

body • mind • spirit

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2025



Sockrider
10-24



A new you for the rest of your life

OMAYRA ACEVEDO

With the new year come new goals and resolutions. Many prioritize their health and commit to making a positive change at the beginning of each year, with the average person moving on by the end of March.

Humans tend to desire immediate benefits over future ones. It's a natural urge that gets the best of us. Yet we often forget the negative consequences of impatience, including poor choices and creating unrealistic expectations that only add stress to our lives.

We are easily discouraged when we haven't lost weight overnight, or tell ourselves we can't afford a personal trainer. These become excuses, and we forget we hold the knowledge and power to become better versions of ourselves. The main ingredient is to stop putting pressure on yourself. You're doing your best, and yes, that is always enough!

Tips to staying motivated

1. Write everything down.
2. Set tiny and realistic goals.
3. Track your progress.
4. Decide what rewards you like and reward yourself.
5. Take breaks.
6. Surround yourself with positivity.
7. Avoid counting numbers like your weight, and focus on how you feel.
8. Practice visualizing your results.
9. Celebrate your milestones.
10. When you want to quit, remember why you started.

The origins of wellness are rooted in the 19th century in intellectual, religious, and medical movements across the United States and Europe. They can also be traced back to Greece, Rome, and Asia, where historical traditions influenced the modern wellness movement.

The concept of Wellness gained momentum in the United States during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, when physicians and thinkers began shaping our way of viewing our health and goals. As medicine evolved, with so-called miracle pills and diets, we lost our connections to our own sense of well-being. The purpose of Wellness is to return to those connections.

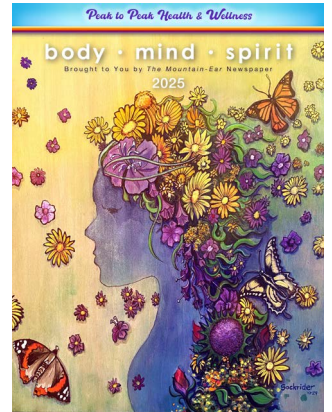
Just as it takes time to build strong relationships, cultivate meaningful experiences, achieve goals, and gain wisdom, so can the most important thing in your life take time: your health. Remember, the greatest things in life often take time because they require a beautiful process of growth, development, and learning. With these things come the greatest rewards.

No matter your trade, you learned skills that got you there, and you're most likely continuing to learn more skills to improve your craft.

Your health is no different. Take your time learning the skills necessary to be healthy. Having good health is the one thing you'll never regret.

A New Year's health resolution is a great goal and starting point, but a commitment to your overall well-being should last the rest of your life, not only for three months. To reach our full potential health, we must find balance within our body, mind, and spirit.

We encourage you to use this guide to help achieve your health goals, every day for the rest of your life, from therapeutic massages and yoga to fitness and nutrition. *The Mountain-Ear's* "Body, Mind and Spirit" was created to support your health journey. You've got this!



Original acrylic painting by David Sockrider.

The Mountain-Ear

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News of the Peak to Peak pring and online:

www.themtnear.com

USPS 548530 • Print ISSN: 1543-6071 • Website ISSN: 2834-099X



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Elevate Your Wellness

body • mind • spirit

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Lyons

Jamestown

Ward

Gold Hill

Boulder

Nederland

Rollinsville

Coal Creek

Golden Gate Canyon State Park

Black Hawk

Central City

Golden

Idaho Springs





Attuning our temple

CHRISTOPHER KELLEY

There is a science to physical touch, one which can be mastered, and with that mastery that touch can heal others; a kind of healing for physical pain, but that can also be felt so deeply that it touches the spirit and eases the mind. But to simply classify a massage as something scientific somehow undermines its power as an art form, for truly, massages are magic.

Perhaps one of the oldest forms of physical therapy, there is evidence of the art of massage existing more than 5,000 years ago.

In 3,000 B.C.E. India, massage was born from the Hindu holistic practice known as "Ayurveda," meaning "life health." As Ayurveda was focused on seeking alignment of body, mind, and spirit with the environment, the practice includes some of the earliest forms of dieting, herbal remedies, aromatherapy, sound therapy, and touch therapy.

Paintings on the walls of Egyptian tombs depict the use of advanced forms of body-mind-spirit healing practices in 2,500 B.C.E., including the first-known use of reflexology, which is hyper-focused, pressured massage on key areas of the body.

There is written record dating back to 2,700 B.C.E. of massage techniques being used in China, as well



Candles lend an aura: One more way to make massage special.

as early forms of acupuncture and yoga and tai chi. Over centuries these practices continued to influence cultures across the globe, including that of Japan, and eventually made its way to the Greek and Roman empires.

The therapeutic art found new life in 19th century Sweden, where the foundations of the form were used to develop a new technique, one which utilized deep-tissue manipulation through unique kneading, long stroke, and circular motions.

The United States, however, didn't grasp the concept until the early to mid-1900s. Though medical "rubbers" were used in the 1700s to rehabilitate patients after surgery, these women, typically with little to no education, were hardly considered professionals.

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BODY IN BALANCE THERAPEUTIC MASSAGE

- Full body Swedish
 - Deep Tissue
 - Prenatal
- Trigger point therapy
 - Myofacial
- Lymphatic drainage techniques

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Attuning our temple



Hot stones and aromatherapy: All set for a massage to please the senses and the spirit.

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This art of “hands-on therapy,” however, proved to become a legitimate medical practice by the late 1800s thanks to the introduction of “Swedish massage.” The terms “masseuse” and “masseur” came to represent a respectable profession by the early 1900s.

Today, massage therapy is an important therapy helping with relieving physical pain, easing mental stress, and realigning one’s spiritual energy. But, as mentioned before, all these facts, all this history fall short in explaining the magic of massage.

From its ancient beginnings, massage has always been more than just a physical exercise, but a ritual, in a way. A ritual of aligning the body—the temple—to attune to the world around us and allow for the free flow of universal energy, that which fills our spirit.

Living in the mountains, we understand perfectly how the environment can fuel us in a way that can only be described as spiritual. Luckily we have so many opportunities, and professional therapists, available to help us align our temples and be one with this beautiful world.

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The many benefits of fitness: finding joy in movement

MINDY LEARY

Exercise isn't just about losing weight or building muscles – it's a gateway to a healthier, more vibrant life. Incorporating different forms of physical activity into your workout routine keeps you motivated, engaged, and well-rounded in fitness.

Swimming, for example, is a full-body workout that's gentle on the joints yet highly effective in building cardiovascular endurance and toning muscles. Whether slicing through the water freestyle or enjoying a leisurely backstroke, swimming is a low-impact way to elevate your heart rate and strengthen your core.

Aerobics and fitness classes bring energy and community bonding to your workouts. These group sessions range from dance-inspired routines to senior aerobics, offering something for everyone. Beyond the physical benefits, the social aspect of working out with others can boost your mental health and keep you coming back for more.



PHOTOS BY MINDY LEARY

Above, left; The mechanics of fitness: A versatile fitness station featuring resistance bands, stability balls, medicine balls, yoga blocks, and rings. It supports functional training, balance exercises, and strength-building routines for all fitness levels. **Above, right;** This machine is specifically designed for strengthening core muscles. Users adjust the weights and sit securely to perform controlled crunch motions, targeting abdominal strength and endurance.

Weightlifting is another pillar of fitness that often gets overlooked. Strength training builds muscle, improves bone density, and boosts metabolism, making it a powerful tool for long-term health. Starting with light weights and proper form can help you ease into this discipline, and soon, you'll notice the benefits in both appearance and strength.

Gaining strength and watching your results as you lift heavier weights is fun. Endurance can be achieved through lengthening your workout each time. Of course, know your limits. Always pushing to the next goal makes exercise exciting!

For those craving variety, gyms provide a mix of options, from climbing walls to specialized equipment. Tackling a climbing wall, for instance, is as much a mental challenge as a physical one, engaging problem-solving skills while improving grip strength and flexibility.

Mixing these activities into your routine ensures you target different muscle groups, improve overall fitness, and stay mentally engaged. With such a rich array of exercises to choose from, there's no reason your fitness journey can't be as enjoyable as it is beneficial. Remember, the best workout is one you love – and the rewards are yours to reap.



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Master of Science,
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Athletic Trainer, Certified

**-sports massage-
38 years experience
including many
world champion
and Olympic athletes**

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Nutrition: reducing the risk of health problems



PHOTO BY Omayra Acevedo

Fresh fruit and edible flowers: For most people, a handful of grapes can be a great addition to any diet.

OMAYRA ACEVEDO

The hardest thing about eating a “balanced” diet is figuring out what works best. People tend either to eat the wrong things or not eat enough. Fad diets don’t always provide the best results; if they do, it’s usually temporary.

Listen to your body. If you’re hungry, eat. If you feel unwell after eating a specific meal, it may not be as good for you as you thought.

Keeping a food journal is a great first step to figuring out what works. Track the time of day you enjoy food and what you eat, followed by grams of protein, carbohydrates, fiber, and fats, plus the number of calories per day.

It sounds much harder than it actually is. Once you get into the habit of tracking what you eat, it becomes second nature.

When you eat the right foods, you never overdo your calorie intake. It’s about ingredients more than calories: as long as you eat the right foods, calories are never an issue.

The stage in life you’re in will also affect what and how much you eat. For example, menopausal women should eat differently than they did in their 20s or 30s, and anyone trying to build muscle will also need to change their diet, increasing their average calorie intake.

We can drastically improve our health through nutrition. According to a study conducted through the National

Library of Medicine, improved diet quality accumulates over time, improving health.

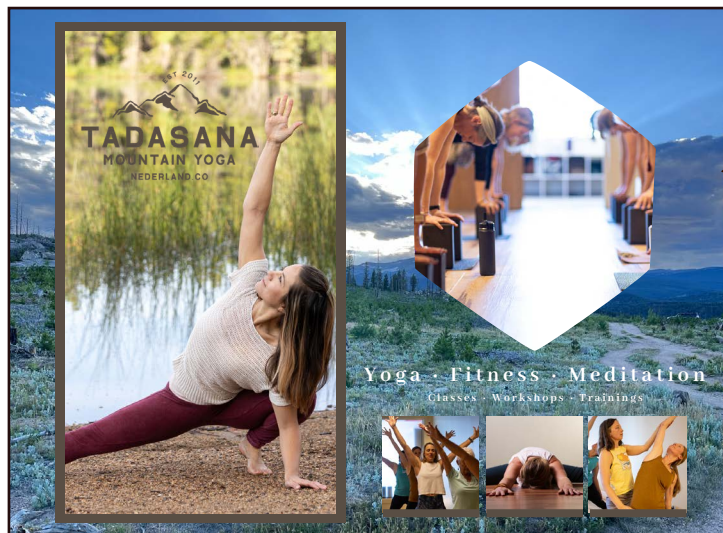
The diet quality improvement study indicated that with improved diets, diabetes could be reduced by over 11%. Heart disease would improve by 7%, and strokes by 10 %.

The study also compared the cost of money spent trying to heal an illness through medication to the cost of buying better ingredients, showing a savings of roughly \$144 billion per year, which would also mean a total of 88,000 fewer deaths in the same period. The numbers don’t lie.

Sometimes, all you need is to tweak the diet you’re already on. By adding one or a few simple ingredients, you’ll be surprised how quickly you gain energy and control of your health. Your body handles stress better and heals more quickly by eating your ideal balanced diet.

With nearly endless sources of nutrition available, there isn’t always a need to hire a nutritionist. However, your insurance policy may help cover the cost of one. Many nutritionists offer telehealth options, making it that much more affordable.

The best thing about speaking with a certified nutritionist is that they will help you figure out a good meal plan that works specifically for you. A nutritionist is like a personal trainer for your organs.





BODY • MIND • SPIRIT SOUND HEALING

The transformative power of Sound Healing

MINDY LEARY

Sound healing, often referred to as a “sound bath” or “sound journey,” is a meditative experience where participants relax and receive sound vibrations from instruments like singing bowls, gongs, and drums. This practice has ancient roots, with cultures worldwide using sound as a tool for healing, relaxation, and spiritual connection.



During a session, sound waves resonate through the body, encouraging a state of deep relaxation. Many find relief from stress, anxiety, and mental fatigue, while others experience profound emotional or spiritual insights. Some may have vivid sensory journeys, while others simply drift

into restful peace. Whatever the experience, sound healing provides a safe and supportive space for personal transformation.

Music can be considered spiritual because it has the ability to evoke deep emotions, connect people to a sense of something larger than themselves, transcend the physical realm, and serve as a powerful tool for expressing and experiencing spiritual concepts, often acting as a key component of religious practices across many cultures; essentially, music can facilitate a profound connection to the divine or inner self through its ability to move and inspire listeners on a profound level.

- Doug Armitage
Brightwood Music



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PHOTOS BY MINDY LEARY

Sound for healing: These gongs contribute to healing sound baths.

For those interested in exploring sound healing, Cody Wales and Reesa Harris offer guided sound bath experiences.

To learn more or book a session, contact them at reesaharris333@gmail.com or visit [@reesaharris333](https://www.instagram.com/reesaharris333) on Instagram.

For additional sound healing experiences in Boulder, Longmont, and beyond, Sound Rise Alchemy offers transformative journeys guided by Prasad Katz and Alyssa. Their sessions integrate a variety of sacred instruments, energetic healing, and shamanic elements to create a deeply immersive experience. Each participant may receive individualized attention with instruments, song, plant brushings, or hands-on healing.

To join a session and learn more, visit Sound Rise Alchemy on Facebook.

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Yoga and meditation

MINDY LEARY

Meditation and yoga are practices with long histories. They aim to help people achieve peace of mind and improve physical health. Both originated in ancient India and share the goal of creating balance. They may overlap in certain cases, though each has its own approach.

Meditation is about quieting the mind, often by focusing on one thing, like breathing or repeating a calming phrase. It's been part of different spiritual paths over the centuries, from Hinduism and Buddhism to, later on, practices in Christian mysticism.

Meditation goes beyond relaxation; it's about becoming more aware of one's thoughts and feelings. This awareness can help people feel less overwhelmed by stress and daily challenges. In today's busy world, many find meditation useful for managing anxiety and staying grounded.

Yoga is known for combining physical postures, breathing exercises, and sometimes meditation. In Sanskrit, the word "yoga" means "union," hinting at its purpose of connecting mind and body.

Historically, yoga included physical movements, ethical practices, and meditation. What most people see as yoga today focuses on postures introduced to the West in the early 1900s. Since then, styles like Hatha, Yin, and Vinyasa have developed, emphasizing different approaches, from gentle stretches to energetic movements.

Both practices have their roots in ancient traditions, which are often seen as paths of self-discovery. About 2,000 years ago, a sage named Patanjali put yoga into a written form called the "Yoga Sutras," explaining it as a way to calm the constant activity of the mind, a concept central to both yoga and meditation.

Research today states that meditation and yoga can positively impact health. Studies show meditation can help reduce stress, sharpen focus, and support mental well-being, even benefiting physical health by lowering blood pressure. Yoga's stretching and breathing exercises improve strength, flexibility, and lung health.

Together, meditation and yoga offer ways to feel centered, both physically and mentally. Their ancient wisdom fits well into modern life, helping people manage stress and find calmness, whether practiced on their own or as a pair. These practices are easy to adapt, making them suitable for a range of lifestyles, and they continue to be powerful tools for health and personal growth.

Yoga and meditation are excellent vehicles for treating and connecting the body, mind, and spirit. The Peak to Peak region has several opportunities to experience these modalities.



PHOTO BY MINDY LEARY

A home altar: The serene Buddha statue sits gracefully amidst candles, incense, and natural elements, encouraging a mindful sanctuary. This sacred space serves as a gentle reminder of balance, calm, and spiritual awakening for body, mind, and spirit.



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BODY • MIND • SPIRIT WORSHIP

Places of worship

MINDY LEARY

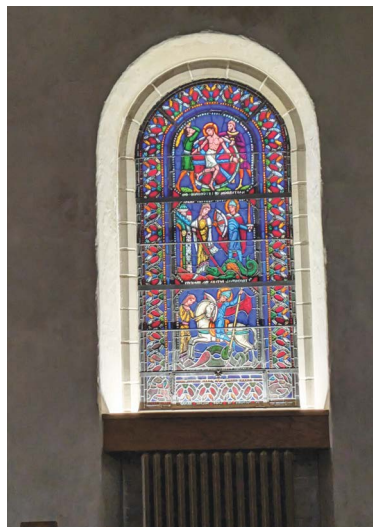
In the quiet embrace of the mountains, the Peak to Peak is home to a variety of places where people gather to connect – with their faith and with each other. These spaces, historic churches or rustic mountain chapels, offer more than a setting for worship: they are havens for reflection, connection, and renewal.

For many in the region, attending a place of worship provides a chance to pause and focus on what matters

most. It's a time for family and friends. It's about grounding oneself and each other, finding meaning, and building relationships within a supportive community.

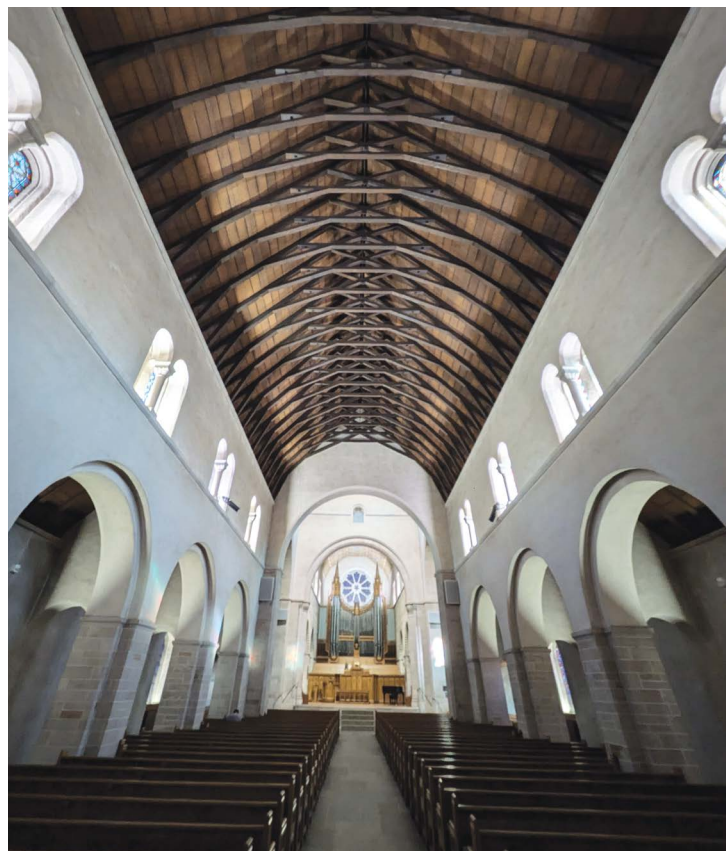
There's nothing like the harmonies of a Sunday choir, the meditative stillness of a prayer circle, or the warmth of sharing coffee and conversation after a service to nurture the spirit.

Faith communities here often extend their mission beyond worship, organizing food drives, supporting neighbors in need, and fostering a culture of compassion and service. Service and helping others are key elements traditionally associated with places of worship.



Stained glass is often used in places of worship:

The vibrant stained glass captures a timeless story, illuminating the wall with colors of devotion and light. A reminder that art and faith are intertwined, this piece serves as a meditative focal point, allowing body, mind, and spirit to align.



PHOTOS BY MINDY LEARY

Sacred architecture and stillness: The soaring wooden ceiling and elegant stone arches of this sacred space invite reflection and tranquility. Rows of empty pews lead the eye toward the altar, offering a pathway for connection to spirit and silence.

Whether you've grown up attending services or are exploring faith for the first time, visiting a place of worship can bring unexpected rewards. It's not just about practicing a belief system; it's about finding a sense of belonging, sharing life's joys and challenges, and connecting to something greater than yourself.

Many believe attending a place of worship also helps their mental health, as it gives them guidance and space to seek answers to life's most difficult questions.

As you move through 2025, consider stepping into one of these sacred spaces. In seeking solace, inspiration, and connection, these places offer a chance to renew your spirit and strengthen your bonds with others.



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MOUNTAIN MESSAGES

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The mountains foster our holistic nature

CHRISTOPHER KELLEY

Those who are born with a true “mountain spirit” are adept at being self-reliant. Being isolated, often purposefully, from the trappings of modern society takes a certain resolve, an uncanny ability not only to endure extreme conditions, but also to be able to truly fend for oneself.

One big part of surviving in this fashion is carrying and using the knowledge passed down by generation after generation of traditional, sustainable living.

This includes ancient techniques for hunting and gathering, for nesting and proper preparation for the seasons, as well as techniques for preventing and treating illnesses with what we can find in nature.

Mountain folk, more than most, understand the benefits of holistic medicine.

Once, holistic medicine, or natural practices of any kind, were classified as quackery. The idea of a natural approach to medicine with a focus on the whole person and on preventive care was seen as outmoded.

Compared to the Western ideal of reactionary medicine, with a hyper focus on the specific illness or body part, techniques that were centuries-old and developed in the East were considered rudimentary next to good ol’ American “modern medicine.”

Our modern lifestyles have since put the denigration of holistic care to rest as we have witnessed our environment and standard practices grow more toxic, and our society become more fast-paced and complex, to the point where some trust in “modern medicine” has waned.

With the need for inner balance growing in an increasingly imbalanced world, holistic approaches have become more accepted.

Holistic wellness practices encompass multiple techniques and forms, all born from natural resources. They also affect the multiple realms of being: the body, the mind, and the spirit; and how the interconnectedness of those realms can be balanced with the world around us.

Today, holistic care is often sought for everyday physical care, such as dieting and exercise; natural supplements have often become the preferred alternative to weight loss pills, and empowering exercises like Tai Chi and Yoga are being offered at traditional gyms.

There are now aisles in grocery stores and co-ops dedicated to homeopathic remedies to ease physical maladies, presented as better options than over-the-counter chemical offerings.

Aromatherapy, sound therapy, chromotherapy, and even acupuncture are all ancient holistic techniques that have



PHOTO BY BARBARA HARDT

Peaceful mountain scene: Living in the mountains lends itself to inner peace.

become popular again to address mental health, to help us navigate our daily stresses and anxieties, and in some cases, even to treat depression.

These practices, which were once so commonly dismissed, are rooted in the very foundations of traditional and modern medicine, including the 6th century Indian art of Ayurveda, which uses natural techniques, including herbal medicines, aromatherapy, ancient massage, to balance physical, mental, and spiritual energies with one’s environment.

Holistic care is also rooted in traditional Chinese medicine, which has a focus on the balancing and harmonizing of one’s physical and mental being in order to prevent disease; and also stems from the teachings of Hippocrates, who is known as the “father of modern medicine.”

Today, holistic practices that trend “down the hill” make their way up here and combine with the priceless institutional knowledge coveted by dedicated mountain folk. This creates opportunities to become one with the mountains in health, in spirit, and in strength.

Ann Trombley MSPT,
Medical Intuitive/Intuitive coach
**30 years experience as a
Physical Therapist**
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BODY • MIND • SPIRIT RESET

Hot Springs reset

MORIAH DAY

When I get overloaded or feel like my body needs a deep cleanse, I hit the hot springs for a few days. Colorado is full of beautiful ones. I often combine a juice, tea and soup cleanse with the trip and as a result I feel uplifted mentally and emotionally as well as more energetic upon returning.

The minerals in the hot springs are absorbed through the skin and allow for distribution throughout the body. Sweating allows for detox as the body also expels toxins.

Fresh juice has vitamins that the cells receive in concentrated doses, and herbal teas have all kinds of different properties that upgrade health and create positive effects.

Dandelion, rose hip and hibiscus, tulsi basil and Juju B and ginger are my favorites—an herbal combination that detoxifies the liver, supplies antioxidants, decreases inflammation and promotes heart health.

My favorite hot spring is Cottonwood Hot Springs in Buena Vista. The water is lovely and kept very clean. The creek is nearby and has a nice little pool with a walk down to it for cold plunging, and a small dry sauna for sweating. There are beautiful hiking trails nearby and Cottonwood Lake is just up the road for swimming in the summer.



PHOTO BY MINDY LEARY

One example of a hot spring pool: Valley View Hot Springs in the San Luis Valley is a popular destination for nature enthusiasts.

The stargazing is incredible at night and relaxing in the warm water while doing it is pure magic and so restful for the soul. I do long Yin Yoga practices with slow deep breathing to open the meridian lines and rejuvenate chi.

The end result is feeling a total reset and coming back to daily life with renewed purpose and energy.

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An easy equation for self-care and love

OMAYRA ACEVEDO

Some people believe it takes years of practice to achieve self-care and love. On the contrary, it's one of the easiest things you can do to improve your wellness. It begins with simply wanting to care for yourself better.

Below is a list of ways to care for your body, mind, and spirit, with a list of local businesses that can help.

Nature

At the top of the list, and considered by psychologists as the least expensive way to improve mental health and sharpen cognition, is spending time in nature. If you're reading "Body, Mind and Spirit," you're most likely spending time in the mountains or living in them, making it even easier to offer yourself the gift of nature.

There's no need to spend hours traveling to get your dose of Mother Nature's medicine. Sitting on your porch or walking around your property will do the trick. Do it often, even if just for a few minutes at a time.

For more ideas on where to go, check out *The Mountain-Ear's Peak to Peak Visitor's Guide* here: <https://themtnear.com/stories/peak-to-peak-visitors-guide-2025> or pick one up along the Peak to Peak Highway, from Central City to Allenspark.

Books

If you're not a fan of reading, no worries. Any book will do, including puzzle games and coloring books. Some second-hand shops in Central City and Black Hawk sell used books at a bargain price. These places are always a good place to look for your next page-turner.



PHOTO BY Omayra Acevedo

From darkness to beauty: Through metamorphosis, the Tiger Swallowtail reminds us that we can experience a great deal of darkness and still turn out something beautiful.

Check out Blue Owl Books & Boutique in Nederland

From journals to books, you're sure to find something to enjoy. They are located at 176 Highway 119 or call them at 303-258-3695. You can find them on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/BlueOwlBooks/>.

Boosting confidence

It's no secret that the more highly motivated and energized you are, the more likely you are to take immediate action to boost your health. No, we're not talking about a complete makeover – simply a treat for your hard work. You can improve your confidence without the gym or yoga class.

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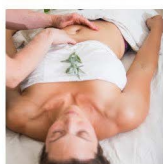
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Hit the local salon, or get a haircut or manicure, or pick up a new soap – you'd be surprised how doing something nice for yourself will change your mood.

Here are a few places across the Peak to Peak region offering indulging experiences.

Habits

Let's face it, we all have habits. Why not pick one up that'll help improve your health?

Did you know laughter enhances your intake of oxygen-rich air, stimulates your heart, lungs, and muscles, and increases the endorphins released by your brain? Why not make laughing your new habit?

It's as simple as reading a funny book or watching funny videos. Go ahead, try it. Find something funny to laugh at for 30 seconds and see how you feel.

Art, whether creating or viewing it, has proven to reduce stress and anxiety. But you don't have to be a professional to be artistic. From gluing sticks together to splashing paint on a canvas or a piece of wood, you will find it liberating to enjoy art.

You don't need a writing degree to keep a journal. Among the many benefits of writing is improving memory. Journaling can also help you relax and cope with depression. Writing about stressful experiences can help manage them.

You might think telling someone to "breathe" sounds strange, since it comes naturally to humans. However, you'd be surprised how often we forget to breathe for our health. Stand or sit up straight, and relax your shoulders and stomach. Take a slow four-count inhale, hold for four counts, and release for six. Repeat as you wish.

There you have it – a few ideas for caring for yourself. Now, show yourself some love. You're worth it!



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Green exercise enhances health

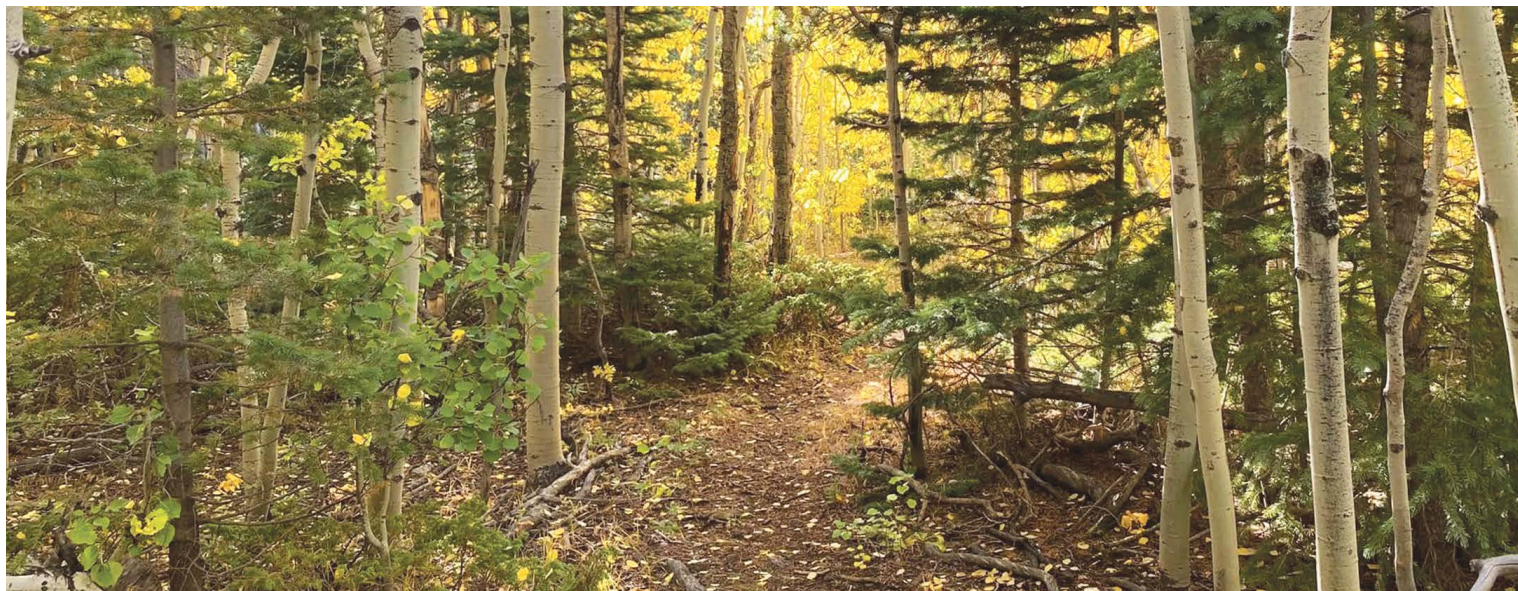


PHOTO BY DAVID SOCKRIDER

A walk in the woods to soothe the soul:

Hiking and being outdoors is a terrific way to reduce stress and anxiety and promote health.

WES ISENHART

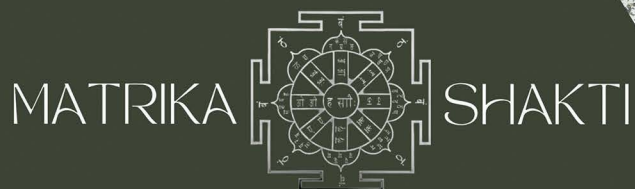
It has been common knowledge since the dawn of the Industrial Revolution that going back to nature and taking a walk in the woods can soothe a troubled soul and make you feel better. Urban life is filled with tensions, stimulation and stress that can wear down the individual. Getting back to nature has been seen as an antidote to the grind and pollution of urban life.

Science is beginning to reveal why “green exercise” is a powerful way to practice preventive health. Studies involving

nature-based prescriptions have shown the physical and mental benefits of being outdoors.

Japanese culture dating back to the 1980s prescribed outdoor walks as a way to deal with anxiety and depression. They coined the term Shinrin-yoku (forest bathing) to describe this method of immersing in nature to achieve a variety of physical and mental benefits that carry over.

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Green exercise

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Forest bathing is different from just hiking around. Forest bathing requires focus on the moment; actually seeing the trees and smelling their fresh scent.

Hiking around and sharing office gossip isn't forest bathing. The goal is to reduce distractions like cellphones and increase awareness of the immediate surroundings, like the shape of the clouds and the color of the lake. Shifting awareness to the outside environment is the key to practicing Shinrin-yoku.

A particular health benefit from being around trees is that the trees give off molecular organic compounds called phytoncides. These organic compounds, emitted by different species of trees including pines, act like an antifungal or antibiotic agent to defend the tree against fungus, diseases, or insects.

Multiple medical studies have shown that when phytoncides are breathed in, they activate a class of white blood cells called Natural Killer (NK) cells that seek out tumor or bacterial cells to eliminate. Consequently, breathing deeply in a forest has been found to be beneficial to health as well as calming the mind.

Green exercise is another term that references outdoor activities that improve cardiovascular fitness, strength, anxiety and depression, cognitive functions of concentration and creativity, and social connections that promote community and a sense of belonging.

A walk in the woods that immerses the individual in the beauty and challenge of the forest is one of the oldest and simplest ways to practice preventive health care.

The Internet search terms to use for more information about the physical and mental benefits of outdoor activities are: green exercise, forest bathing, or phytoncides. Many of the papers in these searches have links to the formal studies.

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To find a training or become a host for a training in the Peak to Peak region, go to:
www.p2phhs.org/mental-health-social-resiliency



If you or someone you know is struggling with mental health, you can call, or text 988 to reach the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. You can also call 911 for emergency services.



Mental health takes exercise

CHRISTOPHER KELLEY

Here in the Peak to Peak region, living in the mountains among trees thick on the ground and clouds thick in the air, our physical bodies are invigorated with every hike we take, and our spirits are rejuvenated with every sunrise. But how do we take care of, arguably, the most important “muscle” of all—our minds?

Measuring physical health is relatively easy; we can feel the results of good physical health in ourselves almost immediately, and can see when someone else is fit and healthy.

It's obviously harder to measure spiritual health, but the term itself is one that is openly accepted in society. It doesn't just allude to an individual's religion, but defines the force within that drives every individual towards a personal goal.

But neither physical health nor spiritual health are as stigmatized as mental health.

Though our state of mind can be considered the most controlling factor in our everyday lives, mental health is viewed by society through a very limited, shortsighted lens. While reaching physical milestones or overcoming spiritual challenges can be shared with others, even celebrated, mental health is a much more private journey.

Mental health is defined by the World Health Organization as “a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community.”

Not only is mental health an important force in driving our internal decision-making engines, but this complex and



PHOTO BY DAVID SOCKRIDER

Stop and Pause: Take time in your day to look at something seemingly simple to just breathe and pause.

intimately personal force is shaped and influenced by so many factors, from biological and genetic factors to environmental and lifestyle factors which include our histories of life experiences, good and bad.

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Mental health takes exercise

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With a seemingly infinite number of variables coming at us every moment, navigating how we mentally react to them becomes yet another challenge for us to master; and, just like with our physical and spiritual fitness, sometimes we need help, especially if there are certain issues holding us back.

The stigma related to the term “mental health” primarily stems from the treatment and management of mental health conditions, also labeled disorders, such as anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress, bipolarism, obsessive-compulsiveness, and schizophrenia.

Caring for one’s mental health takes just as much bravery and dedication as does exercise or diet, if not more. There is no shame in managing one’s own conditions; and mental health has grown over the years to mean so much more than that.

Mental health is a journey towards being the best you that you can be.

And when considering how so many factors in our everyday lives can affect mental health, it makes the possibilities of how to positively impact that health truly

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endless, especially when privileged as we are to be up here in the mountains.

Whether it is seeking out a professional to talk to, or joining a group of likeminded individuals, or indulging in a little retail therapy, or working out physically and spiritually to strengthen your mental health, there are just so many opportunities here to reach peak health.

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Lynn is also trained and certified in Healing Touch, Reiki (Asui Method), Kundalini Yoga (KRI Institute) and has received Doula Training as well.

Lynn is located in Aspen Springs Black Hawk with her personal home studio.

Her training style leans towards rehabilitation, strength and balance. Lynn focuses on core stability as a daily practice. She combines her other teachings to complement the Pilates Fundamentals.

Lynn Rae Gibbs
914-602-4916

lynnraegibbs@gmail.com



Keeping pets safe during extreme weather

OMAYRA ACEVEDO

There are many benefits to having pets, and if you have one or more in your home, you know that nothing compares to the joy they show you when you return home. Their love and loyalty are undeniable.

Having a pet at home decreases stress and improves general health. Interacting with animals has been shown to reduce cortisol levels and lower blood pressure, among many benefits. Essentially, your pet helps keep you safe and healthy. The question is, what are you doing to give your pet the same benefits?

Many people want their pets to experience freedom, so they leave them outside while they are at work, or allow them to come and go as they please.

Pets, much like people, have a limit on their temperature tolerance, which varies and depends on factors such as body fat and activity level. Many pet owners believe that because domestic pets have fur, they'll be spared from the cruel consequences of cold weather. The reality is that many pets suffer greatly during the winter months, some even dying.



PHOTO BY Omayra Acevedo

A cat on the hearth: A perfect way to keep your pet healthy and happy in the cold weather.

Yes, fur can help protect animals from cold weather or sunburn, but did you know that extreme weather can worsen some medical conditions?

If your pet is elderly or has health issues, leaving them outside is unsafe during extreme heat or cold. Pets with diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease, or Cushing's disease (a hormonal imbalance) may struggle to regulate their body temperature, making them more susceptible to problems from temperature extremes.

The American Veterinary Medical Association states, "Long-haired or thick-coated dogs tend to be more cold-tolerant but are still at risk in cold weather. Short-haired pets [including cats] feel the cold faster because they have less protection, and short-legged pets may become cold faster because their bellies and bodies are more likely to come into contact with snow-covered ground."

Checking your pets for signs of cold-weather injuries is a great habit to practice. Cracked or bleeding paws are a sure sign your pet has been affected by cold weather. Wiping their paws after they've been outside or after a

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Keeping pets safe

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walk is also smart. Their paws can pick up chemicals from toxic ice-melting products.

The general rule is to avoid leaving pets outside during below-freezing temperatures or if a big storm is expected. Always provide pets with access to warmth, including insulating pet houses.

Another thing you can do to offer your loving four-legged friend a warm option is to install doggy doors to heated studios or garages. This way they'll have the best of both worlds: the freedom to roam and a safe place to return to without waiting until you get home.

According to People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, 33 dogs have died in the 2024-2025 winter season thus far, and nearly 500 pets have had to be rescued. During the 2024 summer season, 111 pets died from heat exposure.

When pets are left out in very hot temperatures, the risk of suffering from dehydration or heatstroke increases greatly. Many factors, such as being overweight or having breathing problems, can contribute to heat-related suffering.

To keep your pets safe during summer, always leave several bowls filled with fresh cold water in the areas where they

spend the most time. Watch the humidity and limit exercise on extremely humid days. Don't rely on a fan to keep them cool, because fans don't provide relief from heat to animals as they do for people.

Providing ample shade and water to protect your pet from heat and sun can be the difference between a healthy and an unhealthy pet. To keep water cold, add ice to it once or twice a day. Spoiling your pets with cold treats is another effective way to help them regulate their body temperature during heat waves.

Some pet parents suggest leaving your pets indoors in a suitable enclosure. However, if you must leave them outside while you're away, ask a neighbor to check in when they can and report back to you. Watching over each other's pets can be a new neighborhood tradition.

In short, cats and dogs are susceptible to frostbite and hypothermia. Pets can also suffer from stroke due to overexposure to heat, so they should be kept inside during extreme hot or cold temperatures.

To learn more about how to keep your pets and livestock safe from cold weather, visit: <https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/pet-owners/petcare/cold-weather-animal-safety>.

For more information on keeping your pets safe during hot days, visit: <https://www.humanesociety.org/resources/keep-pets-safe-heat>.

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Wilderness hiking with your pet

DEB D'ANDREA

It's a bluebird day, and your bag is packed for an exciting adventure hiking with your beloved pet!

For many, the adventure lies a short drive to tranquil outdoors, an experience several seek throughout the year. You can choose adventures from trails including the Buchanan Pass Trail, Hermit Park, Indian Peaks, Lake Estes, Lily Mountain, Hidden Treasure, Golden Gate, and many more across the area.

All are home to wildlife—the moose, elk, deer, bears, mountain lions, bobcats, ermine, coyote, wolf, squirrels, chipmunks, rattle snakes, eagles, hawks, ticks, butterflies, and many who go unseen. It is fun to sit quietly with your pet, and use all your senses, taking in each moment by their side.

As a traveler, it is good to keep in mind proper pet etiquette, and remembering to leave no trace. In many wilderness areas, pets must be leashed for your safety, your pet's safety, other hikers' safety, and wildlife safety. Yes, safety is a common theme in the wilderness.

A six-foot leash is recommended in several areas to keep your pet close, while other areas offer you "voice control" as long as your pet does not "harass wildlife or hikers."

Personally, having my pets leashed and near me is more relaxing, since then I do not need to worry about them chasing or getting chased by wildlife. Or accidentally following their noses, placing paws down an old mine, or losing their footing cliffside, or getting lost.

There have been several canine rescues where pets have accidentally fallen into precarious situations, and I cannot tally the number of lost pet posters I've seen over the years.



PHOTO BY DAVID SOCKRIDER

Dogs love hikes, too: But make sure to keep them safe on our mountain trails.

I like to avoid those situations altogether, happily leashing my pups.

Included in my backpack (along with my own personal items) are pet snacks, treats, and plenty of water. There's also a first aid kit for myself and my pet. I am always planning for the unexpected, which is key for a successful adventure.

I even include super glue in my first aid kit, a sharp knife, and an air horn to scare off wildlife or in case of an emergency. One year, hiking with my Talisker boy, he stepped into a ball of fishing line that tightened around his leg every time he tried to move, rendering him immobile. I was thankful for my sharp knife, cutting him safely free and removing the fishing line trap from the tree.

I recommend looking into pet-carrying harnesses and slings just in case your pet becomes injured while hiking and needs to be carried out. My pets wear safety harnesses with a handle, so I can easily guide them along the trail or pull them out of a sticky situation. Fortunately, I have not had to!

If cold weather threatens, I bring booties and dog coats in case the temperature drops while we are hiking. If it is hot, I am constantly checking the ground temperature with my hand to ensure they are not burning their paws. I also keep an

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Wilderness hiking

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eye on their tongues, as a purple tongue can be an indicator they are overheated, dehydrated, or have low oxygen levels.

If I have to leave them in the car, I stay aware of how long I am gone. As cold or heat can present critical situations for our pets. I don't leave them in the car for extended periods, and always with a full bowl of water.

When heading out, especially on a solo adventure, always let a friend or relative know where you're going just in case the unexpected happens. Check the weather ahead of time to see if there's a storm brewing, and pack accordingly. Or change your hiking plans if the weather looks questionable. With so many trails to choose from, instead of heading into the mountains, a fun hike can be enjoyed on the plains.

I hope this information is helpful for your upcoming adventures, and that you continue to create memorable moments with your pet in the great outdoors.



PHOTO BY BARBARA HARDT

Where's my human?: Dog and owners take a quick rest during their autumn mountain hike.

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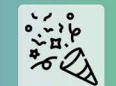
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FRIDAY:	7:30AM - 6PM	7:30AM - 5:30PM
SATURDAY:	9AM - 5PM	9AM - 4:30PM

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 Mon 1/20 - CLOSED Martin Luther King Jr. Day
 Sat 2/8 - Dad & Daughter Dance
 Mon 2/17 - CLOSED Presidents Day
 Sat 3/8 - Mom & Son Nerf War
 Mon 3/17 - Fri 3/21 Spring Break Camp
 Sat 4/12 - Easter Egg Dive & Hunt
 Sat 5/17 - Spring Wined Up 5K
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 Mon 5/26 - CLOSED Memorial Day
 Thurs 6/19 - OPEN Juneteenth
 Sun 6/22 - Family Fun Fishing Clinic @ Central City
 Fri 7/4 - CLOSED Independence Day
 Fri 7/11 - Sun 7/13 Gilpin County Fair
 Register for Youth Soccer, Afterschool Camp, and Adult Volleyball!
 Mon 9/1 - Fri 9/5 - CLOSED Labor Day and Maint. Week
 Sat 9/6 - First Responders Day
 Mon 10/6 - OPEN Frances Xavier Cabrini Day
 Fri 10/24 - Spooky Stroll with Gilpin County School
 Sat 11/8 - Veteran's Lunch with Gilpin Archwood 4-H
 Thurs 11/27 - Fri 11/28 - CLOSED Thanksgiving Holiday
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 Register for Youth Basketball and Winter Break Camp!
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