

December 15, 2020

Word for YO Wellness

A Newsletter by the Pandemic Wellness Coalition

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The Word

Solstice

We are almost there, folks.

Very soon, before the release of the next newsletter, we will have surpassed the halfway point, the transition from shortening days to lengthening days: the winter solstice. The solstice falls on December 21st most years, where it marks the shortest day and the longest night of the year. You might consider it a solar "new year." On this day, the sun spends the least amount of time in our sky, and instead we are granted more time with the moon and stars. Immediately following the solstice, we spend a bit more time with the sun every day, building up to the spring equinox on March 20, and the summer solstice on June 20. From there, the cycle continues: a continual ebb and flow of dark-to-light and light-to-dark.

The winter solstice can be seen as a day were we start anew, a day where we can set intentions or celebrate a milestone. It is a day to remind us that we can start over, create something new for ourselves, and perhaps leave something behind in the process. But perhaps it is a fallacy to think we need specific days to become better versions of ourselves. If we open our eyes, we see death and rebirth all around us - both in the literal and metaphorical sense. We see it daily as light transitions to dark and vice versa. We see it yearly as buds give way to flowers, then seeds, and so on. We see it in our cells' regeneration every seven years, or every time we get a new haircut. We even see it every time we suspend our breath between the inhale and the exhale.

Upon noticing how much nature reflects that which is new, we can choose to embody it ourselves by leaving behind that which no longer serves us and replacing it with higher goals and affirmations, whenever we choose. We can symbolically create a "new year" when we open our eyes to greet the day, or by imagining our front door as a portal towards our higher selves as we sip in fresh air. We can do this after a workout, a meditation, or even after leaving work for the day.

"New" is around us constantly, at any given time and place. Allow yourself to see it, and remind yourself that you do not need a specific day to start over. You can do so any time you deem yourself ready to be born again.

By Jetta Blaine

Word for Yo' Wellness is brought to you by the Pandemic Wellness Coalition, an employee resource group (ERG) with members from many of Yosemite's park partners and hosted by the National Park Service. Look for our newsletter the first and fifteenth of every month. Each issue includes recipes, articles, community submissions, special events and more from your fellow park locals. Have a special request or an art submission? Contact yos.communitybuilder@gmail.com for more information!

Upcoming Events

New This Month!

Activities you can do from home, anytime, anywhere. Check out this [Pulsing Meditation & Centering](#) video and more on the Yosemite Community Builder YouTube channel.



Community Chats

Community Chats are for gathering together to check-in and connect. These are peer-led by different facilitators and are meant to foster in-person community and well-being.

<https://zoom.us/join>

Wednesday, December 16th

5:30 - 7:00pm

Led by Jenni Buczko

Meeting ID: 990 6911 3247

Passcode: 12345

Monday, December 21st

6:00-7:30 pm

Led by Jetta Blaine & Erin Callahan

Meeting ID: 870 7849 5809

Passcode: 746756

Community Ambassador

- Open Forum Brainstorm -

Do you have any ideas that can contribute to the health and wellness of the Park? This open format discussion will be a space where you can share your own ideas. Led by Jamie Gonzales

Tuesday, December 22th

1:00 - 2:00pm

<https://zoom.us/join>

Meeting ID: 206 626 9920

Passcode: wellness1

Full Moon Meditation

Set intentions & experience release for the upcoming lunar cycle.

Led by Jetta Blaine

Tuesday, December 29th

6:00-6:30 pm

<https://zoom.us/join>

Meeting ID: 853 5696 6994

Passcode: 296614

Wednesday Night Yoga

Led by Jetta Blaine

Every Wednesday

5:30-6:30 pm

<https://zoom.us/join>

Meeting ID: 878 8619 6942

Passcode: 445969

Lifestyle Series Dialogue

A series on everyday lifestyle practices to live a more healthy and fulfilling life, inspired by the ancient yogic principles of the Yamas, Niyamas, and Ayurvedic Medicine.

2nd & 4th Tuesdays every month.

Led by Jetta Blaine

Tuesday, December 22nd

5:30-6:30 pm

<https://zoom.us/join>

Meeting ID: 885 6081 0549

Passcode: 008647

Saturday HIIT Workout

Get your blood pumping every Saturday morning with a high-intensity interval training (HIIT) workout! No equipment needed, just an exercise mat if you have one. All ages and ability levels welcome. Led by Nina Listro

<https://zoom.us/join>

Saturday, December 19th & 26

9:00- 9:45am

Meeting ID: 826 3446 5078

Passcode: 790932

To protect the health of ourselves and our community, all events will now be hosted online.

Visit www.yoscommunity.com/events for direct event links and event updates.

Visit www.yoscommunity.com/events for digital event updates & links!

Community Submissions

Sara Dubois
Cathedral



Carlos Antunez
Winter Wonderland

For a chance to feature your personal artwork, poetry, articles, or short stories in our newsletter, please send your submission to yos.communitybuilder@gmail.com



Wellness News

Recipe

For Yo Wellness

This month's ingredient:

CITRUS

Citrus Cranberry Shortbread Cookies

Makes 2 dozen cookies

- 2 cups all purpose flour
- 1/4 tsp. baking powder
- 1/8 tsp. salt
- 1 cup butter, softened
- 3/4 cup confectioners sugar
- 1 1/2 tsp. almond extract
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 tbsp. orange zest, or more to taste
- 1 cup sweetened dried cranberries, chopped

1. Combine flour, baking powder, and salt. Set aside.
2. Beat together butter and sugar with electric mixer until smooth. Stir in almond extract, vanilla extract, and orange zest.
3. Add flour mixture until incorporated. Fold in cranberries.
4. Divide the dough into 2 equal portions, then roll into logs about 7 inches long. Wrap each log in wax paper or plastic wrap, and chill in the refrigerator for 2 - 4 hours.
5. Preheat oven to 350.
6. Remove wax paper and cut the cookie dough into 1/2-inch slices. Arrange the slices on a baking sheet about 1 inch apart.
7. Bake in the preheated oven until firm but not browned, about 10 minutes.

How To Protect Your Mental and Physical Health This Holiday Season

A Q&A with Megan Riehl, PhD, of Michigan Medicine

As temperatures begin to drop, how can you best prepare yourself to head outdoors?

You can prepare now by digging out your warmest winter clothing and assessing whether or not you need to make new purchases to keep yourself and your family members warm outdoors. Remember, outdoor time may be one of the safest ways for us to connect socially as we continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. The emotional benefits of fresh air and sunshine, coupled with the physical activity of walking, hiking or cruising in a wheelchair, is a win-win situation.

What types of activities do you recommend during the winter?

Given that the holidays will likely be a very different experience for most of us, with limited (or no) travel to see extended family members and friends, it's best to start preparing for virtual gatherings with your loved ones. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently put out a new set of guidelines regarding travel and holiday celebrations and small gatherings. You can make these virtual get-togethers especially fun by playing an online game, planning a recipe to cook together, sharing a meal time, watching a show or movie together, opening gifts at the same time or simply connecting on an emotional level.

Another tip is to plan an outdoor excursion with members of your household and/or pod. By taking up a new outdoor hobby like sledding, hiking or exploring new parks, you're opening yourself up to new experiences and memories. There are also ample opportunities to bundle up, pack a lunch and set an example for your children and/or loved ones: Even though things might be different this holiday season, there's still plenty of time to engage with each other in meaningful and enjoyable ways.

Do you have any mental health tips for individuals dealing with the stress of winter?

Mindfulness is the art of being present in the moment without judgement for how you are feeling. It's always important to remember that whatever emotions you may be feeling are OK. This year has been tough enough, and it will continue to hold many unique challenges for us all. When you feel stressed:

- Stop and take a moment to acknowledge your feelings. It's OK to say to yourself, "I am feeling stressed."
- Take a deep breath. First, breathe in through your nose and as you exhale through your mouth, let your shoulders drop down away from your ears.
- Take another deep breath and scan your body for tension. Then, try and actively release any tension from your muscles.
- After a few more breaths, refocus your attention on the next task that is within your realm of control. Now, you'll be ready to move on with your day.

How can people cope with loneliness this year?

Reach out to others if you are struggling. Send a friend a message and set up a plan to talk via phone or video chat. We sometimes forget that chances are, if you are feeling lonely, your loved ones are likely feeling the same way and missing you.

It's smart to create a routine for regular check-ins with friends and family. Sometimes, something as simple as starting a group text chat can really help people feel connected. Remember to never be afraid of letting others know how you are feeling.

With seasonal stress, food-related problems may arise. How can individuals manage these issues?

The holidays can lead to more snacking, larger meals and overindulging in things like desserts and alcohol. By setting intentions with yourself about your food and drink intake, you can better monitor your portions. In addition, meal planning can help you pay attention to what and when you are eating. Ultimately, this practice has the power to help you cut down on overeating or indulging in foods due to convenience. Lastly, I always tell my patients to be aware of their emotions. For some, increased levels of stress, anxiety, sadness or loneliness can lead to emotional eating. Always consider reaching out to a mental health professional if you are concerned about your moods or the general state of your mental health. You're never alone.

Megan Riehl, PhD, is the clinical director of the gastrointestinal behavioral health program at Michigan Medicine, as well as a gastrointestinal psychologist. Retrieved from the University of Michigan Medicine "How To Protect Your Mental and Physical Health This Holiday Season" <https://healthblog.uofmhealth.org/wellness-prevention/how-to-protect-your-mental-and-physical-health-holiday-season>



Activities

Activity 1 Anonymous Holiday Card Exchange

Use the template provided on the back page or make your own holiday card

Instructions

- Decorate a card
- Write something meaningful
- **Don't sign your name on it -**

Message ideas

- Words of encouragement
- Winter themed poem or musing
- Best advice for going into 2021
- Come up with something original!

Drop off your card in the marked box at the Valley or EP Post Office
between 12/16 - 12/23

THEN...

Return to the Post Office 12/28 - 12/31 to pick up an anonymous card
from someone else.

*This is a family friendly activity
Please keep messages appropriate for all ages*

Activity 2 Write a letter of self-reflection for 2020

Note to Self

Journaling reflection activity

Describe 2020 in 3-5 words.

What were your 3 "greatest hits" in 2020?

What were some of your greatest "ah-ha" moments?

What was your biggest area of growth?

What challenges did you face?

What goals did you set? What did you achieve? How? Why?

What's your most glaring piece of unfinished business?

What friends were important to your successes?



Resources

 *Visting the Great Outdoors ?*

STAY SAFE OUTDOORS

Now is not the time to be venturing beyond your ability level or at the edge of your comfort zone. Around the region, healthcare systems are increasingly overwhelmed.

WE MUST DO OUR PART TO ENSURE WE DON'T CONTRIBUTE TO AN ALREADY BURDENED HEALTHCARE SYSTEM



Regional ICU Snapshot

December 12th

The San Joaquin Valley Region currently has **0%** of its ICU beds available.

Please focus on being careful, responsible, and safe.

Visit covid19.ca.gov to learn more



An electronic version of this newsletter and other communiit resources are available at:

www.yoscommunity.com

Resources

Yosemite Medical Clinic
209-372-4637

Mariposa County Health & Human Services
24-hour Crisis Hotline
209-966-7000

Crisis Text Line
Text 741741



NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE
1-800-273-8255 (TALK)

National Suicide Prevention
<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>



Veterans Crisis Line
1-800-273-8255 **PRESS 1**

Veterans Crisis Line
<https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>

Alcoholics Anonymous
Mariposa & Sierra Foothill Chapter
24 Hour Hotline
209-966-3110
<http://www.aamariposafellowship.org>

Coronavirus Sanity Guide
<https://www.tenpercent.com/coronavirus/sanityguide>

