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Durham Region Community Publication

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Winter 2016

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From the Publisher

There are some folks I know who love winter. They love the cold, crisp feeling in the air, the soft blanket of snow covering the ground, and cozying up under a blanket in front of the fireplace. ...And then there are those who dislike winter, who start counting down the days until next summer rolls around. If you fall into this latter category, we realize we may never be able to make you a winter person, but we're hoping our feature article may open up your mind and offer you a different perspective on how reflexology can help ward off common winter ailments and more. Certified reflexologist Linda Googh introduces us to this simple, yet very effective non-invasive treatment in her article, *Winter Wellness – An Introduction to Reflexology* and explains how it has helped her in her life and how it can help you too.

If you tend to hibernate during the winter time, only leaving the house to go to work or grocery shop, then tech blogger Jennifer Liwanag's article on online shopping is a must-read. In *How Technology Can Make Christmas Shopping Stress Free*, Jennifer offers up tips on how you can get all your Christmas shopping done without ever having to leave the house. That's right, not only do you not have to leave your house (or your couch or bed), but you also don't have to deal with the craziness of holiday shopping at the malls. Sounds appealing, doesn't it? Make sure to check out her article and share it with others who also love to shop online.

Finally as you know, we love to promote Durham Region. There are lots of great things to do in this area, and this winter, why not consider visiting one of our region's local museums. In her article, *Step Back in Time – Museums of Durham Region*, Linda Calder visits six local museums and tells us the history of the area and its first inhabitants. She provides quite a bit of information to peak your curiosity and make you want to visit these museums. Of course, due to space, she was only able to describe six, but there are lots more museums in the Durham Region and I encourage you to pay them all a visit when you can. It would be a fun, educational outing you can do with your family and friends.

Have a lovely holiday season and stay warm this winter.

Antoine Elhashem
Publisher



From the Editor

Sometimes life throws you a curveball and you're completely caught off guard. You wonder, is this really happening? Perhaps disbelief and denial are your initial feelings. This can't be happening to me. At some point, reality sets in and you accept what is. Depending on the particular set of circumstances, feelings of confusion, anger, emptiness, loneliness and sadness may set in...

In this issue, I decided to share with you all something very personal and unfortunate that happened to me earlier this year. I experienced a stillbirth. In going through this ordeal, I discovered that there isn't as much dialogue on stillbirth as there is on miscarriage. Or perhaps, the latter happens more frequently than the former so people tend to talk about it more. I had no idea what a stillbirth was until I was in the situation. (A stillbirth is when a baby of 20 weeks+ gestation passes. A miscarriage is when a baby is less than 20 weeks gestation.)

There are some things in life, such as a death or an illness, which we tend not to concern ourselves with and remain oblivious to unless it personally affects us or someone we know. Then when it hits us, some of us feel the urge to do something about it.

Sharing my story is cathartic for me, and I hope it will resonate with other parents who have gone through, or are going through the same thing. For those of you who are fortunate enough to never have to experience the loss of a baby, I hope you can empathize. The article is raw; I want you to put yourself in my shoes, to see the situation through my eyes, to know my thoughts and feelings.

I know it's uncomfortable to talk about the death of a baby because it defies the natural cycle of life as we know it. But as a media outlet, it's our duty to talk about the hard issues no one wants to talk about. So let's get the conversation started. If you have experienced the loss of a baby, I encourage you to share your story with others. If you wish to share it with me, I would be honoured to read it. You can email me personally, editor@thelocalbizmagazine.ca

Until next year, have a safe and happy holiday season.

Wendy Chiavalon
Editor-in-Chief

Have Your Say

After reading the Winter 2016 issue of The Local Biz Magazine, are you more likely to visit a museum in Durham region?

• Yes • No • Maybe

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Losing Your Baby

by Wendy Chiavalon

I was sitting in the waiting room of the ultrasound clinic with my husband. The ultrasound staff were staring at us from behind their desk nervously. My phone rang. All eyes turned toward me. It was my midwife. She said in a quiet voice, “I’m sorry, your baby has passed.” Stunned, I replied, “Okay”, as she insisted it wasn’t okay and that I had every right to be upset. But I didn’t know what else to say.

I hung up the phone and turned to my husband who was watching me intently and said, “The baby passed.” He started crying in the waiting room. The staff at the clinic rushed towards us with tissues, offering words of condolence. The young couple sitting beside me shifted uncomfortably.

I wanted to get out of the ultrasound clinic as fast as I could. The looks of pity on the faces of those around us was too much at the

moment. We left and walked to the parking lot in silence. When we got to the car, my husband broke down in tears hugging me. I hugged him tight and stared out the window. We drove home in silence. I was 6 months (24 weeks) pregnant at the time.

• • •

Not much concerned me on that beautiful, warm, sunny morning of May 10 as I headed off to my midwife appointment. At the end of the appointment as per usual, my midwife asked me to lay on the exam table so she could listen to the baby’s heartbeat. She put the fetal monitor on my stomach. She kept moving it around; she couldn’t find the baby’s heartbeat, only mine. “Maybe the baby’s in an odd position?” I suggested. She left the room to get another monitor. Again she searched. A look of concern came across her face. After 15 minutes of searching for a heartbeat and finding only mine, she said very cautiously, “It usually doesn’t take me this long to find a heartbeat. I’m going to make an appointment for you to get an ultrasound done this afternoon so they can confirm that everything is okay.”

Then the words that signalled to me that something was *not* okay followed. “Where is your husband? You should call him and tell him to come home.”



The enormity of what she was suggesting started to hit me. I fought back tears trying to remain calm. She hugged me before I left; she hoped she was wrong. But as I stepped out of the clinic and headed towards my car, I sensed she was dead right.

At 2:30pm on May 10 in the ultrasound clinic, our baby's death was confirmed.

The hours following were a whirlwind of emotion. For the first few hours after we were told our baby passed, my husband and I didn't quite believe the news. Perhaps everyone was wrong we thought. After all, I hadn't miscarried; my body still thought I was pregnant. Maybe they made a mistake I remember my husband saying. I wanted so badly to believe him, but in the deafening silence within my body in the hours to come, I knew they weren't wrong. I had felt our baby move the night before, but now did not feel anything.

We went home that evening tired and deflated. Our toddler played quietly with his toys; perhaps he sensed something was off with Mommy and Daddy.

I was told I would be induced to deliver at Mount Sinai Hospital. What I thought would be a day or two of waiting ended up being 13 days. I carried our baby within me for 13 days after being told he had passed. I never miscarried (although I was constantly on

edge wondering if I would). In a way, I was happy that I had some more time with our baby, but at other times, I wondered if it was a cruel joke that my body kept on thinking it was pregnant so long after the little heart had stopped beating. Why give me a false sense of hope?

On the morning of May 23, we drove to Mount Sinai for the induction. It was Victoria Day so the DVP was empty. When we reached the labour and delivery floor, the nurses were expecting us. They ushered us to a room at the end of the hall, away from the other mothers delivering babies. They read my chart, they knew why I was there.

I was briefed on what was going to happen. I was told it could take anywhere from 4 to 6 hours after being induced to go into labor. My contractions began within 45 minutes.



At 1:18 pm on May 23, I delivered a beautiful baby boy. He came into this world silent. Instead of the sound of a baby crying, all I heard were the sounds of the hospital machines murmuring and the doctors and nurses shuffling across the floor. The doctor asked if I would like to hold him. I said yes. I didn't know what to expect as they handed him to me; I didn't know what a baby at 24 weeks gestation would look like.

He was small (weighing only 600 grams) and his eyes were closed. As I stared down at him in my arms, I didn't know what to feel. I thought there would be an obvious physical sign, something to indicate why he never made it past 24 weeks, why his heart stopped. But when I looked down at him, all I saw was a perfectly, normal looking baby boy.

We named him Angelo (Italian for Angel). We had him blessed by the chaplain. We took handprints and footprints and were given a beautiful keepsake by the hospital. We chose not to take any pictures.

The three of us spent the night in the antenatal section of the hospital. (Hospital staff were mindful not to put us in the postnatal section of the hospital with other parents and their newborns.) We held Angelo most of the time only putting him down in his bassinet beside us so we could eat and sleep. As the hours passed, he got

more wrinkled and limp; the blanket wrapped around him became heavy as it absorbed his fluids.

The next morning I was discharged. The hospital staff assured us that although we were discharged there was no rush for us to leave. We could spend as much time as we needed with Angelo. We said our goodbyes to Angelo that afternoon. After, we were ushered out via a service elevator in the back (again, so we wouldn't have to bypass other parents celebrating the birth of their babies.) As we waited for the elevator to arrive, we saw the nurse wheel his bassinet away towards the hospital morgue. That was the last time we ever saw Angelo's little face. We buried him a week later in a closed casket ceremony at the cemetery.

Leaving the hospital that afternoon was the bleakest I had ever felt. To the outside world, there were no signs to indicate what had just happened. There was nothing to show for the fact that for 6 months I carried a baby inside me, I delivered him yesterday, and today, I left the hospital without him.

The Aftermath

For the longest time after, I needed people to talk about Angelo, needed them to acknowledge that I had been pregnant, I had a baby, and while he did not live, he did exist. I tried to interject his name into conversations. I wanted to share my story with others. When some people who hadn't seen me since I was pregnant didn't ask or mention what had happened (even though they knew), I would get extremely upset. I wanted to scream, *I was pregnant! I had a baby! His name was Angelo! Did you forget?*

I discovered later that certain people tiptoed around me. They were uncomfortable with what had happened and unsure of where my feelings were at. They were afraid to bring up the subject because they thought it would upset me... pretending it never happened upset me more.

I was able to “function normally” fairly soon after. I took care of the necessary funeral and cemetery arrangements. I responded to work emails even though I was on bereavement leave. I went to playgroups with our toddler. Perhaps it was our toddler that helped us cope. I don’t know what it would have been like if we didn’t have him. Perhaps also, getting back into my normal routine and busying myself prevented me from constantly ruminating on Angelo’s passing.

My feelings of loss were triggered at random times: when a pregnant mother sat beside me at church, when a newborn baby was in the pew in front of me, when a friend posted her ultrasound picture on Facebook, and when I shelved my pregnancy journal because I couldn’t complete it beyond 24 weeks. Of course there were the expected times: when the hearse pulled up with Angelo’s casket to the cemetery, and when we had a picnic at the cemetery on the day he would have been born.

The hardest part was when strangers we met in the weeks and months to come asked me innocently if our toddler was our only child. I would reply, “Yes - he’s our only child”, but as soon as I uttered those words I felt a surge of guilt rise in me. I wanted to say, “I have 2 sons, but my second died.” But I didn’t want to go into any details with people I’d just met; it would be awkward. I still get tongue tied whenever I’m asked this question.

The Grieving Process

Having never experienced the death of a loved one before, the whole notion of grief was foreign to me. To further complicate the matter, grieving the loss of a baby (whether it is through miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, stillbirth or early infant death) is a different experience than grieving other losses in your life. Parents form an attachment with their baby much before it is born. There are hopes and dreams tied to the baby the moment you discover you are pregnant. When you lose your baby, you also lose the future and family you imagined with that baby.

Grief is a normal and healthy response to loss; you need to allow yourself the opportunity to grieve. Some of the feelings experienced when you are grieving (in no particular order) include: numbness, shock, confusion, exhaustion, disbelief, anger, isolation, emptiness, loneliness, guilt, sadness and depression. The intensity at which parents experience these emotions can vary. I realize now that people process grief in different ways; it is a very individual experience. Even my husband and I dealt with grief very differently and it was confusing the times we weren’t on the same page. He cried more in the moment, and I cried days, weeks and even months later when situations triggered me.

There is no right or wrong way to deal with grief. Below are some things that helped me cope:

- Talk openly with your spouse about your feelings.
- Read lots of stories of other parents who have gone through the same thing.
- Read bereavement material / join a bereavement group.
- Honour and remember your baby (attend memorial events, visit the cemetery, write poems, etc.)

- Pamper yourself (have a nice warm tub bath, get a massage, go out for coffee with a friend, etc.)
- Do things and activities you enjoy.
- Exercise and get some fresh air.

Responding to Grief

Those around us also reacted to our grief very differently. Some people were too afraid to say anything to us, while others did their best to console us. I received a lot of well-meaning, but sometimes inappropriate comments which didn’t bring me any comfort:

- You’re young, you will have more children.
- There are parents who go through much worse.
- Maybe it happened for a reason—perhaps the baby would have been born with a defect or disability.
- It’s God’s will.

What did bring me comfort was when people said:

- I’m sorry.
- I know this is a painful, difficult time for you.
- What can I do for you?
- What did you name your baby?
- Your family is in my thoughts and prayers.

And when someone didn’t know what to say or was too scared to say something, a comforting hug, a gentle touch, and just listening helped.

Support for Bereaved Parents

The death of a baby defies the natural cycle of life. It hurts, but there are people who can help. The Pregnancy and Infant Loss Network (www.painnetwork.ca) is a great organization that supports families who have suffered a pregnancy loss or death of a baby. They offer bereavement material, support groups, one-to-one telephone support and commemorative events annually. Check too with your local church, funeral home or cemetery, and hospital where you delivered for reading material, counselling, support groups, memorial events and other services offered for bereaved parents. I discovered that there was no shortage of help available to us and I am grateful for that.

Back to Myself?

I don’t think it is possible to ever return to your “same self” after your baby dies. I have since felt happiness and hopefulness, but it is through a much different lens than before. I’ve realized how fleeting life can be, how unpredictable. How when everything appears to be going according to plan, the rug can be pulled from under your feet and your dreams of the future can be taken away from you in a heartbeat (pun intended). While my husband remains solid in his faith, I struggle with mine. I don’t blame God, but there is always the question of why? *Why us? Why 6 months?* I realize I may never know the answers to my questions in this lifetime, but what brings me peace is that I know Angelo is in a better, happier, place. And what gives me hope, is that someday I will meet him again in heaven.

Wendy Chiavalon is the Editor-in-Chief of The Local Biz Magazine.



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WINTER WELLNESS AN INTRODUCTION TO REFLEXOLOGY

by Linda Googh

What if I told you that there is a very simple and effective way to survive the hustle and bustle of the holiday season? Or, a simple and effective way to improve circulation to your extremities this chilly winter?

What if I also told you that you can take an active part in making these things happen; that you can take an active part in your own wellness? Sure, you know that a healthy diet, plenty of exercise and the right amount of sleep are very important to everyday well-being, but how about a “wellness recipe” to elevate your mood and help balance the stress of holiday shopping? The kind of recipe you can implement for daily balance and harmony to clear your mind and allow the body to recharge and realign itself. ...I’m referring to healing through reflexology!

What is Reflexology?

According to the Reflexology Association of Canada, reflexology is a natural healing art based on the principals that there are zones and reflexes in the feet, hands, ears and face that correspond to every part, gland and organ in the body. By stimulating the nerve endings, we send messages along the nerve pathways to various organs, stimulating and communicating with our body’s nerve network. This helps to balance the energies within the body.

Reflexology is a simple, safe and non-invasive treatment. Your reflexology experience will include a combination of finger, thumb palpitations and other hand moves which target key reflexes. When these moves are combined, they flow like a strategically choreographed dance routine. Some of the benefits experienced during and after a reflexology treatment include:

- The release of good feeling endorphins
- Enhanced vitality and energy
- Improved circulation
- Improved muscle tone
- Boosted immune system
- Restored balance, body, mind, and spirit
- A reduction in inflammation
- Mood elevation
- Pain Reduction
- Less Stress

All ages can benefit from this non-invasive therapy, from babies to seniors, the fittest of fit, and the chronically ill such as cancer patients and those in palliative care. The great part about reflexology is that it works harmoniously with all modalities, including modern medicine. It complements visits to the doctor, chiropractor, massage therapist and even time at the gym!

Mirror, Mirror

Our feet, hands, ears, and face mirror our bodies. They are channels of healing for all the body systems. The foot for instance is a human masterpiece of 26 bones (the same number there are in the vertebrae). When you bring your 2 feet together, a completely mapped outline of the human body appears, with the big toe representing the head, the lateral sides of the feet reflecting the shoulders, knees and hips, down to the heel which mirrors the pelvis. The curves of the feet that follow the arch line from heel to toe look just like the curves of the spine.

The face also mirrors the body. It reflects our emotions, conveys thoughts, and is the first thing people notice about us. The face is composed of muscle, skin, and nerves, just like the rest of the body. Faces are one of the first places to show signs of stress and fatigue. Our skin tone and color reflects how we feel. When we are sick, we look pale; when we are embarrassed we blush.

Hands, also known as our emotional messengers become sweaty when nervous (hence the term sweaty palms). Feet, fire up turning red (hot foot) and sometimes become very swollen (fat foot).

Professionals know how to read the road signs, right down to any changes in your finger and toe nails. A reflexology assessment starts from the minute you walk in the door. Does the client limp? What is their posture like? Rounded shoulders and a head held low may reflect pressure on the thoracic cavity and abdominal organs. These signs will be read by the reflexologist when conducting an initial assessment before the first treatment. All of this is noteworthy, and marked in the clients chart.

Color, tone, texture, and temperature are also very important indicators for various disorders. For example, yellow tones indicate excess toxins – very common in smokers! A professional reflexology therapist will take an accurate health care record. They will also map out areas of concern like calluses, foot structure, joint restrictions, as well as distortions and deformities.

Homeostasis [hoh-mee-uh-STAY-sis]

...is the state created by which the body heals itself.

Have you ever felt like you were floating on air? Or in a dream state where you were semi-asleep? This is the feeling you get during a reflexology treatment, when the body has shifted to a state of homeostasis. It is one of the only modalities that takes you there.

By applying varied amounts of pressure and palpitations to specific key reflexes, one whole being benefits. Circulation improves increasing blood flow, focus is sharpened, and your mood elevates as those good feeling endorphins are released (much like a runners high). Reflexology resets our body to a lower operating tempo, which means less wear and tear on our operating systems.

Water and Reflexology

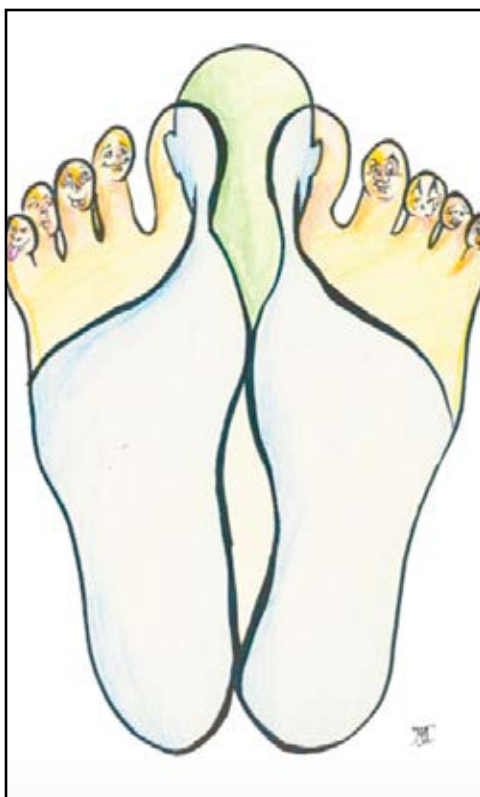
Water plays an important part in reflexology. Hydration is very important before and after reflexology treatments. Here are some important facts to keep in mind:

1/ Water is the fundamental solvent for all the body's biochemical process.

Drinking water kick starts the body's detox system to rid waste from our cells and organs.

2/ Drinking 2 ounces of water every 20 to 30 minutes is as beneficial as your daily intake of 8 glasses of water.

By drinking 2 ounces of water, frequently all day, you are more likely to consume the required amount. The hydration benefits are the same, plus most people find they will urinate more frequently in a balanced daily rhythm. If you are feeling pressured by having to drink large glasses at a time, this is a very good option!



3/ Drink water after a reflexology treatment or after performing self-reflexology.

Water and reflexology are the ideal partnership for eliminating toxins from the body. We know water flushes waste and toxins, but when you add the benefits of reflexology, our detox system multiplies this cleansing action!

4/ Water can be used as therapy.

Water on the outside of the body can be just as beneficial as water we consume. There are various forms of hydrotherapy, such as pool physiotherapy, hot and cold water treatments, and even water sports for some rehabilitation such as swimming.

5/ Water and reflexology both help to balance energies within the body.

Both enhance our vitality and energy, improve circulation, restore, and help to realign our body's internal and external systems, reducing inflammation, pain, and stress.

6/ Reflexology and drinking water help to relieve water retention.

Reflexology helps to improve lymph drainage, as well as pooled fluids held in the soft tissues, joints and body cavities. Drinking water can help the body release fluids. It is hard to wrap your head around this contradicting concept, that drinking water helps water retention. When we are dehydrated, our body protects itself by storing fluid, which is often misplaced and leaves us with the feeling of swelling and bloating. When we are properly hydrated, our body can do its job, by regulating the body's temperature, lubricating our joints and nourishing our skin and internal body systems. In a nut shell, water transports nutrients that give us energy and keep us healthy. The healing combination of water and reflexology is an elixir of life.

My Unexpected Journey into Reflexology

I was producing and choreographing a production for Yamaha Canada at Deerhurst Resort on hard concrete floors. Prior to this, I had been working non-stop on projects and my feet had been burning! That night, I had to change into a long gown and gorgeous high heels (of course!), to call the show and attend the after party. My wardrobe lady noticed my toes had poked through the compression hose I was wearing on account of my tired legs. She asked me, "should I just sew them up?" I said, "yes, but hurry!" ...I should have said cut me open!

I strangled the nerves in both my feet and they went numb. But I ignored it. All I knew was I had to get through the job, and not feeling my feet meant they didn't hurt anymore! The strangulation was only half of it; I had caused anything and everything that could happen to feet, all in one moment of stupidity! The extensive nerve damage and temporary paralyzation presented quite the drama! My world was forever changed, and it was a very long ride back to wellness.

Crying on my deck that summer while reading (you guessed it) an article about the benefits of reflexology, I was hit on the head with an Angel hammer! The moment was profound, and yes, it was an "ah-ha" moment with bells ringing! I had no idea that article was my turning point, and that through the art and science of reflexology and self-reflexology I would be the biggest part of my own healing!

It was not a quick fix by any means, and nothing beats a great reflexology treatment with a dedicated and knowledgeable reflexology therapist. During most of my reflexology studies and training, I was able to administer treatments to others, but not receive them, as the severe nerve damage and other complications caused me too much pain. My very smart teacher then introduced me to self-reflexology, showing me how the various reflexology hand moves and techniques could be altered and adapted so that I could work on myself, thus the term self-reflexology. Once that severe nerve pain lessened, I was then able to be touched by others. Only then was I able to include professional treatments. The combination of receiving a treatment along with the knowledge of self-reflexology cleared the path which led the rest of the way on my healing journey.

Know How To Pick' Em

Choosing a reflexologist is a matter of personal choice. However, there are some important questions you may want to ask to help your decision.

- Are you Certified and Registered? If so, with what Reflexology Association? What is your designation?
- Are you certified in feet only? Or, do you have other certification such as hands and ears?
- Is your member number/registration on your receipts? Who are you insured with?
- How long have you been in practice?
- Do you have any references?

Red Flag

If anyone answers, "I am certified, but gave up my membership in the (related association)..." **RUN!** This means they are not in the continuing education program which keeps their designation such as the one I hold - RCRT / RAC (Registered Certified Reflexology Therapist / Reflexology Association of Canada).

The red flag may also mean free range activities, including the use of sharp instruments which reflexologists do not use. Beware! When they do not have a designation or an association, they most likely do not carry the required insurance.

Take Charge

Whether you aim for more sleep, more exercise and time at the gym or healthier eating, mix it up with a holistic modality like reflexology. More and more people are taking responsibility for their own health and well-being by actively participating in their own daily wellness. Holistic healing is not intended to serve as a band-aid or a one-time fix. It is an ongoing journey in search of more answers and ultimately living better, being healthier, and striving for wholeness. Remember, you are in charge of you! Recharge, rejuvenate, realign and relax this holiday season. Wishing you wellness!

Reflexology Therapist and Corporate Wellness Speaker, Linda Googh RCRT is the author of Reflexology2Go - self-healing recipes for daily wellness. Reflexology2Go video series can be seen on Rogers Cable TV in York and Durham Region. Linda is a teacher and examiner with the Reflexology Association of Canada, with a private practice in Aurora, Ontario. She offers mobile services to the elderly, and those suffering with chronic illness, cancer, and palliative care.

Name that Pain

Tick off all the diseases and conditions that apply to you, and get **one point for each**.

- ☐ Headaches
- ☐ Joint Pain
- ☐ Thyroid
- ☐ Disorder
- ☐ Depression
- ☐ Heel Spurs
- ☐ Flat Feet
- ☐ Allergies
- ☐ Arthritis
- ☐ Asthma
- ☐ Hypertension
- ☐ Colitis
- ☐ Cystitis
- ☐ Prostate Conditions
- ☐ Urinary Track Infections
- ☐ Back Pain
- ☐ Bunions
- ☐ Bursitis
- ☐ Mortons Neuroma
- ☐ Hammer Toe
- ☐ Planta Facilitas
- ☐ Tendonitis
- ☐ Sciatica
- ☐ Diabetes
- ☐ Carpal Tunnel Syndrome
- ☐ Sinusitis
- ☐ Stress
- ☐ Fatigue
- ☐ Immune Disorders

If you scored **5 points or less** you are among a minority of people. For those scoring **6 points and over** you are not alone, that's for sure! Fortunately, all of these different diseases and conditions can benefit from reflexology treatments. (And this is just a partial list!)

Winter Events Calendar

December 10, 2016

"Twas the Night Before Christmas" **by DuffleBag Theatre**

Celebrate the wonder of the season and join us for this hilarious re-telling of "Twas the Night Before Christmas". Children will also have the opportunity to meet with Santa in the Ontario Power Generation Atrium after the show. Tickets are \$20 per person (including HST)
St. Francis Centre for Community (Ajax)
www.stfranciscentre.ca

December 10, 2016

Santa Train

We have received news from the North Pole that Santa will be joining our train rides. Each child will have a chance to meet Santa while enjoying on-board entertainment. Seating is limited and by reservation only. Book early to avoid disappointment. Visit our website for train departure times.

UxbridgeTrain Stations
www.ydhr.ca

December 11, 2016

Community Church Service

Our annual service will be held at the Historic Leaskdale Church at 1:00 pm. and everyone is welcome to attend.
Historic Leaskdale Church (Uxbridge)
www.lucymaudmontgomery.ca

December 14, 2016

Mayor's Light Tour

Free event for local adults 55+. Tour the streets of Pickering and enjoy the neighbourhood lights. Participants will be treated to a short celebration stop at Pickering Rec Complex as part of the tour. The stop includes live entertainment and light refreshments. Afterwards participants will then board the bus to return to their original pick up locations.
Pickering
www.pickering.ca

December 17, 2016

Caroling and Member Appreciation

Drop by to enjoy cider and treats, chat with library board members, and take part in some holiday carols. Also enter the prize draw for your chance to win. This is all part of library saying "thank you" for supporting and being such great library members.
Clarington Public Library - Bowmanville Branch, 163 Church St, Clarington
www.clarington-library.on.ca

December 17, 2016

Jingle Bell Rock

This all-star show features tributes to Buddy Holly, Jerry Lee Lewis and Brenda Lee. Song highlights will include Great Balls of Fire and Peggy Sue alongside Christmas classics Run Run Rudolph, Blue Christmas, Santa Bring Me My Baby Back and, of course, Jingle Bell Rock
Town Hall 1873, Centre for Performing Arts, 302 Queen Street, Scugog
www.townhall1873.ca/coming-soon-jingle-bell-rock

December 27, 2016

Tim Hortons Free Family Skate

Celebrate the holiday season with a free skate sponsored by Tim Hortons.
Pickering Recreational Complex
www.pickering.ca/skate

December 31, 2016

New Year's Eve Party

The Ajax Family New Year's Eve Party delivers a fantastic event for the whole family. This event features children's activities, games, live entertainment, interactive experiences, face painting, ice skating with DJ and more. Party favours are included as participants gather on the ice rink for a special countdown and balloon drop. Tickets are available in December at the Ajax Community Centre, McLean Community Centre, and Audley Recreation Centre. Free admission
Ajax Community Centre
www.ajax.ca

December 31, 2016

Mayor's Light Tour

Free event for local adults 55+, tour the streets of Pickering and enjoy the neighbourhood lights. Participants will be treated to a short celebration stop at Pickering Rec Complex as part of the tour. The stop includes live entertainment and light refreshments. Afterwards participants will then board the bus to return to their original pick up locations.
Pickering
www.pickering.ca

January 19, 2017

Durham Storytelling Gathering

Prior to written history, stories were passed down orally from generation to generation. Today, storytellers uphold this oral tradition and narrate happenings from the past and present, real or imaginary. They breathe life into the old tales, nurture new ones, and take listeners on mind journeys into the wonderment of their imaginations, keeping audiences spellbound. Come Listen. Come Tell. Catch the Magic.
Oshawa
www.durhamfolklorestorytellers.ca

January 28, 2017

Dvorak Cello Concerto

A most powerful program meant to transform all of your future symphony experiences. Breathtaking, glorious, magnificent, ground-breaking Dvorak.
Oshawa
www.ontariophil.ca

January 28, 2017

A Thousand Kisses Deep'

Experience the sensuous, bittersweet songs of Leonard Cohen, Kurt Weill, and their contemporaries, receiving a feminine touch in the hands of Canadian chanteuse, Patricia O'Callaghan. Cash bar available. Tickets are available at the box office, the Ajax and McLean community centres, the Audley Recreation Centre, online at or by calling 905-619-2529, ext. 2787 (ARTS)
St. Francis Centre for Community, Arts & Culture, 78 Church St. S., Ajax
www.stfranciscentre.ca

February 4, 2017

Hoot & Owl

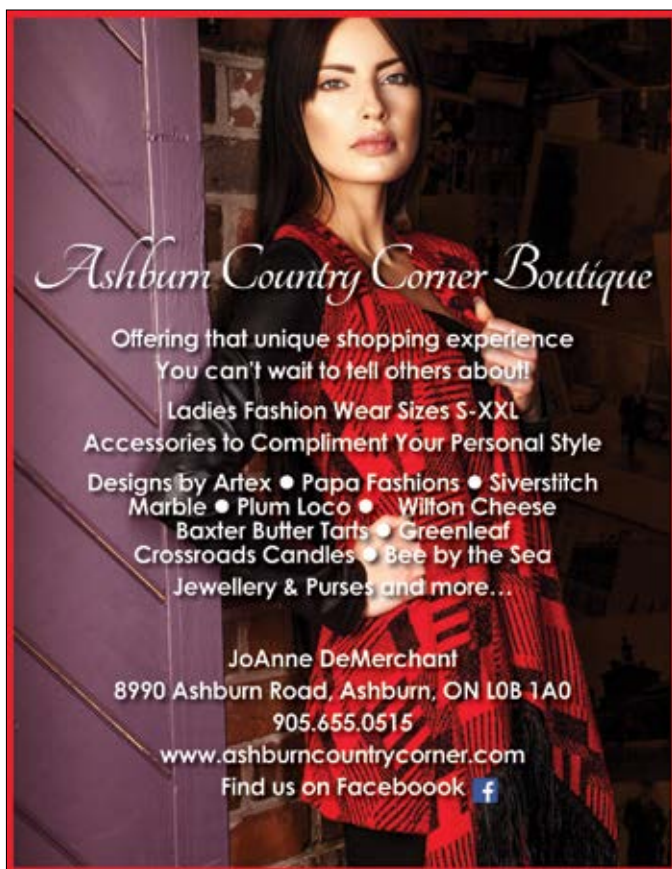
This TRCA evening will start at (meeting site TBA) with a presentation about the owls and eastern coyotes of the forest. You'll then drive to Finch and Rosebank to hike along the Hydro corridor and into Altona Forest where we will call for the owls and coyotes and hope they hoot and howl back! Please dress for the weather with appropriate footwear.
Altona Forest (Pickering)
www.trca.ca

March 4, 2017

An Evening of Spirit

Medium Sherry Gallant hosts this event and will validate messages from loved ones who have died. She continues to encourage her sceptics to not let discomfort prevent them from receiving validation and loving messages from their loved ones.
Oshawa Little Theatre, 62 Russett Avenue, Oshawa
www.sherrygallant.com

For events that may have been added after the publication date and other ideas to plan your perfect day in Durham Region, visit www.durhamtourism.ca.




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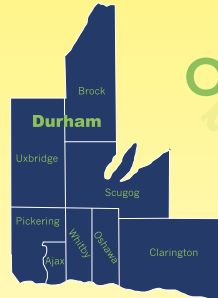
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STEP BACK IN TIME

MUSEUMS OF DURHAM REGION

by Linda Calder

Come back with me to Durham Region three hundred years ago. Step outside. You are probably standing in the middle of a forest. Listen to the silence broken only by the sound of rustling leaves and the occasional bird; listen to the water lapping the shores. Take a deep breath and inhale the pure air...

Nowadays, we hear the sounds of traffic roaring down the highways, the honking of impatient drivers, and the hustle and bustle of towns and cities. A lot has changed in three hundred years. How did we get from there to here?

The first inhabitants of Durham Region were First Nations people. They were the Iroquois, Huron and Mississauga who moved south from northern Ontario. Some of them settled and farmed, and others were nomads. Artifacts have been found around the region showing where they lived and travelled. Around 1700, the Mississauga's settled on Scugog Island. They found an abundance of resources in the forests and wetlands. There was plenty of game for food, furbearing animals, waterfowl and fish. Wild rice also grew in the shallow lake.

The First Nations people developed paths and trails and river routes from Scugog Island to Oshawa. Oshawa Creek was more of a river back then. If you travel down Simcoe Street in Oshawa, you are probably following one of their trails. They carried their furs along Simcoe Street or Oshawa Creek to what is now Lakeview Park. (It was here that the French opened a trading post in 1750 for pelts.)

Early settlers arrived from Britain and France as well as other parts of Europe; the Empire Loyalists came from the United States. They cleared forests and used the logs to build their homes. They grew their own food, not only for daily use, but also to last the winter as there were no stores around. With the influx of newcomers, the area began to grow. Towns and villages began to develop. Churches and schools were built. General Stores became part of the towns and villages so people could buy goods.

There is much to learn about these early Canadians. We are lucky in Durham Region to be blessed with many museums which tell stories of the area with buildings, gardens and artifacts. With so many choices, I selected six to visit and write about.

Clarington Museum and Archives

Clarington Museum and Archives is operated by the Municipality of Clarington and consists of three museums.

The Bowmanville Museum is a beautiful mansion. It started out in 1847 as a one story Regency style cottage. With additions made in 1861 and 1880, it became the two story Italianate house we see today. It has been restored to show the home of a wealthy merchant family from 1901 to 1930. There are nine rooms with late Victorian furnishings. There is a parlour, dining room, conservatory, master bedroom and a girl's and a boy's bedroom. Take a look at the beautiful porch. In July and August, you can sit out and enjoy afternoon tea. They also have an extensive doll collection which they are proud of.

Four rooms within the Bowmanville Museum are the Clarington History Gallery, a permanent exhibit. This is where you will find archival photos and interactive exhibits that talk about the settlement of Clarington, the first settlers, Camp X and much more.

Just a short walk from the Bowmanville Museum (in the former Bowmanville Library) is the second museum, the Sarah Jane Williams Heritage Centre, named for its benefactor. This site preserves documents and artifacts that tell the story of Clarington's rich history.



The third museum is the Clarke Museum in Kirby. Nathaniel Powers, the first settler in the community owned this land. There is a one room school house, a blacksmiths shop and agricultural equipment.

Scugog Shores Museums (Village, Heritage Centre & Archives)

Scugog Shores Museum Village is located on Scugog Island on the shores of Lake Scugog. The Museum was started in 1969 and was run by volunteers until 1984 when a full time person was hired.

The museum has twelve restored buildings along with heritage flower, herb and vegetable gardens. There are also Ojibway Heritage Interpretive Lands. Two buildings are on their original sites: the Head School and the Head Church and Cemetery where about a hundred people are buried. The other buildings have been moved to the site from different places in the township.

Each building tells a different story. There are three homes, a log cabin, Lee house and Rodman cabin so you can see what day to day life was like. There are two barns and a drive shed. You also get a chance to visit some businesses with the Blacksmith, Woodwright, Print and Harness shops. One of the more interesting buildings is the Beef Ring, where you will probably learn something new. (If you're wondering what a Beef Ring is, visit the museum.)

Something unique to the museum is the special relationship with the Mississauga's of Scugog Island with a permanent First Nations exhibit at the Heritage Centre in Scugog Arena. This a great way to learn their history. "This exhibit covers 10,000 years of archaeology, relations between the First Nations and Europeans and the current life of the Mississauga's of Scugog Island"

Uxbridge Historical Centre (Uxbridge-Scott Museum & Archives)

The Uxbridge Historical Centre is just outside Uxbridge with a beautiful rural setting. The museum has eight historical buildings and two replica buildings. The school house (Quaker Hill Public School) which is the only building original to the site, was used from 1924 to 1969. It is a beautiful brick one room building with separate doors for boys and girls.

Quakers settled in Uxbridge. Just down the road from the museum is a two hundred year old Quaker meeting house. The Quaker Heritage display in the office outlines some of the history of Quakerism, and features the Uxbridge Quaker (Friends) pioneer settlement.

Uxbridge has been designated as the Trail Capital of Canada. One of the first trails is the Quaker Trail which is accessed from the museum grounds.

Oshawa Museum

Oshawa Museum is in Lakeview Park in South Oshawa. Oshawa's first settler was Benjamin Wilson who arrived in Oshawa in 1794 and moved into a log cabin that had been a French trading post. The log cabin is long gone, but there are three homes each with different architectural styles on the same site: Henry House, Guy House and Robinson House. This makes the Oshawa Museum unique because the homes that make up the museum are on their original foundations. A few years ago, a drive shed was added giving space for locally made McLaughlin carriages and cutters.

Henry House was the home of Thomas Henry from 1850 until his death in 1879. Thomas was a harbour master and minister and an active participant in developing Port Oshawa. Henry House is set up as a family home from the mid-eighteen hundreds. Each year before Christmas, a Lamplight Tour takes place.

Robinson House was built around 1857 by John Robinson, a Quaker. The Robinson family lived there until the city of Oshawa acquired it in 1963. As the only museum in Oshawa dedicated to telling Oshawa's history, Robinson House features exhibitions that are changed annually to showcase other aspects of Oshawa's rich history. Past exhibitions have featured the Oshawa Railway, Oshawa Dairy and Victorian Mourning Customs. A permanent display of First Nations history is being planned.

Guy House, a frame farmhouse, was the home of James Ogdens Guy who was harbour master. It is home to the offices, archives and is the gathering place for tours.

Many activities are planned throughout the year. Cemetery tours are very popular. Plays are produced in the cemetery with volunteer actors. Stories are that Thomas Henry's ghost has been seen sitting at his desk in Henry House. Proo(f) (Paranormal Researchers of Ontario—the (f) is the unknown variable, the unknown part of an investigation, fear) performs live ghost hunts where visitors can come and see them in action. It seems that there could be ghosts; check it out when you visit the museum!

Lynde House Museum

I'm happy that Whitby now has a dedicated museum building; the previous one was a store in downtown Whitby. Now, Lynde House is a museum on its own site. Lynde House was one of the earliest homes in Whitby on what is now Dundas Street, but was Kingston Road at the time. Many of us who have lived in Whitby for a long time probably remember the house sitting on what was the edge of town.

The Georgian style house was built around 1812 by Jabez Lynde, one of the earliest settlers, and his wife Clarissa for their eight children. Elmina, who died in 1893, was the last member of the family to live there. Over the years, it was a manse and rental property. The house was given to the Historical Society to use as a museum. In 1986



it was moved to Cullen Gardens. It was restored to mid-eighteen hundreds style with such things as handmade wallpaper suitable for that period of time as well as furniture and household goods. After Cullen Gardens closed, the house remained there until it was moved to its present site on Brock Street South in 2013.

The house is decorated similar to when it was at Cullen Gardens to look like a Whitby home in the late 1800's. It would have been the home of a fairly wealthy family. There are a few small items that were found when the house was restored. One of them is a child's shoe that was found in the attic.

Pickering Museum Village

Pickering Museum Village is the largest museum in Durham Region with nineteen buildings. It also has some wonderful historically correct gardens. Buildings have been moved from several places in the area such as Brougham to the museum. You can wander along the paths that take you through the village and view the variety of buildings. The buildings tell stories of the history of the area. The Oddfellows Hall built around 1869 was originally a Christian Church. It was sold to the Oddfellows at around the 1900s. Now, it is a Town Hall and is used for weddings.

Several homes showcase the progression of building materials used to build homes during the time period. The first home was often a very simple dwelling (a lean-to), but quick to construct and just a temporary home. This would probably be followed by a log cabin as logs were readily available as the land was cleared. As you travel along the paths, you will come across a house made of planks. As people had more money available, they might build a frame house. Those who could afford it might build a brick or stone house.

Other buildings you will see are schools, barns, drive sheds, businesses and a beef ring barn. One of my favourites is the Brougham Temperance House (originally called Temperance House). Around 1850, it wasn't unusual for men to drink away their assets, and cost their families their homes, so in 1850, James Woodruff and his family decided to open the Temperance House. As the name implied, no alcohol was served at the Temperance House. It was obviously not a success, as it only stayed in business for about a year. Summer and harvest suppers are now served in the building as part of a play, with diners being in the middle of it.

Durham Region's museums have so many stories to tell. You don't need history books, you don't need pictures because you stand in the homes. You see the household items they used, the clothes they wore. History comes to life and you discover so much.

The curators of the museums are very knowledgeable and they love to talk about their museum. The strength of the museums is their volunteers. They volunteer because of their interest in local history and they enjoy telling people about their museums.

I've only mentioned six museums here, but there are lots more in the Durham Region! So why not plan a trip this winter to some of our local museums and experience history unfold before your eyes? It's a great way to spend time with family during the holidays while simultaneously learning about times gone by!

Linda Calder is a retired teacher. She likes to write and enjoys spending time with her family. She also enjoys going on cruises, taking pictures and scrapbooking.

Durham Museums

Some museums are open year round, and some are open seasonally. For hours of operation, please visit the museum websites.

Clarington Museum and Archives

www.claringtonmuseums.com

Scugog Shores Museums

www.scugog.ca/en/Museums.aspx

Uxbridge Historical Centre

www.uxbridgehistoricalcentre.com

Oshawa Museum

www.oshawamuseum.org

Lynde House Museum

www.lyndehousemuseum.com

Pickering Museum Village

www.pickering.ca/en/museum.asp

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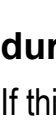
For Android and iPhone smart phones.



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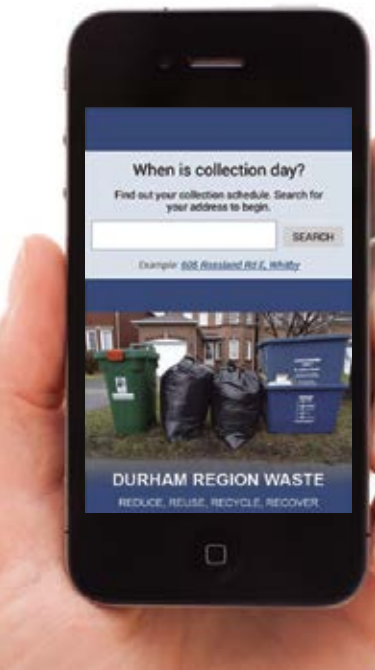


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HOW TECHNOLOGY CAN MAKE CHRISTMAS SHOPPING STRESS FREE!

by Jennifer Liwanag

With the holiday season just around the corner, we're all going kind of crazy to ensure we pick up the perfect gifts for our family and friends. And, with jam packed malls, toys flying off the shelves, long line-ups and tight budgets—Christmas shopping can be super stressful!

Now, what would you say if I told you I could alleviate some of this stress? How, you may ask? But of course: online shopping and the perfect gift list app!

With online shopping, you can crawl under a nice comfortable blanket on your couch or bed, with a warm hot chocolate while watching Netflix, laptop in lap, as you browse the best selection of gifts without ever leaving the comfort of your home. No long line ups. No child fits in the toy section. No need to hire your babysitter for the afternoon. No stressing over available stock at nearby locations. On top of that, with the perfect gift list app, you can stay organized, budget, and ensure you don't miss anyone on your list! Sounds like the perfect solution for holiday shopping stress, doesn't it?

Online Shopping Tips

Use Cash-Back websites Ebates will be your best friend when it comes to online shopping, trust me. It is partnered with several major online retailers (Amazon, Sephora, Nike, GameStop, etc.) and every time you shop at these retailers while enabling Ebates, you will receive a certain percentage back. This cash-back is released to you quarterly through a cheque mailed straight to your house. You can also find some awesome exclusive deals on this website as well. www.ebates.ca

Take advantage of Black Friday and Cyber Monday online deals Many online retailers have a massive blowout sale on these two days. You can find amazing deals on gifts; most of the time, you will be getting very similar deals to those available in-store. This year, Black Friday is on November 25th 2016 and Cyber Monday is on November 28th 2016. If you've missed the dates already, remember to keep this handy tip in mind when next year rolls around.

Join Mailing Lists Did you know that when you join store email lists, you receive discount codes and deals straight in your inbox? This is one of the best ways to save money on gifts with the least amount of searching. You just simply sign up for their mailing list on their website and every time there is a big sale or there are special coupon codes, you will be notified via email.

Coupon Codes Speaking of coupon codes, you can also find them by searching Google. By simply searching "[Store Name] Coupon Code [Month/Year]" you sometimes will stumble upon a small discount you can use to save a little money online that you may not be able to do in-store.

Free Shipping Shop at websites that provide free shipping. That being said, if it is a website where you have to spend X amount of dollars to receive free shipping, take advantage of that, as well. If you are receiving free shipping, you might as well buy in bulk to ensure that free shipping is being put to good use. For example, if I need to spend \$25 on Amazon to get free shipping, I'd be buying as many people gifts as I could on Amazon, even if I exceeded \$25! Why? Because this ensures that the free shipping I'm getting—that I may not receive at a competing store—will be put to a greater use.

Gift Wrap Option Some online shops give an option to opt into giftwrapping for an additional price. If you don't think you are very good at it or just really hate gift wrapping, this may be the way to go. The product will be shipped to you already wrapped and ready to go under the tree.

Ship Gifts If you have family that live far away, you may want to consider having the gift shipped straight to them. (Instead of having it shipped to you, and then you having to ship it to them after.) This way, you save yourself from paying double shipping. Some websites have a section for "alternative address" where you would add your family or friends' addresses, and sometimes they even have a box to check that says, "This is a Gift" which will ensure that the receipt (which tells you how much the gift costs) is not shipped with the package.

Check In-store Stock, Online For those of you who do enjoy going to physical stores but hate disappointment when you arrive to the store to see they don't have what you want in stock, did you know you can check online to see if what you are looking for is carried at your local store? Sometimes, if it isn't carried at your local store, it will even tell you if other stores in the area potentially carry the product, and how many are at that location.

Reserve-In-Store, Online On top of that, many online retailers have the option for you to "Reserve" products in store. That way, especially in instances where there is only one copy of that game or that special toy your child really wants, you can reserve it to ensure no one else buys it on your way to the store. Drive over, pick up your item and you're in and out in five minutes! Easy-Peasy!

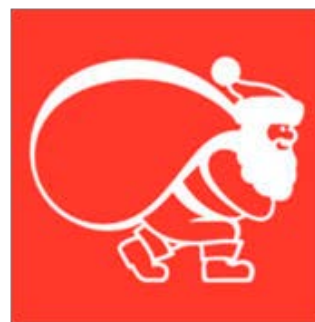
Browse Before You Buy The nice thing about online shopping is how easy it is to price match. You can simply open up two tabs with the same product from different stores and calculate which would be the better deal. I especially like doing this because it allows me to scout available stock without feeling obligated to buy anything—unlike when you visit stores and feel obligated to buy something, despite the price, because the salesperson was really nice to you or convinced you it was a great deal.

Amazon Prime If worse comes to worse, you can always consider Amazon Prime. You can get a free trial for the holiday season. With Amazon Prime, you can get free two-day shipping and free same-day delivery (where available) to ensure gifts arrive on time. This is great for any last minute gifts for that distant family member who didn't RSVP to the family gathering until a couple days before.

Gift List Apps



Christmas Gift List (Android) Christmas Gift List is an app available for Android devices that helps you budget while planning gifts for the holiday season. You can track who you need to buy gifts for, whose gifts you have already bought, which gifts you have already wrapped, and how much money out of your budget you would like to use for each person on your list. You also have the option to password protect the app.



Santa's Bag (Apple) With Santa's Bag available for Apple Devices, you are also able to assign a budget for individual people, while ensuring you buy the perfect gift for everyone special in your life. It also provides a countdown to Christmas, gift categorization based on stores, and a place designated for marking as to whether you have wrapped purchased gifts.

I hope these tips and apps help you this holiday season to save money while being more productive in preparation for Christmas Day!

Jennifer Liwanag is a 4th year university student at UOIT and a Lifestyle blogger at Jennibearxo. In her free time, she designs and sells printable planner stickers at DaintyRoseDesigns on Etsy. She also is the Technology Blogger for The Local Biz Magazine where she shares tech tips and app suggestions.

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by Stephanie Herrera

AT THE BOX OFFICE

Action & Adventure

One of the most anticipated movies of the year is **Rogue One: A Star Wars Story** opening in theatres on December 16th, 2016. A prequel which shows how the stolen Death Star plans came to be in Princess Leia's possession. We follow the creation of a rogue band of resistance fighters whose daring mission is to steal the plans in hopes of saving the galaxy from the Empire.

March 3rd, 2017 will be Hugh Jackman's final portrayal of this classic comic book character in the new movie **Logan**. In this alternate time line, the mutant birth rates are severely in decline and Logan teams up with the mutant Caliban to stop the government's production of mutant killing machines while trying to save the life of a very special little girl.

Thrillers & Horror

Kate Beckinsale is reprising her role in **Underworld: Blood Wars**. In stunning special effects, we are introduced to a new younger, stronger breed of vampire and werewolf in a pinnacle battle between these two fantastical supernatural races. The bloodshed starts on January 6th, 2017.

From the brilliant mind of Jordan Peele, comes the haunting tale **Get Out**, coming to theatres on February 24th, 2017. A young interracial couple make the trek out to her upper class white family in what looks like a typical movie on family and tolerance. But, as the weekend progresses, a series of disturbing discoveries has you gripping the edge of your seat as a truth emerges in this quiet town that is unimaginable. Peele's creative writing, brilliant filmmaking, and his poignant play on race makes this movie a must see.

Holiday Movies

December 9th, 2016 we have a star studded cast including Jennifer Aniston, Jason Bateman, T.J. Miller, and Kate McKinnon in the Hangover-esque movie **Office Christmas Party**. In an effort to save their branch from closing, an office attempts to throw a bash that will impress a client and close a deal that will save their jobs. This is definitely a movie you'll be leaving the kids at home for!

For the kid in us all

In hopes of saving a theatre that has fallen on hard times, Buster (a koala voiced by Matthew McConaughey) produces the world's greatest singing competition in hopes of restoring it to its former glory in the movie **Sing**. This animated film hits theatres December 21st, 2016 with a cast of a variety of animals voiced by such stars as Reese Witherspoon, Seth MacFarlane, and Scarlett Johansson.

Will Arnett lends his voice yet again to Warner Brothers' **The Lego Batman Movie**, scheduled to open February 10th, 2017. The brooding, lone vigilante has to learn patience, teamwork, and maybe how to lighten up just a little when an orphan he adopted becomes his sidekick in the battle against the Joker. The cast also includes the voices of Rosario Dawson, Michel Cera, Zach Galifianakis, Ralph Fiennes, and Mariah Carey.

Stephanie Herrera is an Entertainment Specialist, speaking, teaching, and writing about Improv, Comedy, and Life through her company, Durham Improv & Acting Studio. She is an award winning actor, writer, and singer performing regularly on screen and stage.



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by Rhian Torontow

The Magic Of Travel



Christmastime is an extremely popular time for travel. While you may think that most of the travellers are travelling home for the holidays, quite a lot of the travellers are actually leaving for their vacation. Taking your family vacation over the Christmas holidays can make a whole lot of sense and if you've never considered this before, keep reading and you'll find a number of benefits.

The holidays are a stressful time of year as it seems that your to-do list is always getting longer with all the gifts you want to buy, the gifts you forgot to buy, the food that you need to shop for and prepare, the decorations, all of the cleaning and so forth. Then there is the art of juggling your resources as you feel that you constantly need to be in two places at once and then before you know it, the holidays are over in less time that it took to prepare for them.

When you take your family vacation during the holidays, you get away from all of the stress and you are transported to the whole reason the holiday season was so special, and that's spending quality time with your family (and not frantically vacuuming the family room because you have guests arriving any minute and the cat decided to jump into the tree again and knocked it over sending glittery baubles everywhere).

When you are on vacation over the holidays, you end up spending more time together. Growing up, we would travel over the holidays every year, except one year when we stayed home and I remember being so surprised by how long my mum spent in the kitchen. She was forever dashing back into the kitchen and had her apron on all day. On vacation, I spent a lot more quality time with my family and it felt like the holidays lasted so much longer.

One great benefit to travelling over the holidays that often gets overlooked is that you don't need to take as many vacation days from work! Most people get a number of days off over the holidays, and so using those to your advantage means that you can use your other vacation days later on in the year.

In addition to the obvious stress-reducing advantages going on vacation has on the parents, the kids greatly benefit too. I can speak from personal experience that while I always enjoyed all of my holiday gifts, I don't really remember now what I received but I do have an abundance of memories from our vacations over the holidays. It's these memories that I will carry with me and our vacations are the reason I have such a great relationship with my brother. I remember spending the whole day at the beach on Christmas Eve and we had so much fun. I honestly can't remember what gift my brother gave me that year.

This year, focus on your presence with your family as opposed to your presents. It will leave a long lasting impression.

Along with her mother, Carol, Rhian owns the travel consultancy business, Magical Family Adventures. As a Family Travel Consultant, Rhian creates travel experiences that foster connections in your family that will last a lifetime and transform your children into open-minded, flexible, well-travelled people.

FINANCIAL Fitness

by Karl Marshall



Many Canadian parents save in an RESP for the purpose of funding their children's post-secondary education. The federal government will contribute up to a maximum \$7,200 towards each child's post-secondary education provided you save \$36,000, making the total available \$43,200 (assuming your investment doesn't lose any money and/or growth remains flat).

Like an RRSP or TFSA, an RESP is simply a vehicle that holds investments and not an investment in itself. Growth really depends on what happens with the underlying investments.

According to a recent BMO study, the cost of a 4 year undergraduate degree will rise to \$140,000 for a child born in 2012, so the following questions arise:

Can you predict what the actual cost of post-secondary education will be 17 or 20 years down the road?

Will saving in an RESP alone be sufficient to fund your child's post-secondary education?

The answers are most likely a resounding "NO", and I would like to suggest that the real reason that all Canadians want their children/ grandchildren to go to college or university is to set them up for financial success. An education is therefore (among other things) a tool for providing financial success and stability.

Parents should be concerned about making smart money decisions (which certainly should include saving in an RESP) for their children today, that will set them up for financial success tomorrow. In fact, smart money decisions today will take care of many concerns including funding post-secondary education, and with the rising cost of post-secondary education, it is unlikely that RESP's alone will get the job done.

We recently helped one of our clients use an insurance policy to secure the following for her son:

- Guaranteed permanent insurance coverage
- Guaranteed total she will pay into the policy for 20 years (no payments after 20 years) – \$22,020
- Guaranteed cash values over child's lifetime – \$100,000
- Potential dividends of approximately \$35,000 that can be withdrawn at age 30, and still have in force guaranteed life insurance coverage and cash values.
- Potential legacy for her son's children if he allows dividends to accumulate; and assuming the dividend scale remains the same – up to \$1.6 million

Our client in the above scenario actually asked us for this specific financial product (pays dividends) because her parents were astute enough to use this very strategy to help set her up for financial success. She withdrew the dividends to put toward the deposit on her home, and she still has life insurance in force that she can leave for her son when she passes away; plus her cash values, which are guaranteed to grow.

It was like her parents put money into an account for her when she was a baby, she withdrew all the money her parents put in years later, and she still has money in the account today.

Life insurance on children is not about the morbid thought of death, but rather about providing them with a financial gift that will last their lifetime. This holiday season, give the ones you love a financial gift that will last for their lifetime.

Karl Marshall is President of Marmac Financial Services Limited, an independent insurance and investment brokerage. He lives in Durham Region.

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by Victoria Cozza



Tweens, Teens & In-Between

"Kindness is like snow - It beautifies everything it covers." Kahlil Gibran

Hello Readers! Just when it seems like time has slowed, it surprises me by making another year fly by. I hope you all had an excellent first semester of school and I wish you the best of luck with all of your exams in the New Year.

Unfortunately for me, winter brings the end of my favourite season but I am still excited to see what this holiday season has in store. Though I am sad to see this year go, I am ready to say goodbye to 2016. It has been an amazing year full of self discovery and life lessons, but it's time to close this chapter and move on to a new one. I am very eager to see what 2017 has planned for me and I can't wait for all of the new adventures it will bring with it.

This holiday season, I want you to really connect with someone whether it be with yourself, a loved one, an old friend, or a complete stranger. Get to know them for who they are. Listen to their stories, and learn from their memories and mistakes. You'll discover so much about them and the world in the process. We live in such a beautiful place filled with so many kind, good-hearted people that have incredible stories to tell. This winter take the moment to listen and learn from their experiences.

Every holiday season, my music teacher takes our vocal class to visit multiple retirement homes to sing to the people there, give them presents, and to talk to them about the upcoming holidays. This has become a tradition with our class and it is my favourite thing to do this time of year. I've gotten the chance to speak to so many individuals who have lived such amazing lives and I've learned so much about them. I have had the pleasure of listening and learning about their travels, education, and their memories from stories that have been remembered from long ago. It is truly inspiring to hear everything they have to say, especially because they've seen so much and experienced so many things. I feel really honoured that they want to share their stories with me, and it feels amazing to go out into the community and give something back to them after all they've done for us.

With that being said, I encourage you to be brave this winter and talk to someone, anyone. Learn everything you can about them and cherish those memories forever. Be kind to people and never lose your desire to do good. As long as people are kind to each other our world is in good hands. Happy Holidays and Happy New Year! May your break be merry and your love be spread to all who love you. Thank you for making 2016 the most unforgettable year yet. All the love. Victoria ☺.

Victoria Cozza is a 17 year old grade 12 student in Ajax. She loves singing, playing piano and reading. She also has a passion for music and writing. She loves spending her free time with her family and friends.

DIY DÉCOR

by Sheila Borlase



In this article, we will be assembling an attractive winter planter. Your planter will be entirely unique, you will be the only one with a planter like it on your whole street. While the general structure of your greenery will be fairly common, the finishing touches you add will reflect your personal style and will most definitely be magnificent!



This is a simple project that will take less than an hour to assemble.

First, make sure you have a strong and sturdy base, preferably a wide based pot filled with very moist soil that will freeze well. A standard 14" pot will do well. Ensure the container has drainage holes to prevent any rotting.

Add a centre focal point by inserting three tall birch branches deep into the centre of the pot (feel free to substitute with vibrant red dogwood branches or curly willow if you prefer). Recommended height is 2 and a half times the height of the container

Insert three bricks of floral foam on top of the potting soil forming a triangle around the inside of the pot thereby creating a more secure perimeter surrounding your centre focal point.

Cuttings of greenery are available at most nurseries and craft stores and are sold in bundles.

Alternatively, you may enjoy a peaceful walk in the forest to gather your cuttings of the greenery that most appeals to you personally.

Begin inserting branches into the soil and into the foam base. For depth and texture, make sure there are lots of branches cascading down.

Once your base is created, take a step back and check for symmetry. You can trim as needed.

Continue adding branches according to their size and shape to create the design that best suits your decorating style.

Using personal finishing touches like lotus pods, pinecones, eucalyptus branches or shiny balls will give your planter a truly unique design. You can buy these and other decorative items in craft stores already mounted to metal stems, or you can use a sturdy floral wire and attach to stem yourself.


Remember to water it in so it will freeze in place.

This is a cost effective project that looks great knowing you did it yourself. These wonderfully decorative planters will last well into the winter season, and the best part is that they do well in any light.

Sheila Borlase began PeaceLands Garden Design for the love of dirt. She has a keen passion for landscaping designing and building. Her winning attitude and professional courtesy will leave a lasting impression.


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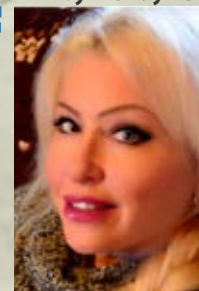


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SKINNIFIED SMASHED POTATOES with GARLIC and CHEESE (Serves 6)

Christmas is by far, my favorite time of year. It's a time to celebrate the season with cheer, by bringing family and friends together. There is another part to this festive season that I also adore (being the foodie that I am), its food, food and more food!! I'm a huge fan of traditional turkey dinner, but don't enjoy the extra calories, carbs and fat it brings to our diets. Imagine indulging in a "healthier" version of turkey dinner, which is just as tasty as the real thing? Simply by changing a few ingredients, you can cut back on a whole lot of calories without compromising taste.

By substituting a smaller portion of cauliflower for potato, cheese with light cheese you can save yourself a whopping 340g total calories!

You will need...

- 4 medium Yukon gold potatoes (cooked in salt water)
- 2 cups of cooked mashed cauliflower
- 4 tablespoons light cream cheese
- 2 tablespoons light sour cream
- 2 tablespoons parmesan
- Salt and pepper
- ½ cup light partly skimmed grated mozzarella
- 1 tablespoon butter

Smash together cooked potatoes and cauliflower. Add all ingredients and blend until smooth with a mixer. Add salt and pepper. Top with a sprinkle of grated mozzarella. Serve and enjoy! .



TURKEY SAUSAGE STUFFING (Serves 6)

By simply using turkey sausage to replace pork sausage, you save yourself a huge total of 1,300 calories and a grand total of 132g in Fat!

- 8 slices Ezekiel bread (or whole wheat)
- 8 links turkey sausage
- 1 tablespoon diced onion
- 2 tablespoons melted butter
- ½ cup of water
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon poultry seasoning

Cook sausage, and when slightly browned, add onion. Cook until onions are soft and slightly browned, set aside.

Prepare bread by placing in a food processor (I prefer this to tearing the bread as it leaves the stuffing very moist). Add melted butter, water, spices to bread, add sausage and onion mixture. We all have our trademark stuffing recipes, but try this with sausage or add mushrooms. The addition of water to this stuffing makes it incredibly moist. Serve and enjoy!

Wendy is a food blogger, food photographer, writer, lifestyle strategist, self-taught chef and lover of animals. While living in Paris, she mastered the art of a perfect crepe, and discovered the world of fabulous wines and champagne! Her passion to find healthy alternatives to popular dishes stems from her desire to live a fit and healthy lifestyle while still enjoying food!



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Taking THE Lead

by Corry Hamilton



My clients often ask me if there is a particular animal charity I support. First off, when picking an animal charity, you need to find something that stirs a passion in you – dogs, cats, horses or perhaps something more exotic. For a starting point, you may want to consider something local, a shelter or rehabilitation facility. It doesn't have to be a monetary donation; you may be able to donate items you are no longer using such as dishes, beds, cages/crates, food, treats and toys. You may even want to donate your time.

Check with your local animal shelter to see if you can volunteer to walk the dogs, clean out cages or offer support through answering phones. You can also ask if there are cleaning supplies they need. It's surprising how many paper towels and detergents they go through. Even office supplies can be beneficial.

There are also agencies such as TAGS (The Animal Guardian Society), Team Chelsea, Nova's Ark and The Farley Foundation that are looking for volunteers and donations.

TAGS is an organization whose mission is to provide re-homing and medical care for animals, as well as educate pet owners and help with behaviour modification.

Team Chelsea comprises an incredible group of volunteers who search for lost pets and reunite them with their owners, or when needed, re-home them. They have also worked with the homeless and others who are down on their luck with pets to insure the stay together

Nova's Ark provides social and communication opportunities for people of all ages and abilities involving a wide range of gentle, therapy animals. They offer youth and adult volunteer positions and are a registered charity.

There are many pet owners who have financial difficulty and have pets they love and want to keep healthy, but don't have the funds to do so. This is where The Farley foundation steps in. The Farley Foundation is a registered charity that assists people in need, by subsidizing the cost of veterinary care for their pets. It was established in 2002 and is currently only open to Ontario residents, but they are looking to expand across Canada.

If reptiles are your thing, consider the Indian River Reptile Zoo in Peterborough. It is a non-profit charity. You can help them in caring for unwanted and abandoned reptiles.

One last thing to keep in mind. Giving an animal a home (while a wonderful experience) is a serious responsibility. It's a decision that shouldn't be made over the holidays. Perhaps take a picture and write out a card saying that you will be adding a new member to the family in the new year. Think it over once the holidays have passed. Also, make sure the pet is well chosen and that the person or family is ready for the responsibility.

Whatever you decide, I'm sure you will feel better. Start a new tradition and give some animals a very Merry Christmas.

Corry is founder and owner of Taking the Lead, a professional pet care company based in the Durham Region.





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Ask Sue-Ann



Dear Sue-Ann:

Two years ago my parents passed. My family relationships have been splintered ever since. I have reached out and nothing has changed. I want to know if it will get better. With Christmas around the corner, I am finding that I miss my family and long for the way things used to be.

A. I am sorry to say that things will never be the way they used to be. Things can only be the way they are now. It's time to establish new family traditions. Families evolve and they are not always available when we need them. Finding a common date of availability, communicating what you are looking to do and getting everyone involved will be a good start to unifying the family. Those who want to be there will always be there. Cherish them and be grateful.

Dear Sue-Ann:

My young son is waking every night calling for me because there is a man standing in his room. I go to his room and he is pointing to the corner and I cannot see what he sees. I was worried and because he is so young he could not fully describe him to me. Until one day he pointed to a picture of my Grandfather in a photo album and declared that was the man who stands in his room. I deeply loved my Grandfather, and I am wondering, is that possible? Is my Grandfather watching over my son?

A. Simply, yes. I have this reported to me with regularity. A kind and loving, protective man in life is the same in death. It is also quite common for children to see spirits so I am not surprised that he would see him and you would not. He may continue to see him for some time and then without warning it may just stop. I suggest you acknowledge it when it happens and leave it at that.

Sue-Ann is a mother of 3 and resides in the Oshawa area. She chooses to utilize her undeniable psychic ability to assist you in resolving all of life's issues. Host and Community Producer of Divine Lane on Rogers Cable 10, Tuesdays at 9 pm. You can find out more and forward your submissions to Sue-Ann at www.divinelane.com

The COACH Corner

by Malachi Brown



A New Birth

Recently, I had the pleasure of listening to a gentleman who was just about to celebrate his eightieth birthday. He told the audience that if he had the opportunity to change anything about his early life, he wouldn't.

I thought this was quite unusual. For a lot of people, the answer to that question would be yes, there are things I would definitely change. His rationale was that the life he had, was the life he was intended to have. In no way was he saying he had a perfect childhood – far from it. He realized he had no option in a lot of things that he had to contend with; where he was born, the parents he had, family members and some of his early friendships. These were predetermined for him.

So what do we make of the life we are given?

Were you born into wealth or poverty? Did you have loving parents or the opposite? Were you born in North America, or in another part in the world? A thousand questions and answers.

For a lot of people, how they started life can be seen as a help or a hindrance. What about you?

Many people see their lives as being stuck, regrets, negativity, what if, or, why couldn't I be someone else. If you are able to elevate yourselves above this kind of thinking, you would come to realize how unique and brilliant you are and that you have a purpose.

When you change the way you think, you will come to realize, all you need to be is the very best version of yourself. So, how do we live to ensure a life with few regrets and the best version of ourselves?

There is a great story in the Bible, of a man who comes to Jesus and asks him how can he have eternal life? Jesus tells him he must be born again. What?! This man like most of us asked Jesus, how can I re-enter my mother's womb? Jesus of course gives him the answer that we all need to hear. He tells him he is not referring to a physical rebirth but a spiritual one. What does he mean?

Change the way you think.

We must change the way we think about our current situation. When we do this, we will realize that our thinking affects every aspect about who we are.

Will you hang on for dear life to your current way of thinking, or are you willing to accept a new way of thinking, the renewing of your mind?

As we enter the Christmas season, followed by the new year when you make your yearly resolution, can I offer a powerful course of action that will change your life for good? Change the way you think. It will positively, profoundly affect everything about you.

"Do not conform to the thinking of the world any longer, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, only then will you know the unique purpose and life, God created for you". (Romans 12:2)

Enjoy the Christmas season. Merry Christmas and a purpose filled 2017.

Malachi Brown, Life Coach, applies his passion in helping others unlock their full potential, enabling them to live the abundant lives they were created to live.

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The Golden Years



Gifts From The Heart Given With Love

Simpsons-Sears and Eaton's were huge competing department stores on Queen Street in Toronto back in the day. Growing up here, many of us remember the arrival of the Simpsons-Sears and Eaton's Christmas Wish Books. The covers were magical and the catalogues were full of treasures. How we enjoyed going through them as kids! All we had to do was place a phone call and our perfect gifts could be picked up a day or two later at the local catalogue store, or it could also be done by mail order.

Gone now are the Christmas Wish Books that sat out on everyone's coffee table. If you want one you have to order it, or you can view the digital catalogue online. (Simpsons-Sears is now just Sears and it's the Sears Wish Book. The last Eaton's catalogue was around 1975.)

Many things have changed since, but the search for the perfect gift for the special people in our lives remain. We have different ways we shop now. Online shopping is very popular, so much so, that we have a feature article on it in this issue. I asked a few of my boomer friends for their input on online shopping. My numbers aren't scientific, but about a quarter of the people I spoke to say they shop online. A few shop online all year long, not just at Christmas. They enjoy it because of the selection offered, and also because of the convenience of home delivery. One person who did shop online did so with a credit card with a low credit limit (about \$1000). They did this for safety purposes; in case their information was stolen, there wasn't much money that could be stolen from the card. On the other side of the spectrum, there was a lady who tried it but said she had "disastrous results". For some seniors, online shopping isn't something that interests them. The women especially, enjoy the social aspect of shopping. They enjoy visiting stores with their girlfriends and going out for lunch after the shopping is done.


I personally prefer to go to the store and buy gifts as I like to pick up, hold and feel what I'm buying (especially when it comes to clothing)! I also like to talk to the salespeople and have them answer any questions I have about the product I'm buying. There are other reasons too. We've seen stores such as Wal-Mart and Target, probably others too, who have had their sites hacked and personal information stolen. I'm also not great at opening mail; something could arrive and it would take me a while to open it. And, if something had to be returned, I would probably not do it just because of having to go through the process of mailing it back. I do however look online for gift ideas and do research to compare prices. I know also some people whose family members will send an online link for items they would like as gifts.

No matter how we buy gifts for family and friends, they are gifts from the heart given with love. May you feel the warm embrace of those important to you as you enjoy the magic of Christmas this season.

Linda Calder is a retired teacher. She likes to write and enjoys spending time with her family. She also enjoys going on cruises, taking pictures and scrapbooking.

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Horoscope

December 2016 to February 2017

Aries (March 21st – April 20th)

This season urges you to get plenty of rest and cocoon as much as possible. You are recovering from a very trying year. Your inner rooms are beckoning for your presence. As often as possible, take time to go within. Choose a place free of any over-stimulation. Take a candle-lit bath, pour a cup of tea and enjoy a little replenishing me-time.

Taurus (April 21st – May 21st)

Your career path will take a very definite turn over the winter months. The planets suggest that you focus on career matters and give personal or emotional matters a break for now. The key to securing your successful career transition will be your social skills, specifically your ability to address the interests of others.

Gemini (May 22nd – June 21st)

Do you recently feel that you'd like a vacation from your life, Gemini? This begs the question, "Why would we want a life that we would want a vacation from?" Vacation, to vacate, vacant. Your desire to have more space in your life is key. Something needs to be emptied out to make space for something else.

Cancer (June 22nd – July 22nd)

Examine the ways in which you've dealt with frustration in your life. This season will test your methods and beg a re-work. Do you hide away under your shell and hope the frustrating problem will disappear? Do you lash out irritably at loved ones or co-workers? How could you handle frustration differently? Count to ten...and breathe.

Leo (July 23rd – August 22nd)

'Tis the season to be generous Leo! You've evaluated how hard you've worked this year and want to lavish your loved ones with the fruits of your labour. You know that this does not only come in the form of gifts. The gift of your time and loving presence is the most precious gift of all. It's the gift that keeps on giving.

Virgo (August 23rd – September 23rd)

This holiday season brings out worry around money and finances. Christmas shopping and perhaps some recent major purchases have weighed on your mind. Ever responsible and dutiful, you bring this attitude to your finances. Just remember, money is a form of energy exchange and is only useful once it is released. Live a little.

Libra (September 24th – October 23rd)

Someone is trying to persuade you in a forceful way to have you see things their way. If you sense this is happening, you would be wise to know that there is no need to argue or engage in a counter struggle. You are free to listen and move on with your own views, preferably unscathed. Having confidence in one's own position does not require others to change theirs. But you know this already.

by Julie Antoinette



Scorpio (October 24th – November 22nd)

You have happened upon a new subject of interest, perhaps while surfing the internet or in passing randomly. This new interest that you have stumbled upon has you completely fascinated. You border on obsession with researching and scouring sources for information. Follow where your search leads. This promises to be an enriching adventure.

Sagittarius (November 23rd – December 21st)

A personal situation arises where you find yourself seeking sound advice. An older person will assist you with some wisdom gained from past and vast experience. A piece of wisdom will come to you poetically expressed in the form of a cliché, which you are asked not to dismiss. There is a lot of truth to be found in clichés.

Capricorn (December 22nd – January 19th)

A project or move which you are keen to make happen requires the approval of "higher ups". Unfortunately, you will be met with a lot of power tripping in the process of obtaining permission to move forward with your vision. Do not engage. There is only one reason that power-trippers trip and that is lack of power. Keep making your preparations in secret because very soon, your idea will reach a sympathetic and truly powerful ear.

Aquarius (January 20th – February 19th)

Over the holidays, gatherings with friends and family will provide the perfect social settings to engage, talk and catch up. And if there is any sign that loves a good intellectual chat-up, it's yours, Aquarius. Be careful to keep your conversations free from talk about politics, religion or anything controversially charged as this may cause an unpleasant atmosphere. 'Tis the season to be jolly. Not brawl-y.

Pisces (February 20th – March 20th)

Oh the weather outside is frightful, but the fire is so delightful! This is your season for love and romance, Pisces. Whether it's the formation of a new relationship, or increasing intimacy with your loved one, you are turning a corner in your relationship sector. Do I hear Christmas engagement bells?

Julie is a Sociology and Psychology graduate, a Psychotherapy Intern and a lifelong student of the psyche. She seeks to relay intuitive messages of guidance from the collective astrological archetypes. As above, so below.



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