

# Word for YO Wellness

November 15, 2020

A Newsletter by the Pandemic Wellness Coalition

## *In This Issue*

Upcoming Events  
*Page 2*

Community  
Submissions  
*Page 3*

Wellness News  
& Recipes  
*Page 4*

Activities  
*Page 5*

Heath Resources  
*Page 6*

## The Word

### **Darkness**

With the arrival of autumn and the end of Daylight Savings Time comes a change that we know to expect, but one that unnerves us nonetheless: the shortening of days and early arrival of darkness in the evening. It is a misconception to think that we can fully separate ourselves from this seasonal transformation, just as it is a misconception to think that we can fully separate ourselves from anything in nature. It affects us on a visceral level, disturbing our sleep, energy, and overall sense of wellbeing. The darkness gathering outside can also teach us a lesson about our own, internal periods of darkness, however. These moments of personal darkness are known as Dark Nights of the Soul.

I would truly doubt it if not everyone on this planet has faced a Dark Night of the Soul. Dark Nights can take the form of breakdowns or unhealthy behaviors. They can take the form of a dead-end path, feeling lost without purpose or direction, or a never-ending sadness that seems to stretch in all directions of time. In many ways, they can feel like purgatory. Although wholly unpleasant and difficult to face, these Dark Nights are often a blessing in disguise.

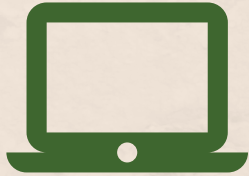
Dark Nights of the Soul are seen as a stage in personal development where a person gains a deeper awareness of their vision of themselves and their self-created perceptions of the world. As we go through life, we pick up all sorts of programming and layers along the way; in yogic and Buddhist texts, these are called samskaras, or impressions. Some of these impressions are healthy, some are not, and some only benefit us for a certain amount of time before they ultimately expire. The Dark Night of the Soul forces one to shed these unhealthy and outdated layers as a new form of oneself begins to emerge, but it often carries with it the emotional pain of facing stark self-realizations as all our previous safeguards wash away. In other words, a lot of the pain we feel during these moments of existential crisis stems from that part of our identity dissolving away as something new is reborn.

A certain level of emotional intelligence comes from leaning into our emotions, so long as we can do so in a safe and meaningful way. Ultimately, the most important thing to remember during these times is that no one feels one particular way forever; just as droplets of water never flow down a stretch of a stream more than once, everything we feel is in a state of continual transition. When you feel as though you have hit rock bottom, do not stigmatize yourself for being there, but rather, take your experience minute by minute, or even moment by moment. If you feel yourself spiraling, practice a grounding exercise that will put you back into you body--such as rubbing your feet and deepening your breath--or direct your energy elsewhere by exercising or journaling. In the fullness of time, you will emerge once more, perhaps just a little bit lighter, and just as complete as you have ever been. After all, a dark winter does lay the groundwork for a fertile spring.

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 for 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](mailto:yos.communitybuilder@gmail.com) for more information!

# Upcoming Events



## We're Going Virtual

*To protect the health of ourselves and our community, all events will now be hosted online. Our virtual platform is still being developed, so check back in with us at [yoscommunity.com/events](https://www.yoscommunity.com/events) for event updates and links to the below online events.*

### **Meditation Sessions**

25 minute meditation groups  
*Led by Jetta Blaine*

Thursday, November 19th  
1:00 pm & 1:30 pm  
Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/join>  
or dial in: 669-900-9128

Meeting ID: 206 626 9920

### ***Returning in December:***

#### **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.

*Led by Jetta Blaine*

Date & Time TBD

### **Community Chat**

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.

*Led by Jetta Blaine, Jenni Buczko, and Erin Callahan*

November 18th  
6:30pm-8:00pm  
Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/join>  
or dial in: 669-900-6833

Meeting ID: 990 6911 3247  
Passcode: 12345

All events brought to you by the Pandemic Wellness Coalition

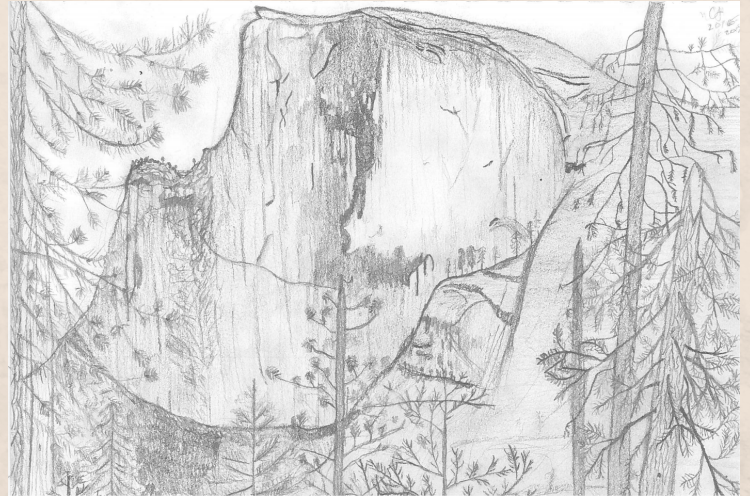
Visit [www.yoscommunity.com/events](https://www.yoscommunity.com/events) for digital event updates & links!

# Community Submissions

## Be Alive

Who shows me what is right  
What is wrong  
Is it my heart  
Or the human fallacy I was born into  
Do the tears streaming down your face  
Show mine In their reflection  
Or is it my neighbor  
The man down the street  
Where does it begin  
Where is my ending  
How do I proceed  
Down this path  
Do I end in an archway  
Married to the thoughts I grew up with  
The ideas born in my head  
From privilege  
From whiteness  
Or is there a turn  
Halfway down that path  
That says  
Stop  
Enough is enough  
Be stronger  
Be braver  
Be an ally  
I am not what I was made to be  
I am not what you see with your eyes  
And neither are the others  
You refuse to believe are the same as you  
There is no difference  
My soul  
Your soul  
Our soul  
The earth  
One  
Being  
My heart is heavy  
And with it comes reverence  
For your pain  
For the struggle  
To live and be alive with the fire  
And passion  
That life is worth living  
I bow my head and heart  
To you  
For the courage  
To be alive

By Ashley Born



Artwork submission by Courtney Johnson



Congratulations to our November Featured Artist

**Jessica Bonner**

*Glacier Point Coyote*

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](mailto:yos.communitybuilder@gmail.com)

# Wellness News

## Recipe

For Yo Wellness

This month's ingredient:

## PUMPKIN

You saved those seeds, right? Pumpkin seeds contain high levels of zinc and tryptophan—which your body converts to serotonin—plus magnesium, fiber, protein, and essential fatty acids. The same goes for the seeds of other winter squash, including butternut, acorn, and spaghetti squash.

Don't let any part of these gorgeous and nutritious winter vegetables go to waste!

## Roasted Pumpkin Seeds

**Fresh, whole pumpkin or squash**

**Olive oil**

**Sea salt**

**Additional seasonings (optional)**

1. Carefully cut open and scrape the seeds out of your pumpkin or squash.
2. Rinse seeds in a colander and remove any flesh or stringy bits.
3. Either boil seeds in heavily salted water for 10 minutes, or soak them in heavily salted water for at least one hour. Drain and air dry on dish towel.
4. In a small bowl, coat seeds lightly in olive oil and add a light sprinkle of salt and/or additional seasonings of your choice.
5. Transfer to baking pan and roast at 400 degrees, but stay close to the oven. Small seeds can take only 5 minutes, while larger seeds can take up to 20. Roast until seeds are a light, toasty brown.

**Additional seasoning ideas:** pepper, garlic powder, Lawry's, chili powder.

## Holiday Gatherings in 2020: Health Experts Provide Tips to Safely Navigate the Holidays During a Pandemic

Adapted from the Mayo Clinic Organization:

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress/art-20047544>

When stress is at its peak, it's hard to stop and regroup. Try to prevent stress and depression in the first place, especially if the holidays have taken an emotional toll on you in the past.

- **Acknowledge your feelings:**

If someone close to you has recently died or you can't be with loved ones for other reasons, realize that it's normal to feel sadness and grief. It's OK to take time to cry or express your feelings. You can't force yourself to be happy just because it's the holiday season.

- **Reach out:**

If you feel lonely or isolated, seek out community, religious or other social events or communities. Many may have websites, online support groups, social media sites or virtual events. They can offer support and companionship.

- **Be realistic:**

The holidays don't have to be perfect or just like last year. As families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well. Choose a few to hold on to, and be open to creating new ones. For example, if your adult children or other relatives can't come to your home, find new ways to celebrate together, such as sharing pictures, emails or videos. Or meet virtually on a video call. Even though your holiday plans may look different this year, you can find ways to celebrate.

- **Set aside differences:**

Try to accept family members and friends as they are, even if they don't live up to all of your expectations. Set aside grievances until a more appropriate time for discussion. And be understanding if others get upset or distressed when something goes awry. Chances are they're feeling the effects of holiday stress and depression, too.

- **Stick to a budget:**

Before you do your gift and food shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend. Then stick to your budget. Don't try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts.

a. Try these alternatives:

b. Donate to a charity in someone's name.

c. Give homemade gifts.

d. Start a family gift exchange.

- **Plan ahead:**

Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, connecting with friends and other activities. Consider whether you can shop online for any of your items. Plan your menus and then make your shopping list. That'll help prevent last-minute scrambling to buy forgotten ingredients. And make sure to line up help for meal prep and cleanup.

- **Learn to say no:**

Saying yes when you should say no can leave you feeling resentful and overwhelmed. Friends and colleagues will understand if you can't participate in every project or activity. If it's not possible to say no when your boss asks you to work overtime, try to remove something else from your agenda to make up for the lost time.

- **Don't abandon healthy habits:**

Don't let the holidays become a free-for-all. Overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt.

a. Try these suggestions:

i. Have a healthy snack before holiday meals so that you don't go overboard on sweets, cheese or drinks.

ii. Eat healthy meals.

iii. Get plenty of sleep.

iv. Include regular physical activity in your daily routine.

v. Try deep-breathing exercises, meditation or yoga.

vi. Avoid excessive tobacco, alcohol and drug use.

vii. Be aware of how the information culture can produce undue stress, and adjust the time you spend reading news and social media as you see fit.

- **Take a breather:**

Make some time for yourself. Find an activity you enjoy. Take a break by yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do. Find something that reduces stress by clearing your mind, slowing your breathing and restoring inner calm.

a. Some options may include:

i. Taking a walk at night and stargazing

ii. Listening to soothing music

iii. Reading a book

- **Seek professional help if you need it:**

Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling persistently sad or anxious, plagued by physical complaints, unable to sleep, irritable and hopeless, and unable to face routine chores. If these feelings last for a while, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional.

# Activities

**"The act of gratitude plays an important role in psychological wellbeing and self-actualization" (Maslow, 1970).**

Take this season as an opportunity to reflect on what you're grateful for. When times are hard, a little bit of gratitude incorporated into your schedule can contribute to overall feelings of wellness.

Try out these activities and see how you can build a gratitude practice into your everyday life.

## Gratitude Jar

<https://www.therapistaid.com/worksheets/gratitude-jar.pdf>

Gratitude jars are a fun, artistic, and hands-on way to practice gratitude. In this activity, you will create a special jar for saving statements at the end of each day. A gratitude statement acknowledges something that a person appreciates or is thankful for. Using blank slips of paper, or the prompts provided in the handout (PDF link above), write down 1-3 good things about your day.

### Materials

- Clear Jar (glass or plastic)
- Art Supplies (ribbons, stickers, magazine cutouts, etc.)
- Gratitude Slips (blank strips of paper, or slips with gratitude prompts - see link for prompts.)

After decorating the jars, it's time to add the first three gratitude statements. Save them up and take them out when you need these small reminders.

## Starting a Gratitude Journal

<https://positivepsychology.com/gratitude-journal-pdf/>

**Consider using the following prompts:**

In the last week...

- What did you do that you are grateful for?
- What did someone else do that you are grateful for?
- What did you learn you are grateful for?
- What did you feel that you are grateful for?
- What did someone else say to you that you are grateful for?
- Is there a feeling that you felt that you are grateful for?
- Is there a sensation (that you saw/heard/smelt/tasted/felt) that you are grateful for?

## Connection Activity

Fill in the chart.

Some examples have been provided.

What are some things that connect you to your:

Friends and Family	Community	Self
<i>Sending letters Facetime</i>	<i>Getting to know locals at the Store</i>	<i>Journaling Learning an instrument</i>

# Resources

## Yosemite Library

### New Hours

As of November 4, 2020

**WEDNESDAYS**

**1:00 – 6:00pm**

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*Until further notice or better funding gets approved.*

Curbside delivery can be arranged for pick up email: [christine.reynolds@mariposalibrary.org](mailto:christine.reynolds@mariposalibrary.org)  
Or call: 372-4552

### For the safety of us all...

- Two library patrons are allowed inside at any time, so patience is needed.
- Please knock and I will let you in as soon as possible.
- All patrons must wear a mask and sanitize upon entering.

Thank you kindly,

~ Christine

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

[Yoscommunity.com](http://Yoscommunity.com)

[Yoscommunity.com/events](http://Yoscommunity.com/events)

[Yoscommunity.com/wellness](http://Yoscommunity.com/wellness)

[Yoscommunity.com/newsletter](http://Yoscommunity.com/newsletter)

[Yoscommunity.com/featuredartist](http://Yoscommunity.com/featuredartist)

## 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**  
<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>



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

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

**Coronavirus Sanity Guide**  
<https://www.tenpercent.com/coronavirusanxietyguide>