive status are unknowingly responsible for up to 75 percent of new infections. Almost half of new infections are among African Americans.

After a 20 minute wait, I note my negative status with a sigh of relief. However, I am left with many thoughts and questions. Luckily, I am also scheduled to conduct an interview this morning with OraQuick’s brand ambassadors, acclaimed singer/songwriter Keri Hilson and noted Medical Doctor and Sexologist, Dr. Ross.

Can you give me some general information on OraQuick and its role in the ongoing war on lack of awareness, one of our greatest opponents in the war on HIV infections.

Dr. Ross: It’s always been a struggle to get our people to go to the Doctor in general and certainly for HIV testing, which is recommended by the CDC. With no trouble, you can now go to the drugstore or online, purchase a test for yourself and your partner and know your status within a short period of time. Once you receive your result, there is also a helpline where a trained professional will help you with any concerns and also transfer you to a Doctor in your area.

Me: There has to be a certain amount of apprehension, approaching such a life defining moment at home and outside of a medical setting. What if you get a positive result?

Dr. Ross: Pre test counseling and post test counselling were classically a part of support for HIV testing in general. It is very clinical and there are routine questions and responses. This system is a lot more individualized and hands on. You are offered support, mentally and medically, through the helpline. Also, OraQuick recommends that you test at home with loved ones for the kind of layered support which is also not available at the clinic. Couples for instance, are encouraged to test together. Friends, family and partners are the ones who are going to ultimately support you in many ways after testing so it is actually ideal that they are there during testing.

Now, I know the two of you are very edgy women with your finger to today’s cultural pulse. With that in mind, I would like to ask you a couple of questions.

Keri, will you tell us more about your connection to OraQuick and your role in this campaign?

Keri: I actually became familiar with OraQuick through my work with the Reed For Hope Foundation, whose mission is to inspire young women of color. Specifically, there is an emphasis on empowerment for Black girls, which is of great interest to me, personally. We are 20 times more likely than any other group to contract HIV. For young Black women aged 16-34, it is the number one killer. Early education and intervention is vital in this fight. OraQuick is a game changer because knowing your status will reduce infection rates and also create options for yourself and your loved ones. I agreed to become a brand ambassador because I am in complete support of Reed For Hope and OraQuick’s missions.

Me: How did you become personally connected and involved in the world of AIDS advocacy and support?

Keri: I love using my voice, my platform and my celebrity for a good cause. I feel an extreme sense of social responsibility. During my travels, I make a point of incorporating a way to give back. I have spent time at centers for HIV/AIDS on multiple continents, which support both patients and their loved ones. My time at these centers has increased my understanding of the importance of community, education and support in this struggle. I have met many people who have touched my heart and effectively removed the barrier between myself and victims.

And you, Dr. Ross - How did you get down with this fight for life?

Dr. Ross: When i was in college pursuing a medical degree, I did a lot of HIV research and outreach. I had a realization that this was a sexual disease and although at the time, awareness was focussed on gay white men, I knew that it would eventually become “our” disease. At that point, I began to devote a lot of my time, energy, thought and research to that end. “Our” has actually come to largely refer to not just Black people, but young Black women in particular. My work with OraQuick fits into the work I’ve been doing already for many years in HIV outreach and prevention.

As a sexologist and public figure, how do you use your expertise to intrigue and entertain people?

Dr. Ross: Well, my ability to keep people entertained has been really helpful. I have a frank and straightforward manner that amuses people but also allows them to trust me. There is this idea that safer sex is less enjoyable. I make it a point to refute that notion, totally! I am all about making sex better and more enjoyable, while also safer. For example, I always say, “Wetter sex is better sex!” It feels good and actually leads to less tearing and therefore less spread of disease.

Me: Any final words?

Dr. Ross: Everyday is a good day to become empowered by knowing our status. It is important to know where you stand in this fight. We owe it to ourselves as well as our loved ones.

Keri: It really boils down to making better decisions and taking back our power. We only have one body, so let’s treat it right and make decisions for the inside as well as outside. Go to lovehealthy.org to see more about my work and how you can become involved.

Dr. Ross On Risk Stratification

When it comes to prevention, it is important for a woman to know that she faces a 1 in 1000 times risk of contracting HIV from unprotected vaginal sex. Risk stratification is how you can reduce those odds as much as possible.

Real life scenario: Let’s say you’re at the club and you meet someone. You both want to get yours. What can you know and/or do to decrease your risk stratification? Anal sex is the riskiest type of sex to engage in without protection. Avoiding it in this scenario would be greatly advantageous.

Giving or receiving oral sex would greatly reduce risk. However, if there is a cold sore or open wound on the mouth or genitals, risk is again increased. Which leads to my next point... Any kind of cut, wound or abrasion will increase risk. Shaving, for instance increases risk stratification by creating many slight abrasions. If he ejaculates anywhere on your pubic area, this could allow the virus to enter your system. Little things like not shaving keep you a bit safer when you’re aware of how HIV is really spread.

Know your body and be aware of what it is telling you. The risk of introducing infected semen within the vagina depends on the integrity of the vagina, which is influenced by many factors: time of the month, how prone you are to tearing, the roughness of the sex act, etc.

The vagina is delicate and does not have as protective a skin as the penis. A raw feeling means that there are abrasions which means you are at a heightened risk. Lubrication is key. Remember, wetter sex is better sex!



Hypno birth

By Muneeza A. Ahmed

I can feel that labor is close. It's my first child and I've prepared with a daily relaxation practice. Will it really work? Will I really be able to stay calm and avoid any discomfort? I start to feel the first twinges of tightening - is this it? I begin my deep breathing practices and listen to my hypnosis recording. Soon after, within a few minutes, I am in la-la land. Mastering this art of going into relaxation at a mere thought "And now, its time to relax..." was what helped me most during my birth. I am feeling pressure starting mid belly, moving down to the pubic bone. Then it stops and then starts again after a few minutes... I guess this is a contraction or a "surge" as we call it in HypnoBirthing. So far, feeling good.

I had prepared for my first birth with a HypnoBirthing class. This class provided my husband and I with some huge "aha" moments - like the fact that humans are mammals and all other mammals give birth pain-free and very calmly. Humans share this ability with other mammals, but when fear, anxiety or tension is present, the hormonal cascade necessary for a good birth is put on hold and adrenaline, the fight or flight hormone, takes over. A flood of adrenaline is our survival response to danger, enabling us to run or fight for our lives when confronted with say, a hungry lion. In nature, if a laboring deer were confronted by a hungry predator, she would run for her life and her body would halt her labor. If her cervix were dilated or open, it would begin to close. Yes, this is our body's response to adrenaline in the presence of fear. The release of adrenaline is the body's signal that we do not feel safe to stay and have a baby; it bears the very clear message to get the H*** out! See, we used to live in the wild too, and if birth wasn't fast, easy and comfortable, we could become prey.

We are the only mammals who can override our instinct with our thinking brain. Other mammals have no choice but to obey their instinct. So even when we are not faced by a hungry lion, our collective fear and anxiety about birth: being in a hospital with lots of machines, hearing words we don't know the meaning of, wearing a hospital gown which is a strong symbol of illness, exposing your most vulnerable parts to strangers (profes-

sionals though they may be), can all end up in feeling like we're faced with a massive threat. Your brain responds to this perceived threat by releasing adrenaline and shutting or slowing down birth.

The pressure and tightening starts to intensify and I am now deepening my breathing, relaxing in the tub at home. My husband starts to read me more 'deepening' scripts that take me into profound states of relaxation. Very soon, I feel my waters release and I go to the bathroom see the mucus that fills the cervix during pregnancy release into the toilet - it looks like clear jello with traces of pink. I am moving around and still doing normal activities of daily life, yet still able to stay within a state of hypnosis and calm. Soon after, we moved to the hospital and I noticed that things slowed down when we arrived. I was not aware of this at the time, but a change of scene, having new people enter your birth field can cause labor to slow or change in some way. Mine completely stopped!! I remember the nurses and midwives were concerned to get some movement on the screen (electronic fetal monitor) and asked me to drink some sugary drinks to get the baby to move. I didn't want to do that. I just really wanted to sleep. It was in the middle of the night and I was tired. I noticed some fear and anxiety creeping in and I told my husband that I was feeling a little stressed. He encouraged me to just go into deeper relaxation, doing Light Touch Massage a beautiful meditation technique we learnt in the HypnoBirthing class. I'm glad I listened to my instincts.

One of the points emphasized in class is to encourage a woman to listen to her instincts. A laboring woman is already a mother and her 'mothering' instincts are heightened at this time. Just like animals listen to their instincts, so should a human mother. In our modern day society with all of our reliance on doctors, drugs and chemicals to help our birth process along, women have literally given away their power around birth. You know the image of the mama bear or mama lion? Animals don't give their power away because they don't know how. I'm not saying that doctors, drugs and chemicals don't have a place in birth, they do. They save lives. However, they are being used way too often in situations where a mother, if encouraged the right way, may end up not needing them. According to the World Health Organization, if a C-section rate is greater than 10-15% there is a crossover from more benefit to more risk. If a mother's birth team, her partner, midwife/ doctor, doula are all aware that she really needs to feel calm, comfortable and supported emotionally, her birth would be far more likely to be a natural birth rather than a birth with interventions. A Guide to Effective Care in Pregnancy and Childbirth (www.childbirthconnection.org) cites that the most important care for a woman in labor is "Physical, emotional & psychological support during labor and birth". Women in a coma have the ability to give birth, which tells us that we don't need our minds

involved in birth. It's our reptilian and limbic brain that governs birth and it uses instinct to work.

Giving birth is very much like having sex. The same hormones govern birth as do orgasm. This main hormone is an endorphin (hormones commonly associated with feeling good after working out), called Oxytocin. Oxytocin is the hormone of love, bonding and attachment. For birth to go well, your body is loaded with Oxytocin (when labor slows or stalls in a hospital, they will usually offer you Pitocin, the synthetic form of oxytocin). Think about when you are being intimate with your partner, if you have any fear or anxiety in the bedroom you will have a hard time reaching orgasm. If you have fears and anxieties around birth, your cervix will have a hard time opening and relaxing for your baby to emerge. If, on the other hand, your body is loaded with Oxytocin, your body will feel good. Oxytocin helps repress any feelings of pain (its about 200 times more powerful than morphine) and although you may not feel 'sexy' some women do report feeling aroused and can even orgasm during birth. A birth orgasm is not a clitoral orgasm. It's a deeper cervical orgasm that can come from the baby's head stimulating the cervix. It's an orgasm that helps you feel transcendental and creates a powerful spiritual connection and will most likely bring you to tears. If a woman had a choice to experience birth a certain way, why wouldn't she choose the most pleasurable way possible, one that nature has created and designed for us to enjoy.

HypnoBirthing reminds us that birth is about the mother, father and baby. It's not about doctors, midwives, doulas and birth educators. It's about empowering women to make choices about their provider and place of birth and to make choices about how they want to give birth. We have the medical interventions and drugs available to us (thank goodness) if we need them, but most healthy mothers having a healthy pregnancy can give birth easily and comfortably without any medical help. The way HypnoBirthing addresses this is to remind us the most important thing is to focus on a calm birth - not a natural birth. When mom is calm, the baby is surrounded in her calm hormones and her chances of having a natural birth are higher. If mom is stressed the baby is surrounded in her stress hormones, which isn't good for the baby or for giving birth.

As my labor slowed down, I was able to get some sleep. When I woke up, labor was full on. I labored in a hospital gently and calmly with a very supportive staff and 21 hours later, gave birth to a beautiful 7 lb baby girl. I now have three children and have experienced birth this way for all of them. Not necessarily through orgasm, which did happen once, but more through the experience of intimate connection with my partner and prayer. Two of my children were birthed in a hospital birth center and the third was birthed at home.



PREVENTABLE WITH IMPROVED BREATHING

Physicians Offer Tips for Restoring Restful Sleep to the Brains of Developing Children

What you don't know can hurt you, say integrated health specialists Dr. Michael Gelb and Dr. Howard Hindin. "Ninety percent of our brains are developed by age 12, so I'm asking parents to think about how a recurring decrease in the flow of oxygen and restful sleep to their child's brain would affect his/her development," says Dr. Gelb of The Gelb Center in New York (www.gelbcenter.com), a holistic dentist known worldwide for pioneering integrative treatments.

"Pay close attention to your kid's breathing; if he or she is suffering from a sleep disorder, it may very well be obstructed breathing, which has been linked to attention deficit hyperactivity disorder; that's causing the problem," says Dr. Hindin of the Hindin Center for Whole Health Dentistry

(www.hindincenter.com), who partners with Dr. Gelb in an interdisciplinary approach to treating chronic disease.

"Medical literature suggests that up to 80 percent of ADHD diagnoses have an airway/sleep component."

ADHD is a non-discriminatory, brain-based medical disorder affecting people of every age, gender, IQ, religious and socioeconomic background. The good news, Dr. Gelb says, is that many such disorders are preventable. When children are 6 months, 18 months and 30 months of age, doctors can predict which ones are likely to develop disorders due to poor breathing. The doctors say sleeping problems are serious and could very well require medical consultation. Additionally, they offer at-home, do-it-yourself tips

for children and adults to promote better breathing during sleep, which is when obstruction typically manifests.

• **PROMOTE NASAL BREATHING.** Sadly, many people who suffer from breathing problems don't even realize it's a problem until something serious occurs, such as a car accident. Obstruction often occurs in the nasal cavity. An easy way to experience deeper sleep and potentially curtail a developing problem is by using Xlear Xylitol nasal spray with a Breathe Right strip. Apply the spray 15 minutes before bedtime.

• **PREVENT OBESITY.** Excessive weight and obesity are the most common causes of sleep apnea – pauses in breathing or shallow breaths while sleeping. Obesity has more than doubled among children and tripled among adolescents in the past 30 years, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The best medicine for prevention is a healthy diet – fewer processed foods, less sugar, salt and fatty snacks, as well as more regular exercise.

• **CREATE AN IDEAL SLEEPING ENVIRONMENT.** Turn your bedroom into a sleeper's paradise with cozy, high thread-count sheets, new pillows, soft lighting, and

soothing noises from a sound machine. Add to these aesthetics a couple of helpful, practical tools. If you tend to grind your teeth when sleeping, a dental night guard can help you awake refreshed and with no jaw pain. Eye-shades help people who relax best in complete darkness.

If these home remedies are not proving effective, it's time for a doctor to screen a patient's tonsils and adenoids, which may be obstructive and need to be removed, according to Dr. Gelb. Then, myofunctional therapy (a program used to correct improper function of the tongue and facial muscles) will help assist palatal expansion for better breathing.

About Michael Gelb, D.D.S., M.S.

Dr. Michael Gelb, pioneer of Airway Centric, is an innovator in airway, breathing, sleep, and painful TMJ disorders. He has studied early intervention for sleep disordered breathing (SDB) specializing in how it relates to fatigue, focus, pain and the effects all of these can have on family health. Dr. Gelb received his D.D.S. degree from Columbia University School of Dental and Oral Surgery and his M.S. degree from SUNY at Buffalo School of Dental Medicine. He is the former Director of the TMJ and Orofacial Pain Program at the NYU College of Dentistry and is currently Clinical Professor in the Depart-

ment of Oral Medicine and Pathology at the NYU College of Dentistry. He is a co-inventor of the NORAD, or Nocturnal Oral Airway Dilator appliance that reduces snoring by positioning the patient's tongue and jaw so that airways stay open. He co-founded the Academy of Physiologic Medicine and Dentistry (APMD) and a non-profit to prevent the proliferation of chronic disease in the U.S. based on airway, sleep and breathing awareness, research and education.

About Howard Hindin, D.D.S.

Dr. Howard Hindin is trained in all aspects of general dentistry. Since the 1990s, his practice has also focused on cosmetic dentistry, temporomandibular joint disorders and craniofacial pain. He is a graduate of New York University College of Dentistry. An acknowledged pioneer in the relationship between dental issues and whole body health, Dr. Hindin is President (2000-present) of the Foundation for the Advancement of Innovative Medicine (FAIM). He is also an active member of the American Academy of Pain Management, American Academy of Cranio Facial Pain, American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine, Academy of General Dentistry, American Dental Association, International Academy of Oral Medicine and Toxicology, and the New York State Society of Acupuncture for Physicians and Dentists. He is also the co-founder of the American Association of Physiological Medicine and Dentistry (AAPMD).



Affairs^{internal}

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR SPOUSE IS HAVING AN AFFAIR

Marriage Expert Outlines 4 Ways to Reconcile Your Relationship (If You're Still Interested)

By Mort Fertel

For many, the response to a cheating spouse is a no-brainer—kick ‘em to the curb. But others want to reconcile despite being betrayed. They’re willing to forgive and believe they can mend the marriage, according to global marriage expert Mort Fertel.

“Some people just can’t accept the idea of forgiving a cheating spouse, but you never know how you’ll react to that situation until it happens to you,” says Fertel, creator of the Marriage Fitness Tele-Boot Camp and author of “Marriage Fitness” (MarriageMax.com).

“It’s easy to say that cheating is unacceptable. And of course, it is. But when you’re faced with the consequences of ending a marriage—like weekends without the kids, less money, a smaller house, a lower standard of living, the prospect of dating again, and tearing up years of photos—many people can’t go there. As unacceptable as cheating is, for many people it’s worth it to try to reconcile rather than divorce and face that nightmare too. In other words, you shouldn’t assume that someone who sticks with a cheating partner is a mentally deranged masochist.”

If you’re fed up, lawyer up—but if you want to save your marriage and reconcile your relationship, here’s some advice:

01 Don’t spy. If your spouse is having an affair, then your marriage needs a leader, not a follower. Spying is another form of betrayal; it’s a violation of trust. Don’t go there. You’ll just add to the distrust in the marriage and make matters worse. Instead, take the high road. Maintain your decency and integrity. Be a leader, not a follower.

02 Hang in there. The vast majority of affairs end within a year. Your spouse may think that he or she will be the exception, but affairs are relationships built on deceit and immorality, and things planted in polluted soil don’t grow well. The affair will die. Don’t make an impulsive decision. Hang in there until the affair runs its natural course. At that point, you and your spouse might see your marriage and your future differently.

Kill ‘em with kindness. He doesn’t deserve it? No kidding! But if you want to spoil his (or her) affair and turn your marriage around, don’t treat your spouse the way he treats you; treat your spouse the way you want him to treat you. Adulterers want their spouses to leave them alone, give them space, that way they can feel emotionally free to philander. But when you extend kindness, it tugs on their conscience and ruins their justification for betraying you.

03 Seduce ‘em. No one should ever do anything sexually they don’t want to do, but if you desire your spouse then go for it. You’re not doing anything wrong. The other man/woman is the mistress/mister; you’re the wife/husband! And to turn this around it’s helpful to rev up the sexual part of your relationship. Your friend may have told you, “Don’t let him have his cake and eat it too.” Yeah, you’ll feel vindicated withholding sex. But what will that accomplish? It’s punitive; it’s not healing. Show her/him what s(he) will be missing if s(he) takes her/his business elsewhere.

About Mort Fertel

Mort Fertel is a world authority on the psychology of relationships. He has been featured as an expert on ABC, NBC, CBS, PBS and Fox television networks. His Marriage Fitness System is endorsed by a wide variety of mental-health professionals, and he has helped save thousands of marriages. Fertel graduated from the University of Pennsylvania, was the CEO of an international nonprofit organization, and is a former marathon runner. He lives with his wife and five children (including triplets!) in Baltimore.

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ONE ^{SIZE} DOES NOT ^{FIT} ALL

By Dr. Michael Jones

Have you ever looked in the mirror and imagined what you would look like with a different nose? Do you obsess over making your nose smaller or longer? Or, perhaps you have inherited a bridge or tip you wish you could correct without insulting your entire family. All I can say is you're not alone. Let's face it, our nose is the center of everything we see when we look in the mirror. Whether too broad or too narrow; Caucasian, African American, or Asian, if you don't like what you see when you look in the mirror it can affect everything from your confidence to your self-esteem.

I think it's a fair assessment to say that the nose is the most sought after facial reconstructive procedure across all races. But considering Rhinoplasty (or nose reshaping) does not have to mean you are ashamed of your culture or who you are.

There are numerous positive side effects to Rhinoplasty - aside from achieving the look you desire - such as enhanced quality in breathing and eliminating snoring. Nose procedures have always been one of my areas of expertise and part of a niche practice I have cultivated. I have a few variations on the traditional protocol that will be of interest to those who have been considering this procedure.

One of the most common requests by women seeking out Rhinoplasty, is an extension to the tip of the nose. Typically, surgeons have used an implant of synthetic materials to create the desired extension. This can be problematic for a few reasons. First, using a foreign implant adds time on to the length of your operation. There are also general risks associated with the use of any synthetic materials in surgery, such as infection and other complications in the post-operative period. My method uses your body's own reserves to create the desired transformation. You are in and out of surgery in the same amount of time as a Rhinoplasty patient who does not desire a lengthier tip, and you have less to worry about during the healing period.

It was clinically proven to give you the "look you've always wanted," while eliminating the complications mentioned with 13 patients, during a groundbreaking study I conducted with several other doctors in 2008. The study has been published for the medical community in several industry journals. I will discuss your ability to use my safe and effective formula for facial reconstruction during a free consultation.

This short overview of nose procedures custom fit to your needs is just the beginning of an exploration of the face that I will embark on with Heart & Soul magazine over the next few months. Stay tuned, immediately following the New Year for a three part series on "The Aging Face." We'll explore the best path for you to take off years and stress in the most natural looking way. Looking forward to seeing you after the holidays. Happy celebrations!



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OBAMA CARE

By Christyna Pourhabib

From the launch of his campaign in 2008, President Obama's Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, commonly known as Obamacare, was one of the key and brilliant components of his campaign promises. This health care plan advertised the possibility for all Americans to have access to affordable health care services while also guaranteeing that the typical family would witness lowered premiums by as much as \$2,500 each year.

These promises, no matter how radical and extreme they sounded, were expected to be in effect by the end of Obama's first term as president. With an unfamiliar aroma of optimism and change in the air, many Americans huddled around their television sets and confidently envisioned a long overdue period of positive modifications ahead. Now, five years later, the country is completely at odds due to both unmatched support and unequivocal disapproval for Obamacare and the changes required to cover nearly half of Americans currently uninsured.

The Affordable Care Act was signed into law as a national health care plan in March of 2010. Obamacare seeks to provide affordable and enhanced quality of health care access, while also seeking to eliminate high costs of health care rates. Not only does this plan require all insurers to cover individuals with pre-existing conditions, payment assistance is also made available through Obamacare marketplace, a website that allows uninsured individuals to compare various State prices for affordable health insurance.

The interesting fact about this program is that nearly 85 percent of Americans that have health insurance have already been reaping the benefits from this program for nearly three years. Have you been to the doctor lately? Well, insurance companies have been required to cover all preventative and women wellness visits. These visits include immunizations, breast-feeding equipment support, domestic violence inspections, and the extremely important mammogram screenings every three years. It is imperative to always stay up to date on your health and monitor the breasts for lumps, masses, and calcifications (deposits of mineral calcium in the breast tissue) through these screenings. Obamacare has also eliminated pre-existing conditions and gender discrimination that calls for women to pay more than men for equivalent treatments and procedures.

Under Obamacare, each and every insurance plan will be required to cover ten necessary health benefits under an Essential Health Benefits (EHB) package. The first of these includes outpatient care, also known as ambulatory care, categorized by treatment that does not involve overnight stays in the hospital. Emergency room services will be covered and include treatment needed for life threatening accidents or illnesses; extra fees may be applied to your insurance if you register at a hospital not located in your region or network. Hospitalization is considered an essential health benefit and covers the care you receive during your stay as a



patient, and any required surgeries, transplants, and at home care. Laboratory services such as screenings, and required testing to diagnose an illness or condition are included free of charge. As mentioned earlier, preventative and women wellness visits fall under the category of the EHB package. Contraceptives are covered under this program, and no co-pay or extra fees are required for women. Maternity and newborn care is incorporated, and includes services that are beneficial to both the new mother and newborn child through labor, delivery, post-delivery and follow up care. Inpatient and outpatient care is included and applied to mental and behavioral health treatment, focusing on alcohol and drug and substance abuse. In addition, rehabilitative services and devices needed to assist in the recovery of various mental and physical skills are covered. One of the prized benefits of the EHB package focuses on children and the necessary pediatric care visits. Children under nineteen receive dental and vision care, including a dental exam every six months, an eye exam, and corrective lens if required. Lastly, prescription drugs recommended to treat illnesses and current conditions will be fully covered.

By 2014, all American citizens will be required to have health insurance or risk being subjected to a one percent tax on the entirety of his/her income. The requirement for all citizens to have health insurance and the increase of national health care spending by about one to two percent is where much of the controversy over this plan comes in to play. While health care spending will indeed rise, this is argued as a necessary result of attempting to cover millions and millions of Americans currently uninsured. The Obamacare organization combats these disapproving views with the belief that by requiring all Americans to be insured, more individuals will go to the doctor when they are sick instead of letting their illnesses worsen over time, consequently leading to higher rates of hospital visits and insurance fees. Those in favor of this plan understand the short term requirement of increased healthcare spending and believe that Obamacare will overall lower costs of health insurance by making insurance a reasonable luxury for all to enjoy.

As a college student, one of the main aspects of Obamacare that appeals to me is the ability for young adults to stay on their parent's insurance until they are twenty six years old. With countless amounts of student loans and competitive work environments upon graduation, having the luxury to be covered by my parents for nearly five more years, provides one area of stress-free worries. As a woman, I applaud the creation of the Essential Health Benefits package, and the incorporation of women wellness visits and screenings as routine care.

While Obamacare will take full effect in 2014, we are well on our way to a reimagined system of health care. Obamacare spending and funding will not be affected by the government shutdown and as of October 1st, all those without insurance have full access to various health care exchanges or marketplaces, in order to discover which health insurance plan is the most affordable and beneficial.



VISION NIGHT

What do you envision for your life in 2014? What new possibilities, new potentialities are waiting to emerge? What old stories will shape the New Year? What rituals of beginning will you embrace? Seasonal holiday parties and family gatherings, watch night services and festivals of light are all rituals of new beginnings. My favorite is "Vision Night."

By Velma E. Love

Every year for the past several years I have gathered with friends and family on New Year's Eve for a "Vision Night." Ten or twelve of us usually sit around the dining room table. The table is covered with a white linen cloth, sprinkled with shiny metallic silver and blue stars, curly ribbons and sparkling confetti. There is always a burning bowl, a candle or an arrangement of candles in the center of the table.

From time to time, vision night has included prayers and affirmations, libations, music, poetry, art, movement, storytelling, journaling, treasure mapping, celebratory toasts, food and wine, and always conversation, the kind of conversation that bubbles up from the soul and ignites the spirit. It is a wonderful time of fellowship and fun and is a classic illustration of the Yoruba concept of *alasu-wada*, the spirit of gathering together. Something magical and enchanting always happens in the gathering.

We release old thoughts, ideas, attitudes, and blockages, by writing them on a small piece of flash paper and watching them magically disappear when the paper is touched to the burning flame. The *ase* (capacity to make things happen) seems so strong and so real. After several hours of merriment and communion, we leave with intentionality and commitment, self-assurance

and power, ready to tap the Spirit and co-create new futures, or so we think. But it doesn't take long for the magic of vision night to wear off.

By the time we have our first quarterly conference call some of us have to look at our notes in order to remember what intentions we actually set for the year. By mid-year the rhythm has changed and we are struggling to stay on point. By the third quarter, we are asking, "Where did the time go? It's September already? What about those seeds I planted on Vision Night? What am I harvesting?" Sometimes we are not always pleased with the harvest.

The reason is something our African ancestors have always known: "The Gods can not grant what the Ori has not sanctioned." The Ori is a Yoruba term for head, consciousness, or god-self within. It is this consciousness, or inner head that determines the outer head, what we will manifest in our lives. We have all heard it, read it, or even talked about it ourselves. "We are our stories. Our biography becomes our biology." We say those words, but so often give no real meaning to what we are saying.

This year's Vision Night will be a little different. This year I am suggesting that we spend some time in preparation, some time with our Ori, our consciousness, some time excavating our stories. We must dig deep in order to discover, uncover and understand the archetypal energies we carry, before we venture to vision our lives in the New Year. Consulting the Ori means listening for the still, quiet voice, the heart and soul of who we are, the rhythms that have shaped our lives and experiences. For in all probability that, more than anything else, is what will determine our manifestations in the New Year.

If we are not aware of the stories we are living, we have not the power to edit and rewrite them. So let us begin by unmasking and digging deep. Don't be frightened by what you find. Quite often we are better than we imagine ourselves to be. Your story is sacred, regardless of how it sounds and what it feels like to you. It is a part of you, woven into the fabric of your being. Whatever debris you find, you can be sure, quite sure, that gems and jewels are there as well. So find a quiet place, grab your journal, light a candle if you care to, and let's get started. Here are 5 steps for uncovering your deeper story:

Still Waters RUN DEEP

STEP 01. REMEMBERING:

My strongest childhood memories are:

STEP 02. REFLECTING:

In the dazzling dark I know myself as:

STEP 03. CONSIDERING (PIVOTAL MOMENTS):

My life was forever changed when:

STEP 04. IMAGINING:

I can vividly imagine myself as:

STEP 05. AFFIRMING:

Recognizing the power of my words,
I affirm my being as:



Take as much time as you need for each step. When you set pen to paper --- pondering, musing, wondering, allow the words to flow from your heart and soul. Use the statements as writing prompts. Stay with it. Build the image with descriptive words that so capture the essence of your experience that they threaten to roll off the page and spring to life. For after all, that is what words do, whether spoken or unspoken. The words you carry in the deep recesses of your being may or may not be your authentic truth. Those words have come

from your environment, your family, friends, teachers and the cultures you have lived in. But those words make up the story from which you live and move and experience your being. Those words shape the way you walk in the world. Walking a different walk begins with talking a different talk. Before you vision for the New Year and the New You, perhaps you will find that you need to "switch words," for you can be sure that the words you speak and the thoughts you think, consciously or not, will indeed shape the life you live.



A HEALTHY MIND

BY DR. MICHAEL FINKELSTEIN

Here's a secret I learned from all my years of practicing medicine---if you think you're healthy, then you are; and if you don't, you're not. It might seem too simple, almost too good to be true, or too bad. The fact is, it all depends on your outlook.

Just think about it. What's on your mind is the entirety of your experience as a human being. Sounds trite, even arcane, but that's the truth.

So, after all the years of study to diagnose and treat disease, for me, my interest in helping people comes down to helping them reframe their experience. So, let's talk about the mind a little, since it matters a lot.

First, let's start off with a simple question---where exactly is your mind? Is it in your brain? Think again. There's no data to suggest that's the case. On the other hand, there's plenty of evidence [M1] to suggest that each and every cell of our body has some form of "intelligence" that connects directly to our brain on the tracts of extensive neurological and hormonal pathways. Just consider a "gut feeling". There's really something to this. Then, there are our instincts and intuition, experiences such as déjà vu and the like. And, there's even more exciting reports involving those people that have abilities that defy logic (or at least scientific explanation), such as clairvoyance. That said, it is compelling to consider that our mind actually exists throughout our body and reaches outside of it, all at the same time. And this then is the conclusion: while much of this input eventually winds

up in the mesh of neurons in our brain that filters and processes it, our cumulative experience goes beyond our bodies and for that we should be grateful, because so much of our health is indeed a state of mind. As a result, we are not completely dependent on our physical bodies to be healthy overall.

Interestingly, it is the modern scientific model that now leads us to the age old conclusion that the metaphysical and physical meet to co-create what we call "consciousness". And this is good news for modern thinkers. Some of your suffering is readily manageable.

Unfortunately, many restrict themselves to the physical world only, and their "powers" remain limited. Similarly, for others who negate the physical entirely, and pursue instead what I would call spiritual bypass, they miss the unique qualities of the human being which is the capacity to employ both ends of this spectrum to comprehend what it means to be alive and aware. In other words, we can learn to listen to both the mind and body, practice both mind and body awareness, rely on both, and ultimately integrate the entire continuum of human experience and to feel healthy. Indeed, that is the point.

I say this without judgment, as each person certainly has a right to choose the direction that feels right. However, I would submit that from a health perspective, most of us will find keeping an "open mind," and allowing for both to work, offers the best opportunity for ongoing growth and genuine health. If you're still struggling with a chronic health condition, for example, and have been banging your head against the wall to find healing,



JUST THINK ABOUT IT: WHAT’S ON YOUR MIND IS THE ENTIRETY OF YOUR EXPERIENCE AS A HUMAN BEING. SOUNDS TRITE, EVEN ARCAINE, BUT THAT’S THE TRUTH.

getting nowhere or not far enough, this is your chance! My prescription isn’t for another pill. It’s for you to embrace the power of your mind, starting today. You can begin to cultivate the skills that will help you regain a measure of control—although “control” isn’t the right word here: what you are really trying to do is to find a balance, to exercise a muscle that, in our culture, has been too often neglected.

As with any endeavor, working with your mind takes practice and patience. With dedicated attention, you’ll come to understand it’s really a matter of choice. What you choose to believe and think about your condition is paramount. If you choose to focus on suffering – on your sore back or your glaucoma or the feeling of hopeless persistent pain—that’s what you’re going to get, all around. It’s a self-fulfilling prophecy. Matter follows mind in an endless cycle, and only the mind—only you—can break it.

But, let me interject right away, I’m not insensitive to the pain you are experiencing. It is real, I know. I have some too. Still, we have a choice about what to focus upon. I prefer to look at the flowers, a blanket of fresh fallen snow and the sunrise. And that’s my practice. It makes a difference, I promise you it will.

I’m guessing you already have heard this, therefore know about it. Maybe you’ve tried it. It is easier said than done for sure. This is owing to the negative mind. Unfortunately we live in a time where the negative background noise is so loud that it is often incorporated into our being, even before we can walk. All those grumpy teachers, even our parents and grandparents played a role. Our politicians, many religious leaders and the media are perhaps the biggest culprits nowadays. And, I hate to say it, our doctors contribute too, and soon enough the negative script is in our head.

Fortunately, however, this tide is turning and I give a nod to the editors of Heart & Soul Magazine for their interest in this subject and in your well-being.

But, you’re going to have to do some work to change your personal reality. The upside, though, is tremendous and it leads to a critical question: If you’re suffering now, what are you waiting for? You can change your mind, and change your life.

So, before I end, let me be practical. Let me suggest 3 simple things you can do that will make an immediate difference, and they are so easy (and free). First, spend time looking at the beauty in nature every day. It could even be as simple as placing a beautiful flower on your desk or by your bed. Give yourself at least 10 minutes soaking up the color, the sounds and smells. Check in with each of your senses.

Next, compose a list of what is working in your life. We all know how easy it is to complain. This is the opposite. From the bacteria in your gut to the cut healing on your little finger, and your dog who greets you when you walk in the door, here are many things that are working really well, things you have not considered in a long time. The truth is, that list is going to be a lot longer than what is not working. Try it!

Finally, put yourself in your own schedule, like a doctor’s appointment. Put time for Michael at 5PM every day for 30 minutes, and caress your inner child, send positive messages and soothing tones. Absorb the essence of the life inside you and around you. Expand your awareness to embrace everything. Over time you will realize that your mind is very large and very powerful. And for extra credit, before you go to bed each night, as those “negative thoughts” creep in, as they tend to do, reframe them. See them as something good trying to happen, your body sending you a signal to pay attention. Be grateful, even if there is pain. I mean that.

What could the message be, pain is never good, right? One of my patients, Steven, actually tried this and came to understand that his terminal lung cancer was a message that suggested he needed to let go. Not of life, but of his anger toward his estranged wife and the negative influence she had on their son. He let go of that anger and eventually reconciled his relationship with his child. Though he did not outlive his disease, his last year of life was filled with meaning and purpose and a son who got to know his father. Just as important, by coming to terms with his life and his condition--a result of dubious choices he made along the way -- he got his soul back!

Once you identify the message and understand the good that is trying to happen, your mind will begin to shift, and your pain will begin to lessen. Keep at it. No one said this would be easy and quick. Remember what’s on your mind is your experience and your experience is your life. So, change what’s on your mind now! I know you can do it.



The Hill Harper

Impact BEYOND THE GIFT OF GIVING

By Naja Hill

The immensely visionary actor, about to publish his fifth book, has mentored our youth, offered a voice of inspiration to our communities, and triumphed over his own battle against thyroid cancer.

It's mid afternoon on a hot summer day in Los Angeles. Actor, author and motivational speaker, Hill Harper, works steadily with an intense look on his face, directing his staff with a calm authority. He notices my arrival and greets me with a warm smile and kiss on the cheek. He immediately goes back to the task at hand and quickly jots down something of importance on a notepad.

As I wait for our interview to start, I stroll around his Hollywood loft overwhelmed by the eclectic collage of artwork mounted about the walls. The first thing I notice in the center of the spacious room is a sizable black grand piano. Next, my eyes are drawn toward a floor-to-ceiling image of Biggie Smalls' face wrapped around a colossal pillar.

The hallway leading to the main room of the loft, is filled with large and colorfully exotic paintings. An oversized multi-colored guitar statue sits facing the entrance to the front door. The space is warm and open, immediately creating a sense of interest within me.

I sit on the couch and look up, enthralled to find multiple framed paintings on the ceiling. There are endless things to look at. Each thing tells an interesting story. Later I would realize that this stylish space is, in many ways, a representation of Hill himself: complex, layered, intense, inundating and inviting.

One of Hill's signature attributes is humility, which I immediately sense. He repeatedly

goes out of his way to ask whether our crew needs anything before checking on me. Once we settle in, I can see his mind going a mile a minute, which makes perfect sense; a man with a Brown University education, a Harvard law degree, a masters in public administration, several New York Times best selling books, a foundation for youth, and a thriving film and TV career spanning almost two decades, surely has a busy mind. And did I mention he is besties with our president?

Asked what he finds fascinating about art, he smiles as his charismatic almond-shaped eyes light up, "what moves me about art is that most great artists are attempting to show you reality in a way that is different than the way you see it."

Reality seems to be a limitless idea to Hill. "I always knew I would paint on a big canvas," he says figuratively, "it is just who I am and the way I was raised." The big canvas Hill refers to would be the one where he proudly proclaims his life ambition is to leave a positive legacy and impact on the world. Hill wants his legacy not to be one of simply carrying on his name and bloodline, but one that changes lives and "...makes the world a better place." He reveals his ambition to build things, whether that is art, businesses or non-profits.

So far his plan is well on its way, having penned inspirational books like *Letters to a Young Brother*, *MANifest Your Destiny* and *Letters to a Young Sister*, *DeFINE Your Destiny*. Both books have become a mandatory read in various institutions, including juvenile prisons as part of sentencing. Currently, Hill is expanding his mentorship with a new book, *Letters to an Incarcerated Brother*, dedicated to incarcerated men and women in our country. "The mass incarceration crisis in this country is something we have to deal with," he says. "We will in part deal with it by tackling the public education crisis."

Education and the high incarceration rates of African American and Latino males are of particular interest to Hill. With the United States eroding public education systems, Hill suggests that education reform and looking at the misuse of unions are the key to changing this failing epidemic. He looks down and chuckles noting that he might get flack for voicing his opinion on the matter. I laugh having an inclination that this is not the first, nor the last time he will ruffle feathers regarding his views on social issues.

As we continue to talk I notice how perfectly polished each of Hill's responses are. Though his answers seem authentic, his demeanor echoes one of a poised politician. Asked if he would ever run for office, he proclaims that though he has thought about it, he prefers to be of service in mediums where he can make the most positive impact. "The problem is, I want to figure out

where I can have the most impact... sometimes politicians are hamstrung by being politicians," Hill notes.

In addition to Hill's aspiration to create a positive change in young peoples lives, the *CSI: NY* actor also uses his celebrity platform to bring awareness to other societal issues. In his latest book, *The Wealth Cure*, *Putting Money In Its Place*, Hill, faced with thyroid cancer, examines society's typical idea of what wealth is. He uses the same methods of rebuilding his health to approach rebuilding one's wealth. "We have so many definitions about consumerism and what being wealthy is. But what true wealth is, are things that are much more expansive than money." Hill pauses, growing profoundly serious as he reflects on the impact having thyroid cancer has had on his outlook on life. "My thyroid cancer experience proves that, beyond anything, the most important wealth factor in our lives is our health. No matter how much money you have, if you're in pain everyday, if you're dying - money doesn't matter."

The sincerity in his voice continues as he shares with me how he stays spiritually and emotionally grounded. "The thing that keeps me spiritually healthy is prayer," notes Hill, "it's very important to me; it's part of what I learned growing up. Before I go to sleep at night, I get down on my knees and give thanks." He lowers his voice honoring his ritualistic practice and confides in me how prayer has profoundly helped him in his life.

As the summer sun begins to set I head home reflecting on the unique man I've just encountered. Such an accomplished person, I thought, so poised and focused on his role in this world. I was touched by his humble spirit and moved by his passion to make a difference. I intuitively knew that the world has yet to see the best of Mr. Hill Harper.

MY FAVORITE THINGS

Harper Fun Facts

What he finds sexy
Mystery, humor, intelligence and good legs.

Beauty regimens
Kiehl's face wash and moisturizer.

Favorite food
Collard greens and black eye peas.

Favorite color
Red because it's a color that represents energy and a warrior spirit.

Favorite hang out
Auberge du Soleil restaurant in California wine country.



Donna Richardson's Extraordinary Life

By Erickka Sy Savane
Photography By Umoja "Mojo" Turner

Health and fitness guru Donna Richardson lives an extraordinary life. From climbing Mount Kilimanjaro in less than 9 days to selling millions of exercise videos to being inducted into the Fitness Hall of Fame, Donna is doing things that many of us only dream of. And at 51 years old, the Maryland native is *just* getting started! In her latest book, *Witness to Fitness: Pumped Up! Powered Up! All Things are Possible!*, Donna shows us how a healthy lifestyle can be achieved through a strong faith in God, a philosophy that has helped her connect with millions of fans around the world. While it would be easy to talk about Donna's accomplishments all day, it might be more interesting to hear her talk about what it takes to live an extraordinary life...

Creative Producer Erica Annise
Make-up Triphena Johnson
Hair Bridgett LaDawn
Fashion Styling Tito Whitfield-Long of ICON Image

“I grew up playing sports and participating in recreational activities. My family loves to dance and whenever we’d have big dinners we’d at least make the effort to dance off the calories. But most important I grew up believing in my faith and in myself.”



WHAT GETS YOU OUT OF BED IN THE MORNING?

Because of His grace and mercy, I feel blessed each day to love and live on purpose. And like most people out there, I need to go to work.

DID YOU GROW UP IN A FITNESS CONSCIOUS HOME?

I grew up playing sports and participating in recreational activities. My family loves to dance and whenever we’d have big dinners we’d at least make the effort to dance off the calories. But most important I grew up believing in my faith and in myself.

WHAT DO YOU DO TO KEEP YOUR BODY, MIND AND SPIRIT IN TACT?

I explore and stretch myself beyond what I think I am capable of doing. And in my daily devotion, I feed my mind, body and spirit so I am constantly being renewed, rejuvenated and reinvigorated.

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES WHEN IT COMES TO MOTIVATING PEOPLE TO GET FIT?

The biggest obstacle in motivating people to become fit and healthier is you can’t help someone until they make a commitment to help themselves. They get in their own way by allowing fear, strongholds, hopelessness and complacency to take control. First, there is nothing more powerful than a changed mind. Change your thinking and your actions will follow. Trust in God with everything in your life, including your health. If you have failed at losing

weight and becoming healthier, it’s because you left Him out of the plan. Last, faith without works is dead. We can pray all day for good health and to lose weight, but we must do the work. You have to be sick and tired or want it bad enough to make it happen.

HOW DO YOU KEEP YOUR CAREER FRESH AND YOURSELF MOTIVATED?

I have to keep reinventing myself. When I started this journey 25 years ago I started in Buns Of Steel. Now I’m 50 and I have Buns of AARP. I get pumped, powered and prayed up knowing I have improved lives, transformed lives and saved lives.

WHAT’S BEEN YOUR GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENT?

I don’t think there is one big accomplishment in my life. My greatest personal accomplishment is being a caregiver for 11 years to my father-in-love who is deceased and now for my dad who has dementia.

HOW HAS YOUR LIFE CHANGED THESE LAST FEW MONTHS AND HOW ARE YOU RENEWING?

My life has changed drastically in the last year and a half due to a divorce. I’ve been to hell and back, but the misery I faced has helped my ministry. I can now share with women who are stuck. I want to help women move forward so that we can be who God has created us to be. As for renewing, I’m bathing in the word, bathing in the water. I love bubble

baths, oils...I put on one of the bishops sermons and it fills me up.

ARE YOU DATING?

I’m open to dating. Everyday I’m working on myself. I tell women that you have to be what you want to attract. And you have to have a vision of love. What do you want it to look like?

WHAT DO YOU DREAM OF DOING THAT YOU HAVEN’T ATTAINED YET?

Recently in an interview, I was asked, “What will you achieve next since you have traveled to 50 states, 50 countries and 7 continents?” I said “I will visit 50 more countries, sky rocket to the moon and continue to do things that challenge me to grow and evolve into being the best me!”

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE OUR H&S WOMAN WHO FINDS HERSELF BEGINNING HER SECOND PHASE OF LIFE?

Whether you are beginning a second phase in your life or starting a new journey in your life, embrace who you are right where you are. Be excited about letting go of your past so you can indulge in your future. And everyday love on you so you will have an overflowing reservoir to love yourself and others. When faced with challenges I think of it as opportunity to grow in grace.

LIFE FLIES BY IN AN INSTANT, LET’S PROTECT THE MEN WE LOVE.

One in six men will develop prostate cancer in their lifetimes. Every 16 minutes, a man dies of prostate cancer in the U.S. But prostate cancer is often treatable. Encourage the men in your life to speak to their health care providers about prostate cancer screening. Visit PCF.ORG to create a plan for better prostate health.*

Quincy Jones and daughter Rashida Jones, Stand Up To Cancer Ambassadors



TO LEARN MORE GO TO SU2C.ORG.



Photo by Andrew MacPherson

Stand Up To Cancer is a program of the Entertainment Industry Foundation, a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization. *Based on Nov 2012 SEER data.

Take Charge of Your Health Challenge

2014

by Latham Thomas,
HHC founder of Mama Glow

Health Plan 2014

Preparation

Start Fresh- Get new gear, sneakers, a new accountability partner, make a new playlist.

Soundtrack

New Day- Alicia Keys

Mantra

Every day presents a new opportunity for me to blossom

As we sweep into 2014, many of us are inundated with thoughts about the new year. We think about our current patterns, what is working and what isn't? What can we do to start fresh? How can we best prepare ourselves for the challenges to come? Change can invoke anxiety in some or provide relief- a release of the charged past and embrace of the new. When it comes to our health and wellness ,the mark of the year's end usually signals a resolution for change. In the new year I will do _____. This necessity for a shift in our lives is positive and necessary, but we must have the will to see it through. Allow me to assist you in this endeavor

With the Winter Season in full swing, many of us are bundled in coats, tucked away indoors and become disconnect from physical activity. Its so important to get some form of exercise daily to maintain heart health, proper blood sugar levels, beneficial muscle to fat ratio, bone density, balanced hormone levels, healthy metabolic function, and of course- libido. You can build in some very simple practices to ensure that you are working towards a more active lifestyle as we move through the colder months.

Use the momentum of the new year to change some things in your personal life for the better. Examine your diet and lifestyle, career, fitness, relationships, and personal well-being. In what areas do you need to pay more attention? When we take full accountability for what is happening (and what is not happening) in our lives, we have the power to shape our own destinies. If you can make a commitment to yourself to live the best life, to be your best self, then everything else will fall into place. First we need to be committed to change.

There are countless fad diets out there and the truth of the matter is- none of them work in the long run. Why? Because there is no one set program that works for all individuals. You are unique and nobody knows your body and spirit better than you do! Rather than trying to mold yourself to stick to a diet that doesn't resonate with your taste buds, try mixing and matching elements that may work for you- incorporate changes that you know are sustainable. For some of us that means eating more greens, cutting out processed sweets, eating less animal protein, drinking more water, going to bed earlier. These are all major steps towards optimal health that we achieve with daily diligence. The key is to feel good in the process.

- Motivation**

Start a Sister Circle

Identify your cheerleaders and supporters, friends who really want to see you shine and succeed. Maybe you have some friends with similar goals - team up with them. Maybe you do workouts together, or just have them there to support you during this process. When you have friends that are motivated to do the same thing, you see results much faster. Your girlfriends and loved ones help you to be accountable to yourself, and remain true to the intentions you set.
- Set a Goal**

If you have a specific goal in mind you are more likely to stay focused and aligned with your lifestyle changes. For instance, if you are supposed to be in a wedding in mid-spring and want to shed 5-10 pounds by then, you will have this goal in the forefront of your consciousness when you sit down to eat and to motivate you when you are exercising. Goal setting gives us tangible ways to achieve success. Set benchmarks where you will reward yourself after meeting certain goals. And don't forget to tell those who love and support you so that they too can help keep you on track.
- Nutrition**

Kick Sugar to the Curb

Simple sugars enter your bloodstream within minutes and have a harmful effect on the body, causing mood swings, weight gain, mineral depletion, heart disease and arthritis, among other disorders. Generally avoid white sugar as well as synthetic sugars. Sugar will definitely interfere with your goal for a trimmer waistline by summertime. If you know you have a sweet tooth, try integrating tasting foods into your diet like sweet potatoes, pears, cinnamon - these foods are soothing to the pancreas and can satisfy the body's craving for sweet taste.
- Keep it fresh**

I mean two things here: 1. Eat the fresh seasonal foods that are available, and 2. Introduce new and exciting dishes and methods of preparation to your culinary repertoire. It gets boring eating the same old thing. Try incorporating some new techniques and recipes that will inspire you to eat healthy.
- Pack a Mobile Pantry**

It can be challenging to eat well when you are constantly on the go. Places that serve healthy lunches and snacks are scarce compared to the plethora of fast food joints out there. One way to set yourself up for success is to pack a mobile pantry. Pack a selection of easily transportable foods that you can munch on throughout the day when you find yourself hungry. This will help keep you away from the vending machines, and help to regulate cravings. Pack fruit, nuts, seeds, crackers, protein bars, and hummus with sliced veggies.

Notes:



Exercise

The small stuff counts

Don't underestimate the power of very small changes. Walk or take stairs whenever possible. Walking stairs activates the glutes, lifting your butt and keeping it firm - and who doesn't like a firm backside? Park your car further away than normal so you can walk more. Incorporate yoga or stretching, and aerobic work into your daily activities. Little short workouts spread throughout your day can have a big impact on your waistline over time.

Get up and Go!

Exercise during the mornings whenever possible. When you work out at the start of your day it decreases your appetite and stimulates the thyroid to burn calories all day long. Try power walking, jogging, swimming, or spinning in the mornings to start off your day, add some resistance training at the end of the workout to further stimulate the fat burning process. This might include push-ups, pull-ups, crunches, and squats.

Switch it Up

When our bodies get used to performing certain exercises on a consistent basis without any changes we don't burn fat as effectively. This can be discouraging at first glance. Take this opportunity to give your routine a tune-up and try something new. If you're a gym circuit girl, try cross-training outdoors. If you are a hardcore Pilates fiend, try a cycling class.

Speed it Up

with Interval Training- The key to fat burning is using interval training workouts- training that alternates high-intensity levels with lower-intensity effort. This formula keeps your body burning calories long after you've stopped working out. Interval training mimics sports- start-and-stop motions with periods of sprinting or close-to-sprinting speeds followed by light jogging or rest. The best thing is that these workouts don't have to be very long- under 30 minutes! A program of interval training stimulates the thyroid which signals a release of testosterone into the bloodstream which then tells the body to burn fat!

5

Quick Tips for Shedding Pounds
in the New Year

Notes:

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5 Quick Tips for Shedding
Pounds in the New Year

01. Bounce!

Jump rope is an excellent form of exercise. It melts off pounds easily, and can be done anywhere. All you need is 15 minutes and a boxing grade jump rope and you're on your way.

02. Get your OM on!

Engaging in mind body practices such as yoga and meditation even for 20 minutes a day has shown a significant decrease in stress response, activating the parasympathic nervous system and melting off the fat.

03. Snack Smart

As it cools off we are more likely to eat more between meals. Schedule snacks between meals to sustain energy, instead of grazing anytime you're bored. If you keep your blood sugar stable, you're less likely to crave fatty, processed foods or to overeat at mealtime. Eating balanced snacks is key. An apple isn't going to provide you much sustained energy, but an apple followed by a handful of almonds will give you energy that lasts because the fat content in the almonds slows the burn of the fruit sugar. Other smart snack suggestions include: edamame, unsalted nuts, seeds, veggies and hummus.

04. Walk your Weight Off

Try integrating walking into your daily routine, not just walking to the subway or your car, but setting aside 30-40 minutes daily for brisk outdoor walking. If you live near a park, wake up early and walk, walk to work, take the stairs instead of the elevator, get off the train a few stops before your own and walk the rest of the way. Walking briskly will bump up your energy by increasing oxygen levels while releasing endorphins. Any activity that causes your heart to pump will increase your daily calorie burn significantly and aid in your weight loss. So get moving to get fit.

05. Just Drink It!

We need water for our bodies to conduct metabolic functions and we constantly dehydrate ourselves, forgetting to drink water, drinking caffeinated beverages, smoking, eating processed foods, etc. Carry a water bottle with you daily, drink it constantly and when you want to warm up have some nice caffeine free herbal teas. Drinking water aids in weight loss. The liver's job is to convert stored fat to energy. Unfortunately, another of the liver's duties is to pick up the slack for the kidneys, which need plenty of water to work properly. If the kidneys are water-deprived, the liver has to do their work along with its own, lowering its total productivity. You can drink water and green juices to keep well hydrated.

Get your pen and journal out:

>> Write down 5 goals you have for 2014 around self nourishment. Feeding yourself goes much deeper than what's on your fork.

>> What changes will you make to support that healthy new you that wants to emerge?

>> What are you committed to starting this week?

>> What do you need to let go of to be able to achieve your goals?

Fitness
Challenge

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BACK TO OUR ROOTS: HOW TO PLANT A GARDEN

When I lost my job, and cash was low, I still wanted fresh fruits and veggies and since I couldn't afford organic produce, I decided to start a garden.

By Patricia Simpson

ONE TO GROW ON

Garden Community

Visit forums, blogs, read gardening magazines or join a local club. You never know what you may learn. Even consider doing a community garden in your area.

Seed swaps are common, though ensure that you know who's providing your seeds and research catalogs thoroughly. Lastly, you could take a class or visit your local library.

17

PERCENT OF ALL AMERICAN CHILDREN LIVE IN HOUSEHOLDS CONSIDERED FOOD-INSECURE, DEFINED AS "LIMITED OR UNCERTAIN ACCESS TO ADEQUATE FOOD."
Source: The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)



I am a devoted son, a singer, and an artist.
And I am living with HIV.

Let's stop HIV together.™

JAMAR



Jamar has lived with HIV since 2006.

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www.ActAgainstAIDS.org



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Michelle Obama is the nation's crusader when it comes to healthy eating, with the Lets Move campaign and her book *American Grown: The Story of the White House Kitchen Garden and Gardens Across America*, so it's time for African Americans to focus on eating more fruits and veggies to make a healthier America. Starting a garden was one of the best decisions I've made. Not only do I love to cook, it was beneficial emotionally during the time of job loss. I had known of family members who'd lived on farms but in this technology based culture, growing a garden never occurred to me as something I could feasibly do. It's really simple to get started and depending on what state you live in, there should be University extensions and plenty of resources to guide you along the process. But the following are some of the basics.

DECIDE ON YOUR LOCATION

You don't have to have a huge yard to be able to grow a garden but you do need sun and rain. If you live in apartment or have an outside porch you can still grow something for your home in a sunny area or patio. Containers grow great food and should be wide enough for your food to root properly.



DECIDE WHAT YOU WANT TO GROW

There are many choices. You can grow vegetables, herbs, and flowers. Fruit trees require a little more attention and sometimes a certain climate, so you may want to limit your food to that which grows in the ground. Certain flowers attract butterflies and bees which are good for your garden and help farmers. If you decide to grow vegetables decide what you want to eat. Depending on if you live in a hot or cool climate, check the USDA website to know what you can grow and how long your growing season will be.

Spinach is a cool crop that can grow even into the fall, so if you live in a warmer climate like Georgia, you may be able to have a long harvest season. If you are in a cooler climate like New England growing may stop when it gets cold. Peppers are a summer plant due to the high temperatures they require, so if you live in a HOT place these may be a good choice. If you are a good cook it may be rewarding to grow your own specialties and add them to your dishes.

PREPARE YOUR SOIL AND GET YOUR TOOLS

Do some research as to what would be the best way to prepare your soil. Many home improvement stores have a wealth of

information on how to start a small garden and usually will tell you what you need to buy. You don't have to spend a great deal if you just want to start a small garden. Usually you need potting soil, mulch (if not growing a container garden), fertilizer and tools for weeding and watering. Keep it simple and make sure you grow smaller plants that don't require extensive supports or trellises etc.

You can start by testing your soil to see what the PH is and whether or not you need to add anything to the soil composition. Even if you are not a chemistry wiz, your local home improvement store will more than likely sell kits. If you don't want to test your soil, which is recommended, you can still start by purchasing pots for container gardening or mulch and potting soil to get up the weeds. You can also make raised bed gardens, if you are really concerned, which are more complicated and may cost a little more, but possibly safer depending on your area and soil composition.

Gardening is fun and a great way to learn and be active, productive and healthy in your summer and fall months.

Further Resources: Obama, Michelle [2012]. *American Grown: The Story of the White House Kitchen Garden and Gardens Across America*. Crown.

By Any Greens Necessary: A Revolutionary Guide for Black Women Who Want to Eat Great, Get Healthy, Lose Weight, and Look Phat, Tracey Lynn McQuirter MPH

Patricia Simpson is a newbie gardener and freelance writer from Maryland.



Passport

rooms. Tennis courts, European spa and two challenging golf courses looking out on the Bay. The European spa offers the traditional to more exotic treatments including their “Body Experiences” Exotic Island Ritual. This is a combination of massage experiences with sugar exfoliation, pure coconut skin refresher, warm stones then Fijian body butter. The Robert Trent Jones Golf Trails are two eighteen-hole championship layouts that span eight miles.

Dining

Because it is so close to the Gulf, Mobile Bay’s cuisine combines traditional southern dishes with the area seafood. The Mobile Bay area is close to fresh as well as salt water and there is a variety of seafood from which to choose. Most common on local menus are oysters, shrimp and crab dishes with a Southern twist. You will often see grits accompanying shrimp and fried green tomatoes as an appetizer before luxuriating your palette with a variety of oysters right from the Bay like you would at Wintzell’s Oyster House (www.wintzellsoysterhouse.com). Macaroni and cheese, potato salad or collard greens serve as a side dish on most menus. Of course, there will be spicy seafood gumbo and the sweetest sweet tea to quench your thirst. You cannot leave the table of a Southern meal without tasting two of the desserts most desired, sweet and tart key lime pie or delightful bread pudding. Hot beignets are on the menu at Panini Pete’s (www.paninipetes.com). This French inspired pastry is sprinkled with powdered sugar and accented with lemon that is squeezed over the pastry. In one word, heaven. You cannot leave the South without experiencing a beignet. Mobile is big on Barbecue too. You will find as many barbecue joints such as Dreamland BBQ (www.dreamlandbbq.com) as you will seafood restaurants. Serving Barbecue ribs, chicken and more, cooked in an open barbecue pit right before your eyes. It is authentic Southern cooking at its best.

BOB BAUMHOWER’S COMPLETE ANGLER
SEAFOOD GRILLE & BAR
www.completeanglergrille.com

Sitting over Mobile Bay at sunset on a Summer evening is a perfect moment to experience the fresh local fare at Bob Baumhower’s Complete Angler Seafood Grille & Bar. The seafood, fresh caught, straight from the Bay, along with other freshly prepared dishes, are delightful and exotic, in a local way. Dishes like Gator Tail and Barbacoa, Cuban barbecue, offer variety in the menu. All of this stimulation and amazingsness can be frustrating to a traveling reporter who has limited physical space and time to enjoy every dish!

Mobile Bay, Alabama is the secret place to get away from what you do everyday. It is a place to slow down, forget your diet, be pampered and reconnect with self. A history lesson and a look into the future. You truly feel like you are on vacation because the rest of the world is out there and you have found a little peace in Mobile Bay.

– *Alexandra Bowie*

MOBILE BAY ALABAMA

OLD FASHIONED SOUTHERN CHARM WITH A MODERN UPGRADE

When you think of vacation spots in the Southeast your thoughts go to Florida or perhaps the Georgia Sea Islands. As one’s mind drifts across a mental map of the United States you would not likely consider Mobile Bay, Alabama as a vacation destination. Mobile Bay, Alabama, with all of it’s historic Southern charm and blended modern artistic energy makes for a surprising year round retreat. If you are the type to go off the beaten path for good ole Southern hospitality and peaceful rejuvenation, Mobile Bay, Alabama is the destination for you. Their slogan is appropriately “secretly awesome,” and Mobile Bay’s quiet awesomeness is what wraps around you like a warm gulf breeze.

Mobile Bay, Alabama is forty-five minutes from the Gulf of Mexico, two hours from New Orleans and fifty minutes from Pensacola, Florida. It’s central location makes it a stop on a tour of the Southeast and well worth the effort. Mobile Bay, Alabama has a warm humid temperate climate with hot summers and moderate temperatures in the winter which makes it a year round travel option. Mobile Bay’s French and Spanish inspired architecture reminds you of parts of Savannah, GA and New Orleans, LA. It echoes with ghosts of the South’s well documented history. There is pride and resolution in the air and in the hearts of its people. It is quiet and beautiful in a peaceful small town way. This is Mobile Bay, Alabama.

Tradition

MOBILE CARNIVAL MUSEUM
www.mobilecarnivalmuseum.com

Mobile Bay and it’s surrounding areas, have cultural influences from the English, Creek Indian, Yoruba tribe in West Africa, French and Spanish. It is seen and felt all over the city in its architecture, traditions, food and even the faces of its people. There are traditions that are as old as the established American South. They will never die. There is also room for new ways as seen in the art world of Mobile Bay and its surrounding areas.



Imagine hundreds of thousands of moon pies and doubloons descending from every high place in the city by maskers. That would be one of your experiences during the three week celebration of Mardi Gras in Mobile Bay when the entire city parties. When thinking of Mardi Gras in the United States, many think first of New Orleans. A little known fact is that Mardi Gras’ birthplace in the U.S. is in Mobile, Alabama and they take it very seriously. There are coronations of kings and queens with courts and grand balls costing individual families up to \$100,000 or more. In order to become king and queen you must have a bloodline connection to previous kings and queens; bloodlines dating back 200 years. Organizations and secret societies like the Maids of Mirth and Mistresses of Joe Cain are plotted all over the city making you wonder what secrets they hold. Mardi Gras in Mobile with its parades, masquerade balls and king cake parties is a more “family friendly” celebration than New Orleans’, according to Craig Roberts, resident expert on Mardi Gras and volunteer at the Mobile Carnival Museum. In 2014 Mardi Gras in Mobile Bay will begin celebrating February 1st.

Art Scene

There are several outlets for those seeking creative and cultural stimulation in Mobile Bay. Exploring every artistic venue in this city, I was delighted to note the quantity and variety in Mobile Bay and surrounding

areas. A balanced mix of tradition like the History Museum of Mobile (www.museumofmobile.com) and the Mobile Carnival Museum (www.mobilecarnivalmuseum.com) and the modern like the Center for the Living Arts/Space 301 and Robertson Gallery (www.robertsongallerymobile.com) in downtown Mobile make for a faceted experience. Center for the Living Arts/Space 301 (www.space301.com)

When you first walk into this modern setting inside the Center for the Living Arts/Space 301 you feel like you have stepped out of one time period and into the future. This downtown gallery is all about the study, exhibition and enjoyment of contemporary fine art. The Center for the Living Arts features works by local, regional and national artists. Exhibitions like the Cosmic Cavern by artist Kenny Scharf of New York City, take you out of this world into a neon, 3D room filled with recycled once desired items of our lives. Or experience the Futures Project, exhibiting from May 2013 to January 2014, that take a hopeful look into the future of the Gulf Coast. The Center for the Living Arts is a sampling of the consciousness and creativity in this small southern city.

Accommodations

THE KATE SHEPARD HOUSE B&B
www.kateshepardhouse.com

The Kate Shepard House B&B is nestled in a quiet, family friendly neighborhood in Mobile. You immediately feel the comfort of home as you hear the melody of an ice cream truck pass by and you are served lemonade and chocolate cookies in the historic parlor. Run by Wendy and Bill James, they

make certain you feel that comfort. Very little of the interior or exterior architecture has changed from when it was built from a catalogue in 1897 by the Shepard Family of Mobile. You are given a history lesson by Wendy James with the display of papers and other artifacts found in the attic, left by the Shepard Family dating back to 1837. No phones, no televisions in the room, just fresh flowers and a filled to the brim candy jar. Pecan praline french toast for breakfast, individual cheese and egg soufflés, waffles and fresh fruit each morning; something different everyday.

“It was like becoming part of a new family for a short time. I felt very much at home and loved my room, with its antique furniture. I couldn’t wait to get in that bed at the end of each day. It was so soft and comfortable and piled with pillows. Up a couple stairs to a landing was the bathroom with a water closet and giant soaking tub.” Shannon Leonard Clinton, a guest at the Kate Shepard House B&B.

Rejuvenate

GRAND HOTEL MARRIOTT RESORT, GOLF & SPA
www.pchresorts.com/grandhotel

Originally the Point Clear Hotel built in 1847, the Grand Hotel Marriott Resort, Golf & Spa in the Point Clear Peninsula is breathtaking, serene and restorative. Combining traditional Southern hospitality, modern amenities, and its own beach, the Grand Hotel is a secret paradise locked away in the Mobile Bay area. The Grand underwent a \$50 million renovation after Hurricane Katrina in 2006. The hotel has a AAA Four Diamond rating with 550 acres of waterfront and 405 luxury guest



CAPRICORN
(DEC 22 - JAN 20)

You may be experiencing the end of a cycle in regards to friendships. You are craving experience and transformation. Learn to be more flexible and forgive and forget.

(Hint: The more willing you are to be transparent, honest and detached, the better.)

Michelle Obama, January 17

By Esi Evans

Winter marks the passage of time between the old and the new. It represents a time of contemplation, renewing of vows and making of resolutions. In the stillness and peace we begin to craft our new selves for reemergence in the Spring.

PRESS ON!



AQUARIUS
JAN 21 - FEB 19

Strive to maintain balance between career and home life. Watch your money - be honest around your financial situation. It is a great time to look for work that speaks to your heart's desires.



PISCES
FEB 20 - MARCH 20

Choices you make now will affect your career in the future so choose carefully. You may have to lose your ego to find your true Self. Opportunities for romance and play abound!



ARIES
MARCH 21 - APRIL 20

Discipline and imagination are necessary in cultivating your financial landscape. You are in the throes of a deep process surrounding trust. Find new and unusual ways of doing "the same old thing."



TAURUS
APRIL 21 - MAY 22

You are entering a new phase and must be careful not to scatter your energies. Definite, practical and concrete goals coupled with faith is the formula to achieving your goals. Self-control is of the utmost importance during this passage.



GEMINI
MAY 23 - JUNE 21

Your ability to prosper and flourish remains strong during this time. Guard against over-indulgence and beware of anxiety. Continue to regenerate by nurturing your body.



CANCER
JUNE 22 - JULY 22

New opportunities continue to emerge for your personal growth and expansion. Your relationships may be a bit intense at this time. It is vital that you learn to express your feelings.



LEO
JULY 23 - AUGUST 22

Your life is starting in a new direction and may be on the up and up. There may be confusion regarding partnership resources so pay attention to your finances.



VIRGO
AUG 23 - SEPT 22

Your mind is fastidious and your words have a sober quality to them now. Notice power struggles and jealousy games that can undermine your relationship. Your psychic abilities are heightened at this time.



LIBRA
SEPT 23 - OCT 22

Attend to your tendency to be overly materialistic. Continue to revamp your goals and values. This is a great time to invoke expansion in your career.



SAGITTARIUS
NOV 23 - DEC 21

This is an excellent time to finish off old projects. Your internal house is being overhauled and transformed. Open yourself to new horizons.



SCORPIO
OCT 23 - NOV 22

You are somewhat reserved and quiet at this juncture in your life. Please note that no hard work is ever wasted and your reward will come in due time. The key to success is to focus on internal matters.

"Dare, and fear will falter.
Challenge, and fear will flee.
This is the beginning of your
dream-making." -- Carew Papritz

AWESOME YOU

By K Neycha Herford

Every year as we approach New Year's Eve, millions of people bargain with themselves and affirm a handful of resolutions they will commit to in order to change themselves and their lives. Most often these resolutions fade by early Spring. The momentum, afforded by the hype of a new calendar year, wains. All the plans for a better you and a better life continue to rendezvous with a tomorrow that simply doesn't exist. Resolutions fail specifically because they are projections of the future. Change happens in the present.

The jig is up folks. Your droning on and on about "one of these days" is utterly useless and frankly, it's delusional. I know, because on occasion I get caught in that same chorus of make-believe, as if there's always going to be another opportunity to "do me" or create the life I've always imagined. Generally it will take something sobering like an unexpected death to jolt me back into the reality that life

is fragile and time, so very precious. It is in these moments that the mental habit of "one-daying" loses its appeal, and my patience for procrastination aborts instantly. The question then becomes how much longer will I put it off? How much longer will you put it off? Tomorrow is the greatest lie ever invented.

You don't need a new year to be a new you. You need conviction and fearlessness - - to act - - now. That's it, period! There is no magical antidote. Not your parents, your partner, a new city or a new year can get the job done. Only you can. What are you so afraid of? I'd bet you the money in my bank account that those exact fears are holding ransom the keys to your most profound transformations. If you want a new you, get out of your way. Stepping into and owning the grand potential of your life requires that you put your big girl panties on and do the freaking work. It's not a negotiation.

I am not here to entertain your excuses or to coddle your fears. My clients will tell you how disinterested I am in the negative, self-defeating stories you tell yourself about your life and your past. What are you going to do now? I challenge you to stop making reservations with some future, improved you, and allow the awesome you already inside to come out. She's in there, capable, powerful, wisely discerning and already

enough. You must allow her to enter the building. Today. Unshackled, she (her thoughts, her choices, her decisions) can radically change your life this very second! There is no tomorrow for us to get better in. The moment of awesome you is now.

This year, this month, this moment, I double dare you to go boldly in a direction that stretches you beyond your comfort zone. Trust me, your epic life is waiting for you. Move.

DARING *is* CARING A few tidbits for the daring:

01 SHIFT OR SHUT-UP

You don't get to complain about the same BS everyday if you're not willing to do anything about it. If you make a promise to yourself, do it. Being an "I'mma" person is overrated.

02 UNPLUG FROM THE MATRIX

Second-hand living is an active, ongoing appointment with joylessness. Status-quo and sexy are rarely used in the same sentence. Discover and commit to your own path. Stop settling for mediocrity.

03 SEEK ALIGNMENT

Make choices that support the truth of who you say you want to be. Make decisions that cultivate the experiences you say you want to have. If it doesn't support, abort.

04 STOP SPLURGING ON REGRET

You can't allow yourself to be governed by your past. It's done and can't be changed no matter how many hours you waste wishing it were different. Bless it and release it.

05 DEAD YOUR LOVE AFFAIR WITH BEING A VICTIM

You can't believe everything your emotions tell you. Don't just feel, investigate. Tell yourself a new story that is empowering rather than stifling.

06 SAY NO TO THINGS YOU DON'T WANT TO DO

Energy is your most important currency. It is important not to spend it all on things, people and situations that add little or no value to your life.

07 AUDIT YOUR LIFE/YOURSELF

If something or someone is causing ongoing distress in your life, much more than adding joy, get rid of it, release them. Same with the negative Chatty-Patty that sometimes camps in your head and wreaks all kinds of unnecessary havoc. They've all got to go. No bargaining.

08 TELL THE TRUTH, ESPECIALLY TO YOURSELF

Telling the truth about who you are, where you are and what you want from your life is an everyday act of courage. Communicating what is real for you, in any given moment, is an exercise in freedom. Be free.

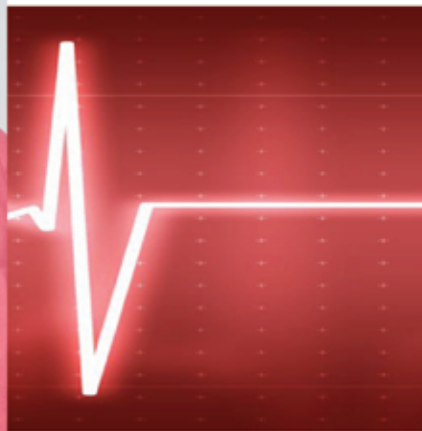
09 BE FEARLESS

You must not accept the way fear has capsized your life. You must feel the fear, and do it anyway. This is an exercise in fearlessness. Be fearless.

Cheers to you!



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