

The Valley School of Healing Arts

Winter Meditation

Spring is coming, but it's not here yet. There will still be some cold days, and snow, and ice. As we anxiously await warmer days and more sunshine, we often find ourselves wishing winter away. *If the ground weren't frozen, I could dig in my garden. If I could just go for a walk in the sunshine, I'd feel better. Yes, everything will be better when spring arrives.*

We all know that the cold and darkness cannot be wished away. Trying to resist what life brings only makes life more difficult for us. We use so much energy wishing for something different that we miss the beauty of now as well as opportunities for growth.

Winter has much to teach us about the dark and difficult times in our lives. The pain of losing a loved one, dealing with illness or the loss of a job becomes greater when we resist. By accepting our lives as they are and trusting that we will be okay no matter what, we open the door to peace.

Spiritual leaders teach us that peace is not something outside ourselves. Peace is present in each moment in everything we see and do. We only need to recognize it by living mindfully.

Practicing mindfulness is not limited to a meditation cushion. Mindfulness can be practiced anywhere and at any time. The simple practice of shifting awareness to our breathing can slow down our thinking and return us to the present moment. When we aren't caught up in thinking, worrying, regretting, or rehashing, we are available to experience the joy of being.

Instead of resisting the next storm, embrace it. Pay attention with curiosity and gratitude to the message it brings.

Peace is every step. It turns the endless path to joy.
~Thich Nhat Hanh

Dear Readers,

Because winter can be a very difficult time for many, we infused this newsletter with a message of hope along with suggestions for dealing with seasonal depression. All of us at the Valley School send our love and support to you and yours.



Join our digital newsletter mailing list by signing up on our website or by sending an email request to newsTVSC@gmail.com.



"We'll keep the light lit for you at our house."

Bone-Cold and Dog-Tired: SAD from a Chinese Perspective

by Trey Casimir

From a Chinese perspective, Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is about as natural a response to the season as one can expect. Winter is the season of fear, and is associated with the kidneys, which are also associated with the will, including the will to survive. Fearing the cold and wanting to survive are pretty primal parts of the season. Furthermore, during the cold, short days of winter, yang energy is at its lowest ebb. Yang energy is warm, moving, insubstantial and protective, so when it is low, rest is the best treatment. Other animals hibernate, and humans in earlier times were much less active during the winter in order to preserve the dwindling resources of the harvest and hunt.

To some extent, SAD can be said to be a social rather than a psychological disorder. That is, some people, being naturally attuned to the seasons, wish to retreat from life, slow down and conserve energy in the winter. But modern society demands that we GO, GO, GO all the time -- if you don't (or can't) get with the program, you will be labeled by society as "sick." However, for better or worse this is the society we inhabit, and it makes various demands of us that might be labeled, "unnatural."

Acupuncture for SAD is generally very simple -- you use points on the kidney meridian, or which are associated with kidney function, and you heat them up with moxibustion (burning herbs, generally mugwort) or a heat lamp. This is said to kindle the flame of the person's kidney yang energy, and can be very helpful for SAD and other winter-time kidney ailments, including low back pain, low sex drive and lack of motivation. However, kidney qi is more or less finite, and one must be cautious about burning through it casually or prematurely. Generally the best approach, if one is prone to the winter-time blues, is to do a prophylactic treatment before the worst of winter arrives, usually around Thanksgiving. This way, a single treatment can be used to fortify before the cold and dark arrive, and you are less likely to over-tax kidney qi with repeated kindling. Although we are talking about kidney yang energy in the case of SAD, kidney yang always interacts with kidney yin, like a flame and its candle. Better to light the candle early and let it flicker through the cold and dark than to repeatedly blast it with a blowtorch in an attempt to drive the cold and dark away. It won't work, and it will leave you with just a puddle of wax.

Too, try to accept the pull of nature to sleep more, retreat from the world and conserve your deepest energy. Spring will be here soon, and since the Chinese say the spring arrives in early February, it will be here sooner than we in the West think! When the birds and animals start to move, the sap flows and people start to get cabin fever, it is a sure sign that Spring has arrived, even if there is still snow on the ground and sub-freezing temperatures. The days are longer, and things are starting to move again. Get up! Go out! Find something fresh to eat and be grimly satisfied you made it through another winter. Springtime is the season of anger, and the best thing to do with anger is to give it a job.

Now get back to work!

Trey Casimir, a licensed acupuncturist with an established practice in Lewisburg, PA, teaches Acupuncture Meridians and Introduction to Oriental Medicine at the Valley School.



The Teachers Speak—Introducing Karen Stoner, LMT

Karen teaches Pregnancy and Infant Massage at the Valley School



I decided to specialize in Prenatal Massage shortly after my oldest daughter was born in 2008. I had been working in the massage therapy field for several years at that point, and I had received training in several different modalities including Prenatal Massage, but I had no idea how basic and simplistically flawed that training actually was. While I was pregnant I had received a prenatal massage from another therapist who had the exact same training as I did, and I was incredibly disappointed - not in the therapist, but in the technique of the actual massage. I didn't get anything close to the relief I was looking for in the areas that needed it. So after an initial shock of "Is this what I'm doing to women who come to me for prenatal massage?" I realized I needed to provide better, so I got more advanced and specialized training in as many different aspects of prenatal massage as I could find. The infant massage also came out of this extensive learning because I realized that despite once again receiving a very basic education in infant massage during my training, there was way more to learn and how truly the best people to actually perform infant massage was a child's own parents, so teaching infant massage to parents also joined my practice.

Massage Therapy wasn't my first career. I was a professionally trained ballerina and had studied with companies such as the Pennsylvania Ballet and The Hartford Ballet, as well as opportunities with companies including The Martha Graham Company and Pilobolus. I attended the Hartt School at the University of Hartford, aspiring to get my degree in dance performance, but through a series of events, I ended up in the Children's Dance Pedagogy program. That was my first taste of teaching, and being completely truthful, I hated it. Pedagogy knocked me on my rear and more than once I wanted to quit and swore I'd never be a teacher. However, I worked with young children, and I had one particular child who was struggling and something drove me to try and find a way to help her. When I watched her finally succeed, I realized the power that a teacher had. Now I can't imagine not sharing my knowledge to help others. Teaching carried over into my professional dance career, which lasted all of 3 years before I was injured in a car accident. The teaching sustained me during my rehabilitation, and although I had to abandon the professional career, it was during that rehabilitation that I discovered massage therapy and figured "If it can fix me, there must be something to this" and as it so happened, there was a massage school just up the street from the dance studio where I was teaching, so things all seemed to fall into place.

I just recently started teaching at the Valley School of Healing Arts in 2018. I had been teaching infant massage to parents, teachers, and caretakers for several years, as well as continuing to teach dance, but this is my first opportunity to teach other massage therapists. My hope is that I can help educate new massage therapists with more than just basic information and avoid some of the misinformation that I received in my own training, so they can start right away with a more complete and confident knowledge in the prenatal and infant massage modalities. I have truly enjoyed the atmosphere at the Valley School of Healing Arts because the emphasis is making the students the best and most complete therapists they can be in order to truly help others.

Since my training in teaching was originally in dance, I am very hands-on in teaching. I use a combination of lecture and demonstration to deliver as much information as I can. Massage therapists need to be hands on, so they need to learn hands on. Book knowledge is important so therapists can in turn educate their clients, but it only takes you so far if you don't have the physical muscle memory to both experience the results of the modality as well as how to execute the massage techniques. What I hope to deliver in my classes is a complete education both physically and mentally to prepare massage therapists to perform massage safely, confidently, and to help their clients in the ways they need to be helped. In my prenatal massage class, I not only cover what a therapist needs to know in order to execute a massage safely on a pregnant woman, but also how to help and support her throughout the pregnancy by being able to provide her information to help her mental state as well as her physical well being.



I am very excited to be joining the staff at the Valley School of the Healing Arts and looking forward to sharing my knowledge with up and coming massage therapists, as well as working with a staff that truly values healing and helping others. I have always been involved in careers that are very competitive, and it is refreshing to be involved with a group that strives to support and build up others for the greater good.

The Healing Power of Horses

by Gwynne Lebo

The Daily Item ran an article in the “Parade” section of the Sunday paper on February 17, 2019, that dealt with Veterans, victims of abuse, people with special needs, eating disorders, or PTSD and how all of these individuals were helped by being around horses. All of us who volunteer at Far Point Equine Rescue and anyone who works with horses could not agree more wholeheartedly with these stories.

As board member and riding instructor with Random Canyon Riding Program for 15 years, I experienced firsthand how horses help mentally and physically challenged individuals. All who worked or volunteered as lead liners or side walkers could feel the connection these special individuals had with their horses. On the horses they were free from legs that did not work, from wheelchairs or crutches, or from compromised balance. Being with the horses also gave the riders a feeling of accomplishment and pride. As the horses walked with these students on their backs, the natural movement of the horse simulated a human’s walking. Very young children, who were not able to sit, lay prone on the horse’s back while the movement of the horse’s hips stimulated their bodies. Individuals with tight muscles experienced their muscles relaxing, and people who were anxious and nervous learned to trust the horse and relax and enjoy the supervised ride. One individual who had been hit by lightning and was paralyzed was able to feel his hips moving again. The joy on his face as he sat tall on the horse brought tears to our eyes. Another day we found a young, non-verbal girl leaning forward and whispering to her horse. We all cried that day!

Riding isn’t the only way to experience a bond with horses. Simply looking into a horse’s eyes, feeling its breath, or hearing it nicker builds a powerful connection. The exercise of grooming a horse creates a feeling of closeness and mutual trust between the groomer and horse. Being rubbed under the chin or on the chest makes many horses as docile as puppies. When individuals who have never been around horses come to Far Point, the first thing we do is put them with Cody or Dream Walker, so they can experience the gentleness of these large animals. Our guests soon learn that they are safe touching and being in the same space.

People going through drug and alcohol rehab programs come to the farm once a week to groom the horses, give them treats, and muck the stalls. We have been connected with this program for many years, and each time they come at least one of these individuals says how much he/she enjoys coming to the farm. Someone recently told Cricket that with all his rehab and therapy at the center, coming to Far Point has helped him more than anything else he has done. The good feeling of being there comes from knowing that the horses need our help and the desire to help them. The serenity of the farm on the hill, the calming non-judgmental nature of the horses, the positive interaction with the volunteers, and the feeling of being valued and appreciated work together as the healing power of Far Point.

If you are feeling depressed, feeling like you need some exercise, or feeling like you need someone or something to talk to, please come on out to Far Point Equine Rescue. You can volunteer or just come and be around the horses any morning from 9:30 a.m to noon. I am one hundred percent sure that you will leave with a smile on your face and a feeling of contentment. You may have mud on your shoes, horsehair on your clothes, and dirt on your hands, but the healing power of the horses will stay with you long after you clean up.

Is Winter a Disease?

by Cynthia Koons

While there are plenty of folks who actually enjoy winters in Pennsylvania and other points in the Northern Hemisphere, anyone who suffers with Seasonal Affective Disorder probably would agree that winter in the Northern Latitudes is something of a disease!

Seasonal Affective Disorder, generally understood to be a direct result of diminished sunlight due to cloudy and shorter days, is a collection of symptoms experienced by some people when the days grow significantly shorter, around the end of October. Symptoms range from mild to severe and may include diminished appetite, inability to find pleasure in daily activities, sleep disorders, aggravation of skin disorders. SAD can actually deteriorate into significant depression and the inability to function normally in life.

The typical allopathic response to SAD is to prescribe SSRIs (serum serotonin reuptake inhibitors) with frequently limited improvement. Fortunately, there are a variety of other options for SAD sufferers.

Light Therapy

- Sun exposure on untreated skin is the best way for the body to produce Vitamin D. Just 10 minutes a day of direct sun on exposed skin will significantly increase blood levels of Vitamin D, which is critical to basic health as well as bone strength and absorption of calcium.
- When sun exposure is not possible, installing full spectrum light bulbs into all of one's light fixtures may help. Light therapy lamps can also help to relieve both the emotional aspects of SAD as well as various skin issues that may accompany the disorder.

Herbal Assistance

- Teas: lemon balm, stinging nettles, dried St. John's Wort
- Fire cider, a vinegar tincture of a variety of aromatic foods including, onion, garlic, horseradish root, ginger root, lemons and orange. It may also include peppers and/or greens such as parsley, rosemary or basil. There are as many recipes as there are makers!!
- Tinctures: St. John's Wort tincture can be helpful for generalized support of emotional health, given in dropwise doses on a daily basis until the desired result is achieved. Motherwort tinctures for women can be helpful for overcoming emotional imbalance at any time of the year, but also during the cold, dark winter months. Motherwort is harvested at its various stages, maiden, matron and crone stages to be most helpful to a given woman depending on what stage in life she finds herself. Given in dropwise doses on a daily basis
- Oils & balms: St. John's Wort infused into food grade oil as a topical agent will relieve restless legs and sleeplessness.

Take a bath. A warm footbath of Epsom salts is the quickest way to elevate blood levels of magnesium, a critical electrolyte that is difficult to obtain in large enough quantity from diet alone. Magnesium is a critical component in the body's function, promoting pain relief and stabilization of calcium uptake and metabolism.

Other complimentary adjuncts for treating SAD include acupuncture therapy, massage therapy, reflexology and chiropractic adjustment all designed to promote basic, fundamental health and well being in order to overcome and survive yet another cold, dark winter.

Cynthia Koons, RN, BSN, teaches Pathology, HIV and the Workplace, and Herbal Simpling I & II at the Valley School.

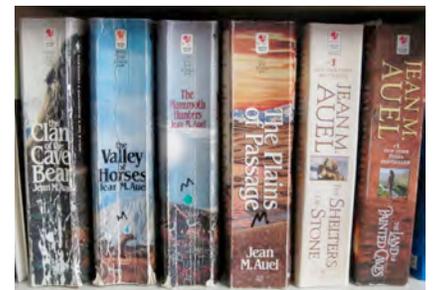
On the Growing of the Light

by Ruth Steck

Does winter give you the grims? Do you suffer from seasonal funk? So common a phenomenon is this that it's earned an acronym: SAD.

We like acronyms—it's one of the funny little ways our culture tries to jam sprawling complexities into little boxes, all nice and tidy. Little tiny boxes, like rings come in, maybe—just big enough to cram three or four letters into. Boxed and labeled, winter woe is now a treatable condition, listed in the 4th Edition of *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, which lays out the more than two thousand ways we've found so far that human beings can be recognizably 'disordered', from faintly anxious in company to flagrantly psychotic in full public view. If you're not in the mood for a pharmaceutical reply to your winter blues, here are some other suggestions:

- ❖ Don't be a weenie: go outside now and again. Dress like you know the temperature—many a case of winter misery derives from going hat-less through fear of hair disorder. Winter light is one of the season's great compensations: how the stars blaze on a clear night, how the white bodies of sycamores etch a blue January sky. Keep watch on how the angle of the sun's rays heightens by the day. If you like, construct a small Stonehenge on your patio, or in a sunny window. Don't fret on cloudy days—they just make the observable change more evident when the sun finally does come out. That changing of the sun's angle (which of course is really *our* change as we go around) is called the solar azimuth. Just saying the words 'solar azimuth' you may find oddly restorative. It sounds like a punk band, or a character in a Robert Heinlein story.
- ❖ Remind yourself that you know, as a thousand generations before you have known, that winter is followed by spring. Just because the moon goes dark three nights a month doesn't mean it's gone.
- ❖ Read Jean M. Auel's entire *Clan of the Cave Bear* series. Not only will the consumption of six fat tomes get you pretty far along the arc of winter, the books themselves are full of depictions of how we lived through winter at the dawn of human history. Mending lines, and sharpening blades, and stitching pretty beads on soft hides. And lots of bundling beneath blankets.



"Live each season as it passes; breathe the air, drink the drink, taste the fruit, and resign yourself to the influence of the earth." -Henry David Thoreau



Ruth Steck teaches Therapy for Cancer and Anatomy and Physiology at the Valley School.

Upcoming Classes & Events

Reiki II (14 hrs) Saturday & Sunday, March 23 & 24, 2019 from 10-5:30. Prerequisite Reiki I. Instructor: Karin Phillips. Tuition: \$240.

Tai Chi Beginnings (8 hrs.) Thursdays, March 7, 14, 21, 28, 6-8pm. Required for massage program. Tuition: \$125. Instructor: Bonnie Luther.

Intro to CranioSacral Therapy (12 hrs) March 16 from 9-5:30 & March 17 from 8-3. Instructor: Norma Hayhurst. Tuition: \$325.

Aromatherapy II (6 hrs) Saturday, April 27, from 10-4:30. Prerequisite: Aromatherapy I. This class is required for diplomas in therapeutic massage and alternative healing. Instructor: Linda Weihbrecht. Tuition: \$142.

Healing Touch I (20 hrs) Friday, May 17 from 6-8pm, Saturday, May 18 from 9-6 & Sunday, May 19 from 9-6. Instructor: Tammy Nickel. Tuition: \$380.

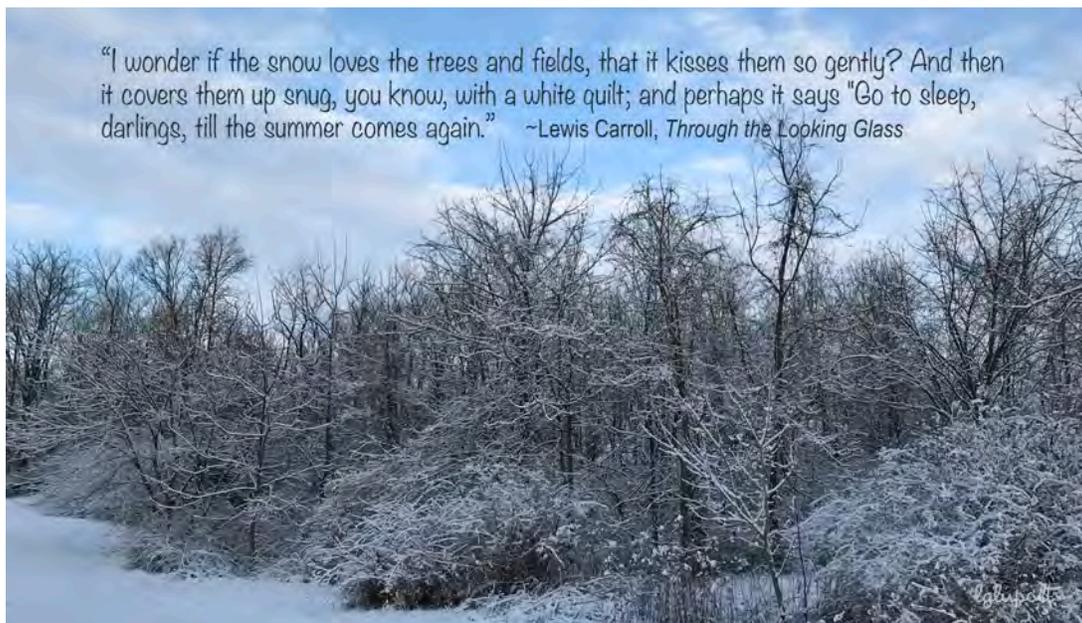
Healing Touch II (20 hrs) Friday, June 21 from 6-8, Saturday, June 22 from 9-6 & Sunday, June 23 from 9-6. Prerequisite: Healing Touch I. Instructor: Tammy Nickel. Tuition: \$380.

Flower Essences (4 hrs) Saturday, July 13 from 9-1. Required for therapeutic massage and alternative healing diplomas. Instructor: Jack Braunstein. Tuition: \$85. Bring a glass bowl, cuticle scissors & tongs.

Flower Essence Therapy (4 hrs) Saturday, July 13 from 1:30-5:30pm. Prerequisite: Flower Essences. Instructor: Jack Braunstein. Tuition: \$90. Bring a glass bowl, cuticle scissors & tongs

Ortho-Bionomy (16 hrs) October 19 & 20 from 9-5 each day. Instructor: Cynthia Wood. Tuition: \$325.

Please call 570-374-2222 to register. We would love to hear from you! A deposit is required to hold a place in class.



The Valley School of Healing Arts

1752 S. Susquehanna Trail
Port Trevorton, PA 17864

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The Valley School of Healing Arts

A Pennsylvania Private Licensed School

Diploma Programs:

Therapeutic Massage (700 hours)

Reflexology (400 hours)

Alternative Healing (500 hours)

Classes may be taken individually as well.

Private healing appointments are also available.

1752 S. Susquehanna Trail, Port Trevorton, PA 17864

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