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The Local Biz Magazine

Spring 2022

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From the Publisher

Welcome to Spring 2022 everyone! This year is the Year of the Garden which is a celebration of the garden and everything gardening related in Canada. The ceremonies official launch on March 20, 2022, which is the first day of spring. If you love gardening, have recently discovered it thanks to the pandemic, or just want to learn more about all things gardening-related, then this is the celebration for you. Sukanya Samy has written a feature article fittingly titled *The Year of the Garden* which tells us much more about this event, and also discusses some interesting things like the benefits of gardening (which are many), the essentials for starting a garden, and types of plants you can plant if you want to try your hand at it. You can find her article on page 6 of the magazine.

We would also like to take this time to say goodbye to Josie Myers, who has been our family columnist for the past few years at the magazine. We wish her well in her future endeavours. And, we would like to welcome our new family columnist Monica Fox to the magazine. Monica is a busy mom of 3 and we look forward to her insights on family life in our ongoing *Family Matters* column.

Finally, don't forget to check out what the rest of our columnists are writing about (on the topic of well-being in this issue), as well as our bloggers on our website. We have lots of great content for you!

As always, I hope you enjoy reading the wonderful content we have for you in this Spring 2022 issue of *The Local Biz Magazine*. Feel free to share your thoughts on it with us. Don't forget to also connect with us through our website www.thelocalbizmagazine.ca and Facebook page. We love to hear from you! Until next time!

Antoine Elhashem
Publisher



COVID-19 and the shelter-in-place orders in 2020 saw many people take up new hobbies, or renew their existing hobbies. Exercising, baking, and gardening were three of the most popular, and people could dabble in them with the extra time they had on hand.

Passion for gardening was evident, and the demand for plants, seeds, horticultural products, and services saw an unprecedented rise. For example, Canada-based *Stokes Seeds*, which ships to the United States and Canada, received 1,000 online orders during the weekend of March 21, 2020, four times more than average. The reason for this spike? “People around the world are turning to gardening as a soothing, family friendly hobby that also eases concerns over food security as lockdowns slow the harvesting and distribution of some crops.” (Reuters)

Some of these trends have continued into 2021 and will continue into 2022. With this in mind, *Communities in Bloom* and the *Canadian Garden Council* has proclaimed 2022 as Canada's **Year of the Garden** in honor of the *Canadian Nursery Landscape Association* (CNLA) centennial celebration. The Year of the Garden 2022 will showcase Canada's diverse horticultural and gardening practices and hopes to create a legacy for a sustainable future through plants. Planning is underway for a year of exciting events, celebrations, and promotions that will take place in communities, schools, businesses, public gardens, and backyard gardens across Canada.

Benefits of Gardening

Like many people, I had time on my hands during the first pandemic wave, and I took up gardening as my hobby. I had a few ornamental and indoor plants, and I tried growing a few vegetables for the first time. Gardening helped me tremendously – it took my mind off all the negativity and gave me something constructive to do. It gave me the confidence to grow more and gave my family some healthy, homegrown vegetables. I cannot emphasize the various benefits of gardening enough.

1. Health and Wellness Benefits

It's well documented that gardening provides many physical and mental health benefits.

According to the *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, gardening qualifies as exercise. In fact, getting out in the yard for just 30-45 minutes can burn up to 300 calories. This exercise, like any other, keeps your mind active, alert, and young.

Digging in the dirt, squatting, bending, and balancing all are forms of resistance exercises that will keep your muscles working as well and help you move better in the long run. Being outdoors in nature also aids in getting fresh air, boosts your mind, and helps your body absorb the necessary vitamin D from the sun.

In addition, gardening helps you eat better and healthier if you grow fruits and vegetables. Many of us turn to unhealthy foods as they are available in a pinch, but like the adage ‘out of sight, out of mind’, if you keep junk out of your house, you won't eat it as much. If you have plenty of fresh produce, you will tend to pick up those and eat healthier.

Gardening is also a great habit to teach children. They love seeing new roots grow and harvesting vegetables. Getting children to

appreciate healthy foods through gardening is an excellent way to form a healthy relationship with food. Gardening keeps on giving. Once you plant a garden, you will, for certain, share your fresh produce with your neighbors and friends. You will be spreading health – that's the power of the garden.

2. Environmental Benefits

There are many environmental benefits to gardening. It integrates more plants into city life: tree canopy, community gardens, public parks, green roofs, and green infrastructure. This helps produce more oxygen, sequester more carbon, and mitigate heat in urban areas. Planting more can also engage Canadians in the federal government's commitment to plant 2 billion trees and fight climate change.

3. Economic Benefits

A few seeds can grow enough vegetables to feed you a few meals. According to *Investopedia*, if done right, the return on investment of starting a garden is very high. What that means is that subtracting all the expenses you make for planning and planting a garden, the return you get for your investment is a lot more than buying produce. For example, a pound of organic tomatoes at a store may cost you about \$3.00. A package of heirloom tomato seeds, that costs approximately the same, will yield much much more. One tomato plant may provide you with 5-10 pounds of tomatoes during the season. You can see how much more profitable that is for you compared to store bought tomatoes.

4. Cultural Benefits

Gardening also provides many cultural benefits. People can better appreciate the role gardens play in communities and our

country. Garden's welcome everyone and anyone, there are no biases, all of us can start a garden.

Gardens can also support the integration of garden culture in schools and community gardens. Consider the [Let's Move](#) initiative started by the former first lady of the USA, Michelle Obama. Not only do children get an opportunity to be active, but they eat healthy and appreciate diversity in each other.

Types of Plants or Gardens

With so many benefits, no wonder gardening has been a top hobby around the world in the last two years. But, if you have never done it, how do you get started? What kind of garden can you start with? Here are some recommendations. You can try them one at a time or mix them up based on your confidence and experience.

- Indoor plants:** If you are a complete newbie, indoor plants can be a great start. There are lots of varieties to choose from. Many ornamentals are easy to care for and can help purify the air in your house. Many are flowering plants that can brighten up any home. These plants can also help you understand water, light, and soil requirements, guiding you to more complex plant care.
- Flower garden:** You can grow perennials (come back year after year) or annuals (need to be replaced yearly) in pots or in the ground outside. Both perennials and annuals can be grown by planting a seed, or seedling (young plant).
- Herbs and vegetables:** Some herbs and vegetables are very easy to grow and care for. Just throw some seeds in the soil (ground or pot) and watch the magic happen. Depending on what you want to grow, you can read up online or at the back of the seeds package to get a basic understanding of the plant's



While indoor plants and ornamental gardens are relatively simple, a basic understanding of growing fruits and vegetables is imperative. Here are a few considerations.

1. Light – No plant can grow without light. Most fruits and vegetables do best in sunlight, but many plants can thrive in artificial light called grow lights. Grow lights mimic the full-spectrum light that sunlight possesses. Understanding how much light a particular plant needs can go a long way in seeing success.

2. Soil – Healthy soil is imperative for plants. A vibrant soil with beneficial microbes helps plants thrive. Compost and organic matter like leaves, kitchen waste, or bark contain living organisms and microbes. These microbes feed on organic matter and release macro and micro-nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium, iron, calcium, etc., back into the soil. The richer the soil in these macro/micro-nutrients, the better your yield and health of your vegetables. You can fertilize your soil by applying synthetic fertilizer to take care of the macro-nutrients your plants need, but these fertilizers don't provide micro-nutrients, your soil does. Note: plants grown in containers have slightly different soil requirements than plants grown in the ground. It is best to purchase potting soil or potting mix if growing plants in a pot.

3. Water – Understand the water needs of the crop you are growing. An inch of water a week with some rainfall is adequate for most vegetables. Wet foliage for extended periods can enable pests and diseases.

5. Mulch – Mulch is a layer of material applied around a garden to conserve soil moisture, improve fertility, and keep away pests. A three-inch layer of organic mulch around plants insulates the soil and keeps it cooler in the summer months and warmer in winter. It suppresses weeds and doesn't let water stand, thus keeping some pests away. Keep in mind that some mulches may contain chemicals. Look for the *Mulch and Soil Council* seal in bagged mulches – they certify them to be free of any harmful ingredients. Or you can ask your garden center the source of the mulch.

6. Pests – Pests show you that there is some problem with your garden. If you have taken care of other essentials properly, your healthy plants may be able to fight them off naturally. But if that does not work, there are natural ways to deal with pests, like applying neem or eucalyptus oil or releasing 'beneficial insects'. Beneficial insects like ladybugs are available to buy and help eat the other harmful pests affecting your garden. If these natural ways don't keep the pests at bay, using chemical insecticides or pesticides can help, but bear in mind that pesticides can harm pollinators, beneficial insects, or even your pets, so apply them responsibly.

7. Size of your garden – As an amateur, start small. A one or two-square-foot garden may be enough to grow a few herbs and a couple of small vegetable plants. As you understand more about gardening, you can increase the size of your garden.

Some of you may not have space outdoors but don't worry. You can grow most food in containers or produce bags on your balcony or porch, keeping these essentials in mind. If you are still unsure where to start, visit your local garden center or local nursery, and they can help you.

The last two years have been tough on most of us, and we still have a long way to go before we are out of the pandemic for good. Gardening or growing plants can be your rainbow in these dark and isolated times. The activity can positively impact your mental state - watching something grow that you have cared for is very therapeutic and helps keep our physical bodies moving too. I know it helped me manage my nerves last year and this. So, make 2022 your year of gardening and reap the numerous benefits of this great hobby.

If you would like to know more about this initiative, visit <https://gardenscanada.ca/year-of-the-garden/>.

Indoor plants: Aloe vera, Jade (*Crassula Ovata*), Lucky Bamboo (*Dracaena Sanders*), Snake Plant (*Sansevieria*), and Pothos (*Epipremnum*)

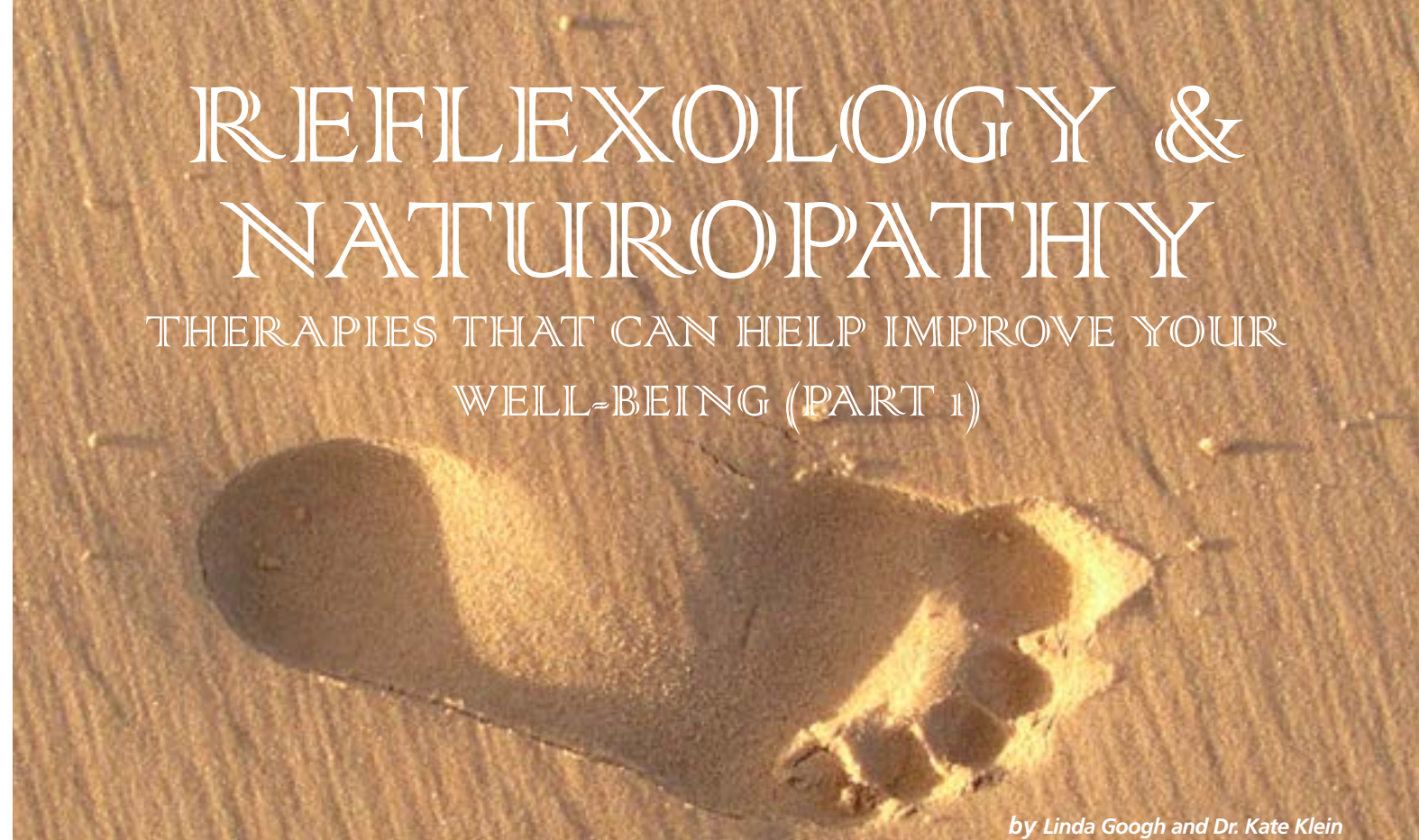
Herbs and Vegetables: Root vegetables like carrots and beets, peppers, salad greens like lettuce and spinach, beans, lavender, rosemary, and oregano.

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REFLEXOLOGY & NATUROPATHY

THERAPIES THAT CAN HELP IMPROVE YOUR WELL-BEING (PART 1)



by Linda Googh and Dr. Kate Klein

Do you want to sleep better? Or be better able to manage stress in your life? If you often take the quick-fix route of medication to treat your ailments, why not instead try alternative therapies. In this 2-part article, we talk to four different wellness practitioners to find out how their respective therapies can help with sleep and stress problems, as well improve your well-being and overall quality of life. Part 1 looks at reflexology and naturopathy.

Reflexology

What is reflexology?

According to the *Reflexology Association of Canada*, "reflexology is the study of reflexes. Reflexology therapies are natural therapeutic methods derived from this study based on the principle that there are reflexes in the body that map to other parts, glands, and organs of the body. Through the application of pressure on these reflexes, reflexology therapy can relieve tension, improve circulation, and support the body's efforts to function optimally."

Who can benefit from reflexology?

All ages, including the fittest of fit and the chronically ill (cancer patients and those in palliative care) can benefit from this non-invasive therapy. Reflexology introduces a state called "parasympathetic" that facilitates the body's natural ability to re-balance its self-healing potential, regulate nerve impulses, and alleviate energy blockages. In a nutshell, by stimulating the nerve endings of the feet, hands, ears, and face through simple reflexology techniques of applied pressure and the magic touch of trained hands, your blood flow and nerve supply to all areas of the body will improve as will your lymphatic and immune system.

How does reflexology help a person deal with stress?

By stimulating the nerve endings, reflexologists send messages along the nerve pathways to various organs stimulating and communicating with the body's nerve network. This helps to eliminate stress as it balances the energies within the body. Good feeling hormones called endorphins are produced during a treatment combatting stress. Many refer to this feeling as a "runners high."

Can reflexology help a person sleep better?

The answer is a big fat YES! Reflexology is a natural way of relaxing and balancing the body which not only induces sleep, but also helps improve the quantity and quality of sleep. Signals are sent to the brain that effect our brain waves. Circulation improves promoting a slower and deeper breathing pattern. Pain is relieved, and the magic begins as we enter the state of homeostasis. Sweet Dreams!



Do you recommend doing reflexology as a treatment on its own, or in conjunction with another therapeutic approach? Please elaborate.

Reflexology can be a stand-alone therapy as well as a complementary one. Many clients rotate their reflexology treatments with other treatments such as acupuncture and massage therapy, just to name a few. Reflexology can also pick up the slack if injury prevents someone from getting an alternative treatment. For example, a broken arm can easily be worked on and treated through a foot reflexology treatment.

In your own words, tell me why reflexology is important for an individual's overall well-being?

Reflexology is a healing modality offering the body assistance in its own recovery. More and more people are turning to reflexology to alleviate symptoms of chronic pain, stress, and medical disorders. Reflexology therapy has been shown to be an effective treatment for those suffering from chronic pain and illness, including the fear and anxiety brought on by disease. The many benefits continue to work after each session.

Are your services covered under OHIP? Private insurance?

Reflexology is not covered by OHIP. It is covered by most insurance companies across Canada. Clients must check their individual insurance plans or their employers to determine if reflexology is covered in their plan. If it is not covered, clients can

request to have it added to their coverage or ask their employer to include it in their group health insurance.

What would you say to people who are interested, but hesitant about trying out a new therapeutic approach to improve their health?

If you have doubts about giving reflexology a try, I can assure you it's an affordable, non-intrusive holistic therapy. And don't worry if you're shy – the only article of clothing that is removed are your socks. (Did you know that we have over 7,000 nerve endings in the feet alone?) It's no wonder the tension melts away like butter! Don't like your feet touched? Reflexology for hands, ears, and face, promote that very same feeling of well-being. Give it a try! You have nothing to lose but everything to gain!

Linda Googh is a former professional dancer, choreographer, and international dance adjudicator. Her life-changing foot injuries led her to what would become her second calling. Linda's journey back to wellness not only led her to becoming a Registered Canadian Reflexology Therapist, but also an examiner with the *Reflexology Association of Canada*. A wellness speaker, and author of the audio-visual book *Reflexology2Go*.

Naturopathy

1. What is naturopathic medicine or a naturopathic doctor?

Naturopathic medicine is a distinct primary care system that focuses on addressing the root cause of illness using evidence-based natural treatments methods ranging from nutrition and lifestyle recommendations, vitamins/supplements, herbs, and acupuncture just to name a few.

Naturopathic doctors are highly skilled primary care providers who are regulated in several provinces and states across North America. They are required to complete nearly a decade of post-secondary education and pass licensing exams in order to treat patients. Some naturopathic doctors obtain additional training and licenses to prescribe specific pharmaceuticals, such as bioidentical hormones or desiccated thyroid hormones, or provide intravenous vitamin therapy to their patients.

2. Who can benefit from seeing a naturopathic doctor?

Everyone!

Naturopathic doctors provide care to patients of all ages, ranging from newborn to elderly. Many naturopathic doctors choose to focus their practice on specific illnesses/conditions or populations, for example pediatrics, women's health, fertility, etc. while others may tailor their practice similar to a general family practitioner.

Many patients seeking a naturopathic doctor have seen several health care providers/specialists for one specific health concern. However, we know our bodies are complex and although several health problems may not seem related, they often are connected in some way. One of the many reasons patients seek out this



approach is because they are looking for a complete assessment and treatment plan which takes into account all aspects of their physical, mental, and emotional health.

3. How does naturopathic medicine help a person deal with stress?

There are several approaches naturopathic doctors use to help patients address stress. During an initial appointment, stress is one of the primary aspects discussed to determine why it is occurring and how it can be managed. Some stressors are modifiable while other stressors are not so easily changed.

The goal of naturopathic medicine is to help the patient address their stressors which can be changed and support the body's ability to cope with stress through proper nutrition, exercise, supplements/herbs, or acupuncture, and ongoing assessment.

4. Can a naturopathic doctor help a person sleep better?

Definitely! Again, naturopathic doctors assess the foundation of healthy sleep in our initial and ongoing consultations with our patients because it is such an important aspect to overall physical and mental well-being.

We address any underlying reasons why sleep may be challenging for a patient by first assessing if it is a concern with initiating sleep, staying asleep, or both. Usually, we discuss sleep hygiene (areas where we can improve in our sleep routine/habits), reasons why sleep could be problematic, potential

evaluation of sleep quality including blood work and/or sleep studies (if applicable), and provide treatment options for improving sleep quality. Treatment options will range based on why sleep is a concern.

5. Do you recommend naturopathic medicine as a treatment on its own, or in conjunction with another therapeutic approach? Please elaborate.

It depends on a variety of factors. Naturopathic doctors are part of a patient's health care team offering a specific skill set to help address their health concerns. We believe that there is a reason other health care providers such as a family doctor, physiotherapist, chiropractor, massage therapist, etc. exist; and that is because we all have something different and beneficial to offer our patients.

Patients are encouraged to build their health care team and seek one or several treatment options to help them address their concerns.

6. In your own words, tell me why naturopathic medicine is important for an individual's overall well-being?

Naturopathic doctors offer a unique approach and comprehensive assessment when addressing our patient's health. We take the time to get to know our patient's history, current health concerns, and overall goals. Treatment plans are tailored to our patient, providing a safe and effective option to meet the needs of the patient.

7. Are your services covered under OHIP? Private insurance?

Naturopathic medicine is not covered by OHIP. Many private insurance companies do offer naturopathic coverage under their paramedical services. Coverage amounts can range. We encourage patients to contact their providers to inquire about their coverage amount.

8. What would you say to people who are interested, but hesitant about trying out a new therapeutic approach to improve their health?

Many naturopathic doctors offer free 15-minute meet and greets to answer any questions, briefly discuss concerns, and provide an explanation of the visit structure to potential patients who aren't sure if naturopathic medicine is for them. I highly encourage anyone interested in seeing a naturopathic doctor to reach out and book a complimentary consultation to determine if you and the practitioner are a good fit for one another and if you are on the same page with your health goals.

Dr. Kate Klein is a licensed naturopathic doctor and owner of *Your Health Collective*, a health and wellness clinic located in Ajax, serving all of Durham region. Dr. Kate focuses in women's health concerns including hormonal conditions and fertility, digestive conditions, and mental health. When not in the clinic, you will find Dr. Kate spending time outdoors with her family and friends.



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Improving Your Finances & Your Financial Well-Being

by Nicole Forrester

Spring cleaning often refers to giving your home a deep clean after a long winter so that you're fresh, clean, and unencumbered for the warmer coming months ahead.

Most of us do this for our homes annually, but how often do we do this for our finances? Why not spring clean annually for your finances as well?

Financial Well-Being

Your financial well-being is the extent to which you can meet all your current financial commitments and needs comfortably, while also having the financial resilience to continue doing so in the future. It's not only about +/- on a balance sheet. It's about having a good handle on where you are and where you plan to go. It's also about how prepared you are for unforeseen financial circumstances and how much freedom you reap from the money you earn, to fund and live the life you want to lead.

Generally speaking, people with a higher level of financial well-being are less stressed about money and have a greater resilience rate when life throws unexpected expenses at them. In contrast, people with a lower level of financial well-being find it much more difficult to bounce back from unexpected expenditures and are far more stressed about money. It has been found that having a higher level of financial well-being is associated with lower levels of stress both physical and mental.

Step 1: Financial Snapshot

The journey to improving your financial well-being starts with looking at where you are right now. Put together a summary or a financial snapshot of your assets (what you own), debts (what you owe) and all forms of your income (what you earn) on an

annual and monthly basis. This will give you a snapshot of where you are financially at this moment. This is not a difficult task physically, but it is mentally. Looking at what you're spending and saving monthly and annually can be a tough mental task but I promise it will be a truly beneficially one. It is the first step in taking control of your financial well-being and in turn improving the quality of your life.

Step 2: Looking at the Numbers

Once you have your financial snapshot completed, take a breath, and then take a moment to really absorb the numbers. Do you have more going out in debt payments monthly than income coming in? Have you got extra money every month after paying your monthly debts that just seems to disappear with miscellaneous purchases? Try and establish whether you are in a deficit monthly or a surplus. Look closely at what you are spending your money on. There will definitely be a few surprises.

If you're in a monthly deficit...

You've faced the music and it doesn't feel good. You recognize that on a monthly basis you've got more debt payments going out than income coming in. If so, start to do a deep dive into your debts. For example, have you got multiple balances you're servicing on high interest rate credit cards? It is often a good strategy to consolidate your high interest rate credit card debt on a line of credit at a lower rate of interest. Instead of having four monthly payments at 18%+ interest, you can apply for a line of credit, consolidate the debt so you have one payment at a lower interest rate of approximately 8%.

If you own your own home, taking advantage of the soaring home values may put you in a prime position to re-finance your home. The bank will re-evaluate the value of your home and you may be happily surprised that you qualify for more room on your mortgage. Consolidating all your outstanding debt into your mortgage is often the easiest, cheapest way to pay it off. Mortgage rates are still at historical lows, 2.9%-4.5%, and having

debt



one monthly payment at the cheapest rate of interest you can qualify for, makes the most financial sense and will relieve more mental stress than you can imagine.

Examine Your Expenses

After you've had a look at your major debt payments – car payments, tuition payments, credit card debt – do a deep dive into what you're spending your money on. Getting *Starbucks* 3 days a week can run you a tab of \$120 a month or \$1440 a year! Does making your coffee at home and cutting back to 1 coffee out a week make sense in the grand scheme of things if it will save you \$80 per month? If you're eating lunch out 5 days a week that's \$15 x 5 = \$75/week or \$300/month or \$3600/year. Does it make sense to cut back to eating out 1 day a week instead to help your bottom line and financial well-being?

Not saving?

You've looked at your financial snapshot and you've got enough money to cover your monthly debts and some left over, but it always seems to get spent one way or another. Congratulations! This is a good spot to be in. Now you just need to protect and grow your surplus. The best way to save money is to pay yourself first. Figure out approximately how much you have as a surplus monthly, and start a pre-authorized contribution plan. This is an automatic withdrawal you can set up with your financial institution. You can have this automatic withdrawal going into a RESP for your child's future education, your RRSP for your retirement, or any other number of investments you have for your long-term financial goals.

Step 3: Long-Term and Short-Term Goals

Now that you've put together a financial snapshot and analyzed where your money is going, you need to set both long-term and short-term goals. People's long-term goals are usually centred around retirement, funding a child's higher education, buying a home, or paying off a mortgage on their existing home. Short-

term goals usually include saving for a family vacation, buying a car, or paying off credit card debt. Whatever your long term or short-term goals are, you get one step closer to reaching them by identifying what they are and taking measured consistent action to reach them. We all may luck out and hit a bullseye blindly every once in a while, but we increase our chances of hitting a bullseye exponentially if we know what it is and what it looks like.

Your Mindset

Our relationship with our finances emanates in our spirit and energy and affects all aspects of our lives. Generally, people are operating with a spirit of scarcity or abundance. If you're always scrambling at month end to make sure everything gets paid, or are worried about money to fund future plans, you are operating in a spirit of scarcity. By looking at your financial snapshot, analyzing where you're spending, making efficient changes and outlining your future long-term and short-term goals, you begin to take control of your financial well-being and move into a spirit of abundance. Operating in a spirit of abundance will draw more money, opportunities and positive energy to you.

Nicole Forrester is a local Durham & GTA Real Estate Broker with over 17+ years of experience in the financial industry. Trained on Bay Street as an Investment Executive & Professional Financial Planner for one of Canada's largest financial institutions, she has extensive experience negotiating large financial transactions. Nicole's goal is to be a blessing to every person she meets and recognizes that every trade in Real Estate is not just a house... it's a Home. For more information search Nicole Forrester Real Estate Broker on Social Media.



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laptop or other portable device.

Spring Events Calendar

Usually, our Events calendar is filled with event listings. Unfortunately, this year, due to the ever-changing COVID-19 pandemic, many events have either been cancelled, postponed, or gone virtual. The good news is that things are starting to return to some sort of normalcy and we expect to see an increase in many local events in the coming months.

Below, is a current listing of events planned for the Spring months in Durham Region. If an event you would like to attend is not listed below, we suggest you contact the event organizer directly to determine the status of the event.

March 6 to April 24, 2022

Moving Connections: Dancing Collected Stories

Moving Connections is a community movement practice, conceived and developed by Karen Kaeja in 2018. During the pandemic, this practice took the form of virtual workshops delivered via Zoom. Dancing Collected Stories offers participants the opportunity to collaboratively create new movement experiences in each session that are based on personal stories. Participants will be led through the workshops by a team of professional dancers. This program is designed for all ages, bodies, and abilities - no previous dance experience required! Adults aged 50+ are encouraged to participate. FREE Pickering
www.kaeja.org/movingconnections
226-975-1714

March 9, 2022

How to Plan a Successful Garden

This presentation on planning a successful garden covers evaluating site conditions, other factors such as maintenance, function and style and finally planning your garden space and selecting plants. Zoom event:
[zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_N5i9LS3uOPKtGoBHK8iqEA](https://zoom.us/join/zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_N5i9LS3uOPKtGoBHK8iqEA)
Whitby
905-706-1098

March 12, 2022

Geocaching Adventures

This beginners workshop will introduce you to Geocaching in a fun and safe setting at Owl's Hollow in Uxbridge, ON. The session will start with an introduction about geocaching, followed by an orientation to the GPS unit. After one practice geocache as a group, a review will be done about important geocaching etiquette, helpful hints, safety considerations, and set the participants loose on the course in groups with a GPS unit. Participants could hunt for 1, 2, 3, or more hidden caches ranging in size (from micro to large) and difficulty level. Caches include trading items for all participants. Children under 12 must be accompanied by a paying adult. Please come prepared for the weather as the event runs rain, shine, or snow! Uxbridge
sites.google.com/geocacheCanada.com/geocache-canada/home
416-402-6746

March 16, 2022

Perennials

Topics covered include the ideal conditions for various plants, the many colours and sizes available in both flowers and foliage. Also discussed is the where and when of planting, pruning, adding or removing to make your perennial garden beds a thing of wonder. Zoom Event: [zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_rYQhb6JnTJ-l3Kgpr-lrXg](https://zoom.us/join/zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_rYQhb6JnTJ-l3Kgpr-lrXg)
Whitby
905-706-1098

March 26, 2022

Middle Raged - Sketch Comedy starring Geri Hall and Gary Pearson

A hysterical sketch comedy show that explores the ridiculous nature of life from 30 to 65 and beyond, when the bloom is off the rose, but the thorns are sharper than ever. The show hilariously highlights the challenges that life inevitably throws our way as we age. It's all about couples dealing with child rearing in confusing modern times, empty nests, aging parents, financial stresses, struggling to write our wills, and yes, even trying to spice up the bedroom with Outlander role play. Parental Advisory - Mature Content. This show is not suitable for those under 18. Tickets required. Ajax
www.stfranciscentre.ca or ajax.ca/townevents
905-619-2529, ext. 7241

April 18 to 24, 2022

Community Clean Up: Kick off Week

For groups who would like to organize a cleanup in their own neighbourhood, including parks, green spaces and trails. Oshawa
specialevents@oshawa.ca

April 30, 2022

Tea & Talk: Pickering's Roaring 1920's

Despite voting itself dry since the 1800s, Pickering was anything but in the 1920s! Come enjoy a refreshing cup of tea (this is a temperate function after all!) with a homemade scone and sweet, followed by a talk about Pickering's less-than-temperate decade. Funding provided by the Government of Canada, and created with the assistance of Central Counties Tourism. Minimum age - 12 years. Pickering
www.waronwhisy.ca
905.683.8401

May 7, 2022

Always Abba: A Tribute to Abba

Experience their incredible music and majesty with ALWAYS ABBA as they bring you ABBA's greatest hits. Relive the fun as you enjoy the classic looks and sound that made ABBA famous. ALWAYS ABBA's impeccable vocals and stellar musicianship makes them the greatest ABBA tribute and they offer a performance you are sure to love. Come spend the night with ALWAYS ABBA and let your inner Dancing Queen be reborn! Tickets required. Ajax
www.stfranciscentre.ca or ajax.ca/townevents
905-619-2529, ext. 7241

May 23, 2022

Scugog Shores Museum Village Opens for the Season!

Explore the 11 buildings of historic pioneer village and the Ojibway Heritage Interpretive Lands. Guided tours are provided. Regular admission applies. Additional fees may apply on special event days. *Subject to change depending on public health and COVID-19 restrictions at the time* Scugog
www.scugog.ca/en/Museums.aspx
9052602017

May 28, 2022

Artfest

Artfest is back in person for 2022 in Esplanade Park. Residents can enjoy browsing through an open-air market while experiencing the sights and sounds of artistic expressions. Running for three Saturdays in Esplanade Park! Free to attend. Cost for vendors. Pickering
www.cityofpickering.ca
905.420.4620

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.

Spring Horoscope

MARCH 2022 to MAY 2022

by Julie Antoinette



Aries (March 21 – April 20)
'Tis the season of your birth, Aries! Life is composed of a complexity of cycles. Your birthday, in conjunction with springtime, signals the passing of old energy and the inviting of the new. Notice the areas of your life that have had recent closure, and those that are about to be birthed. Infuse your highest intentions and wishes into this process for best results.

Taurus (April 21 – May 21)
If there is a need for forgiveness in any area of your life, the planets are behind you to help put this behind you. You are not advised to carry this heavy feeling into your next phase. Forgiveness is really to “give forth”. Simply, it is to let go. Release yourself from this burden. Give yourself this gift.

Gemini (May 22 – June 21)
Do you remember moments in the past where you were overcome with intense laughter? That feeling of intermittent-ecstatic-loss-of-command-over-many-of-your-voluntary-functions kind of intense laughter? It's been a while since you've felt that kind of reckless abandon. Ring that funny friend or watch a comedy show, buckle up and settle in. Laughter is the best medicine.

Cancer (June 22 – July 22)
You are in the midst of adjusting to something new. Whether it be a home, a car, a new child or family member, job, relationship, something new has come to you. Be mindful that any stress you may be experiencing is merely related to an adjustment period. The planets say embrace this new appearance with all your might. You're about to level-up.

Leo (July 23 – August 22)
Don't be alarmed by the present change in your energy levels. Although you have always been up to any task and ready to handle any situation, lately, you've felt too exhausted to engage as you normally do. We all have energy ebbs and flows. Take a moment, slow down, rest and recharge. You'll be leagues further if you do.

Virgo (August 23 – September 23)
You're ready to re-invent yourself, Virgo. Every time you look in the mirror, something urges you to work a little more with what you have. This will give you the gentle push toward inspiration for re-invention. Start with a haircut. Consider a wardrobe renewal. Hire a consultant if you're really serious. Time to meet the new you.

Libra (September 24 – October 23)
Lately you've been drawn to romantic comedies and love stories and you don't know why. This is not your usual go-to for entertainment. Perhaps your heart is tugging at you to re-evaluate and re-address your current love and relationships sector. Ask yourself those difficult questions to arrive at your solutions for a better and more fulfilling love relationship. Life is really all about our relationships. And you, Libra, hold the balance of exchanges in your energy. Take it to higher levels.

Scorpio (October 24 – November 22)
You find yourself in a situation that is difficult to bear. From whichever angle you apply your risk assessment thinking, you imagine only countless barriers and limitations and loads of unpleasant consequences. Think about how this kind of thinking serves you. Are you secretly served by your stalemated position vs. actually moving forward? Are you part of the problem or part of the solution? A little self-honesty will clarify and release you from this tempting downward spiral.

Sagittarius (November 23 – December 21)
There's only one thing that spring means to you this year and that is cleaning. You have caught a bout of the Declutter Bug. Every room, corner, container and drawer have been searched and processed and you feel incredibly lighter. But you don't feel done yet. Perhaps you could re-direct your scrubbing inward. There are many ways to cleanse and detox the body. Do some research and get cleansing!

Capricorn (December 22 – January 19)
There is someone in your life who preserves the nostalgia of a simpler time. You love being in the presence of this person because of the feeling they bring of being transported into another world. Think about the reasons for your attraction to this feeling. What are the qualities you are attracted to? Is your life calling you to simplify? Are you drawn back to different values? A different pace? The answer awaits your questioning.

Aquarius (January 20 – February 19)
Are you having that experience where you repeatedly see number patterns everywhere? What can this mean? One way to approach this is to be aware of your thoughts at the time of the numbers appearing. The universe has many ways of summoning our attention to self examine and recalibrate if necessary. This begins in our thoughts.

Pisces (February 20 – March 20)
You've struggled with how to manage the parts of your personality you're the least proud of. Never be ashamed of your perceived flaws or vulnerabilities. When you own them and display them as badges before others, no one can use them against you. Because now you do not hold them against you. Integrate, not separate.

Written by Julie Antoinette. In this horoscope, she relays intuitive messages of guidance from the collective astrological archetypes. As above, so below.

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by Tara Richardson



Soul Searching

When you think of well-being, what comes to mind?

When you think of well-being, what comes to mind?

Green smoothies and grueling hour-long workouts every day? Going on a spiritual journey to India? If this doesn't sound appealing, please know that everyone's version of well-being is different. My picture of well-being does not include green smoothies, hour-long workouts, or heading to India to become enlightened, and this is okay! Instead, I focus on the activities that I know keep me well and do them. Notice the emphasis on doing the activities. Very often we know what's good for us but, for a myriad of reasons, just don't do them. For me this means taking time to journal, move my body, read books on personal growth, spend time with others, and just slow down to appreciate life.

Being well is not about being perfect and it is not simply the opposite of mental illness. Mental illness will often rob us of our memory of being well, which I think is extremely cruel. Not only is your mood low, now you can't even fathom being well. Regardless of mental illness or not, it may be helpful to sit down and identify what you are like when you're well in case you forget: Are you enthusiastic at work? Do you take the dog out three times a day? Are you connected to friends? Write down what wellness means to you. If you're really struggling, imagine yourself as the best version of you: How do you feel? What are your thoughts? What gives you meaning? What do you do? Taking time to reflect on what wellness means for you will allow you to notice times where you are/are not your most well self. A big part of wellness is checking in with yourself regularly.

Many experts suggest that having balance across all life domains is important. Life domains include personal development, career, finances, relationships, spiritual, love life, fun, and health. I see the merit in balance. If I'm putting 110% into relationships, it's likely that aside from this domain the rest of my life is a hot mess. However, there are other experts who posit that we should be spending more time on our main goals and don't promote a perfect balance. If I am trying to write a book in a year, it's going to eat up a lot of time and I will likely need to drop the ball in one of the other life domains, but I also know that it's time limited. Both opinions are valid. Choose whatever works best for you.

Finally, remember the well-used cliché: well-being is an on-going journey, not a destination. Sounds very hokey but accurate. When we make wellness a journey it is more likely to lead to a happier, more fulfilled life. If we focus on the destination, then we will constantly be chasing a “better” version of ourselves without ever getting to the destination. Choose the journey.

Tara is a wellness blogger for The Local Biz Magazine who hopes to publish her memoir on finding hope and meaning while living with a mental illness.

Get Fit: Inside & Out

by Bianca Schaefer



Boost Your Wellness Goals with a Personal Trainer

According to a worldwide survey done by the *American College of Sports Medicine*, one of the top-ten anticipated fitness trends of 2022 will be the hiring of personal trainers. In truth though, this hasn't been just a trend for 2022. People have been doing this for years! I know, because I'm a personal trainer who has been coaching clients in person and online long before COVID-19 and Zoom Training even existed. Frustratingly, with so many lockdowns and gym closures, people have had to re-assess how they do fitness. Now more than ever, hiring a personal trainer can be just what you need to achieve your wellness goals. Here's why you should consider it.

Personalized Programming

Whether you're an avid fitness buff or just wanting to get back into shape, personal trainers can tailor a fitness program that's designed specifically for you. This often involves an assessment of your current fitness level, mobility, and desired goals. They can personalize your workouts to accommodate the space and equipment you have available, create a vast variety of movements/activities designed uniquely for your body, and create a hybrid of indoor/outdoor workouts. Say goodbye to boring, old routines.

Accountability and Motivation

Let's face it. We all do better when we have someone in our corner cheering us on and keeping us accountable. Having a trainer can help you be committed to your goals through regularly scheduled appointments, progress assessments, reasonable challenges, and encouraging words to keep you motivated. A trainer wants you to succeed just as much as you do yourself; and having someone focus on you helps you stay committed and motivated.

Achieve Goals through Professional Expertise

Looking to lose weight, run your first marathon, or improve your golf score? Hiring a professional can help you achieve your goals safely, efficiently, and much more effectively. After all, how many times have you tried it on your own first, only to discover there was a better way to do it, that could have saved you time and prevented injury? A seasoned trainer knows how to help you achieve your goals in the best, most effective way possible. Let them do what you hired them to do; which is helping you get to the next level.

There are so many additional benefits with hiring a personal trainer. While your trainer can be a source of innovation and motivation, you may also develop a life-long friendship with someone who truly wants to come alongside you on your wellness journey. And wouldn't it feel great knowing you're helping to support the economy and your trainer's livelihood by hiring them for their expertise? If I may humbly say, "I always feel honoured."

Bianca Schaefer is a Holistic Health Coach who inspires a global community to take charge of their health through nourishing their body, mind and soul with delicious foods, an active lifestyle and a mindset that believes anything is possible. Check out Bianca on her personal website, BiancaSchaefer.com or follow on Social @biancaschaefer1.

by Afeefa Malik



Tweens, Teens & In-Between

Hello readers! I hope you all had a great start to 2022. What an eventful year 2021 was! It is definitely worth noting your accomplishments and acknowledging that you all made it through the year in one piece!

We started 2021 in lockdown. Fortunately, by the summertime, things started to look better with cases declining and in-person schools opening up again. However, Ontario went back into lockdown in January 2022. Despite this disappointing end, many positive things happened during the winter. My most memorable aspect of the last season was watching *Spiderman - No Way Home* with my sisters in theatres.

While reflecting on the past, and anticipating the future, I continue to acknowledge the vital importance of taking time for my mental health and well-being. In this column, I want to touch upon some of my experiences with the pandemic, and why it is important to take care of our mental health during this time.

The increase in COVID-19 cases greatly affected many of us. As students, we had to say goodbye to seeing our friends as we went back to an online learning environment. It felt like 2020 all over again. This left a lot of us feeling anxious.

Personally, I felt as if I had adjusted to this change better than I did 2 years ago. A lot can change over the course of 2 years. The people you hang out with, your style, your personality and so much more. I found people who connected with me, and whom I could rely on. I also found other ways to spend my free time and limit my time on screens, such as, by taking walks or exercising. These are just some of the ways that I continue to take care of my mental health during the pandemic.

It takes time to find out what works for you, what you like, and what things you might need to distance yourself from. It is also important to have a balance between time for yourself and time for productivity. Just because you are not doing anything productive does not mean you are wasting time. Taking time for yourself is extremely beneficial especially during a pandemic. But, never doing anything productive is also not the way to go. Realistically, there are still things that need to be done, and eventually, you are going to have to do them. Taking a small walk around your neighborhood can help increase your motivation. It is important to find that work-life balance.

Most importantly, talking to a therapist, a parent, a trusted adult or a friend (make sure to ask for consent before you vent), is a great way to release some weight off your chest. If you find yourself struggling, please reach out to someone you trust! There are many great resources that provide you with the help you need.

Thank you all for reading! I look forward to talking to you in the next issue!

Afeefa Malik is a grade 10 student at Grand River Collegiate Institute. She loves to learn new things, code and create games in her free time.

Family Matters

by Monica Fox



Building Health and Happiness At Home

Spring is a time of renewal and new beginnings, but many families are still managing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially on their well-being. The term well-being is multidimensional and incorporates our physical, emotional, spiritual, social, intellectual and economic wellness. It is our compass to health and happiness. It is diverse and fluid.

Over the past two years, many families have experienced anxiety over sending kids to school, stress about keeping them home for online learning, and fear of not knowing what tomorrow will bring. It's been a rollercoaster and the ride isn't over just yet. So, what can we do to continue to ride this out and preserve our family's well-being and build resiliency?

Start with you. Before diagnosing and addressing our kid's behaviour, it's important that as parents we first reflect and acknowledge the state of our own well-being. It is quite possible that the kids are just fine and we are projecting our own anxieties and stressors. Ask yourself how you are feeling and ensure that you're parenting from a good place. For instance, in one moment you may feel overwhelmed about juggling work and family life, and in another, you may feel the weight of providing for your family. Improving your overall well-being is a process, but in the moment when your kids are screaming, being rude and generally can't cope with the day, you can be there for them and help them identify what's really going on so they too can carry on from a healthy place.

Start the day with a plan and allow it to change. Think back to when your child was a newborn and development happened so quickly. It probably felt like every time you figured out what they needed, they'd develop and change, resulting in you starting over again. Think of this pandemic the same way. Start with an idea of what each day or week will look like to help your family maintain a healthy well-being. It could be as simple as creating a list of things you want your kids to do, or setting a schedule of planned activities. For instance, a list could include one chore, homework, piano practice and going outside daily. Everything else can fall where it falls. What you create can help your kids feel a sense of purpose and avoid boredom. They may look forward to knowing there is something to accomplish for the day. Who doesn't enjoy checking things off a list? When you notice them becoming disinterested, recreate a new one and continue to adapt to their needs.

Know the phrase, "pick and choose your battles?" What about "pick and choose your stress-battles?" Whatever it is, chances are you are the only person stressing about it while others are dancing. Why not dance? The world will keep turning and at least you'll be swirling around with it. Children are resilient...unless of course you're taking away their phone or iPad. :-)

Monica Fox is an HR professional who understands the demands of being a working mom. When not spending time with her family, she loves to pursue her many hobbies which include art, photography, writing and athletics..

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by Wendy Lee

A Forkful of Healthy



Sweet Potato, Spinach and Lentil Dahl

Infused with fragrant Indian spices, this vegan dahl is deeply satisfying and awakens your tastebuds while nourishing your whole body down to the core.

Ingredients:

1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

1 small white onion, finely diced

1 garlic clove, crushed

1 inch piece of ginger, peeled and finely chopped

½ long red chili, finely chopped

1 tsp ground turmeric

½ tsp cumin

½ tsp garam marsala

1 tbsp tomato paste

1 - 14 ounce can diced tomatoes



1 medium sweet potato, cut into small chunks

1/2 cup red lentils

1 cup vegetable stock

½ - 14-ounce can of coconut cream

1 cup spinach leaves

Directions:

- Heat the olive oil in a large pot over medium-high heat. Add the onion and sauté until it begins to soften.
- Add the garlic, ginger, and chili, continuing to sauté for another minute.
- Then add turmeric, cumin, and garam marsala. Lightly sauté for 2 - 3 minutes or until fragrant.
- Add the tomato paste, tomatoes, sweet potato, lentils, stock, and coconut cream. Stir well and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low and simmer for 20 - 25 minutes or until the sweet potato is cooked. Stir through baby spinach leaves right at the end.
- Serve topped with cilantro leaves and a spoonful of coconut yogurt. For added texture, sprinkle coconut flakes and serve with fluffy basmati rice and toasty naan bread! Optional: You can add an extra burst of flavour by searing ¼ tsp each of whole spices like mustard seeds, fennel seeds and cumin seeds in coconut oil for about 1 minute. Then drizzle overtop of the dahl.

Protein: 13.6g	Carbs: 45.7g	Fat: 14.1g
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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 French cuisine, and also 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!

FINANCE & REAL ESTATE INSIGHTS

by Nicole Forrester



Improve your Curb Appeal

We all feel better when we buy a new outfit, get our hair done, or improve the way we look on the outside. Why are our homes any different? Here are a few affordable ways to improve your home's curb appeal this spring, so you feel better living in it!

Paint your front door – Freshen up your home this spring with a new coat of paint on your front door. You can stick with a subtle colour that blends with your shutters or garage door or be bold and choose a statement colour, like red, that is sure to make a splash!

Illuminate pathways and gardens – Landscape lighting is a beautiful way to highlight your home and add to your curb appeal. A few well-placed solar garden lights along a pathway or highlighting your garden are a stunning way to make your home “shine.”

Add Planters – A few strategically placed planters with seasonal flowers are a great cost-efficient way to really make your home season ready and inviting.

Clean and pressure wash – Cleaning up your yard by getting rid of old leaves, brush and garbage that was sitting under piles of snow for the winter is a super easy way to improve the look of your home. Power washing the driveway or deck can also make a surprising difference. Don't forget to wash your windows inside and out at least once a year!

Create a seating area – Whether it's a rocking chair on a porch or strategically placed bistro set in the garden, creating a seating area with interest is a great way to improve your home's overall look and functionality.

Take care of your lawn – A well groomed lawn makes every home look better. Taking care of your lawn starts in the spring with grass seed, turf builder and a good watering routine. Cut your lawn regularly and you'll always be pleased with your home as you drive up to it.

After the long winter, we're all ready to be outside a little more. Why not start by adding curb appeal to your home? These tips are affordable ways to get you outside early in the spring and really make your home shine. I have no doubt whether you're looking to sell and move up the property ladder, or just to enjoy driving up to your home, adding curb appeal will make you feel better about yourself and about the home you're living in.

Nicole Forrester is a local Durham & GTA Real Estate Broker with over 17+ years of experience in the financial industry. Trained on Bay Street as an Investment Executive & Professional Financial Planner for one of Canada's largest financial institutions, she has extensive experience negotiating large financial transactions. Nicole's goal is to be a blessing to every person she meets and recognizes that every trade in Real Estate is not just a house. . . it's a Home. For more information, search Nicole Forrester Real Estate Broker on Social Media.

Bianca Schaefer is a 360 Holistic Health Professional who inspires a global community to take charge of their lives through nourishing their body, mind and spirit with delicious healthy foods, an active lifestyle and a mindset that believes anything is possible!

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by Sue-Ann Bavlnka



Ask Sue-Ann

Dear Sue-Ann:

I am a stepmother and I am in a very difficult situation. I have a grown stepson who has been causing chaos and it is never ending. I have repeatedly given him opportunities, second chances, third chances and so on. I have reached the end. I can do no more. He is a grown man. He has now threatened me. I am doing everything I can to calm the situation and severe ties as easily as possible. It's not easy as you can imagine. I need help with my emotional state. How can I move through this and not carry the chaos?

Signed: Stressed Stepmother

A. I want to say I am sorry you are going through this. We hear of families having difficulties like this, but it is far different when you are going through it yourself. You have done a really good job identifying the stressors. The next step is meditation. You know that you are seeking peace so that will be the goal for your meditation. Focus on the breath and let it drift away on the breath. Making sure to get exercise and eating properly will go a long way also. The key is to start your day with the goal that you will move through each situation peacefully. Before you know it, you will be in a good place emotionally.

Affirmation: *With each breath that I take, I take in peace and exhale stress and negativity from my body mind and spirit*

Sue-Ann Bavlnka resides in Quinte West. She is a psychic medium with an international clientele..

The COACH Corner

by Malachi Brown



Out with the old, in with the new.

Usually, we make this declaration at the end of one year going into the next. How things have changed recently. Over the past two years, this statement could be said monthly, if not weekly due to covid. Things we normally relied on were constantly changing. When will things get back to normal? Or at the other end of the spectrum, what will be the new normal?

All this has led to confusion, anxiety, and a greater awareness of our mental health. We are now forced to have a very different kind of conversation. We recognize the need for social interaction, family gatherings and a place to go to on a daily basis. Some people even miss not being in an office!

We have also come to the realization that we do not control as much as we thought we did. We need to rethink our lives.

We have a couple of options. We can allow the times to totally overwhelm us, or, take the necessary actions and do the work needed to live the life we've always wanted. Take this time to really evaluate what it is you want for your life. It might mean watching less TV, giving up some social media time or, spending time to think.

Imagine being given a clean canvas that represents your life with the instruction of painting the life you've always wanted. This can be a very challenging exercise for most people. Usually, their mind will start telling them all the reasons this exercise won't work. They start putting limitations on what is possible. I don't have the time, not enough money, too old, an entire collection of excuses. This quickly shuts down the process of thinking about what is possible.

When people get bogged down, I add this, if time and money were not an issue what would the canvas look like? Interestingly, the wheels begin to turn more freely at this point. A joy starts to emerge and the creative process begins. "I would do this; I would do that." What emerges consistently is a life that looks a lot different than the one they are currently living. Dreams that were put aside are now being talked about. Passionate projects are now percolating. Business ideas are now flowing. Travel is now on the horizon.

Is your current life the one you've always wanted?

Will you waste this precious time getting caught up in the noise that is getting louder each day, or will you take this opportunity to work on the life you have always desired? Look at your family and friends, personal growth, finances, health, spiritual growth, career and significant other. Are all these areas the best they can be? If not, use this time to work on creating your best life. You might not get this golden opportunity again.

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 have.

by Linda Calder



The Golden Years

Many years ago, I saw a magazine article about a young woman who painted black plastic pots from garden centres and used them for flowers. I decided to give it a try using rust paint which is all I had at the time. I filled the pots with flowers and put them on my balcony that overlooked the patio. My love for plant pot gardening was born.

Since those first painted pots, I have added many more to my collection. I have lots of ceramic ones; I've also added boot planters. Basically, if something holds soil, it can become a planter. One of my planters is a toy dump truck given by my dad to my son more than forty years ago. I put soil in, used some rocks as a barrier so the soil wouldn't run out and planted.

When I sold my house in Oshawa and moved to my Mam's place in Whitby, I inherited her deck. Mam loved to spend lots of time on her deck on her lounge in the sun reading, which wasn't my thing. So, I decided to fill the deck with plants. I also put tables against the deck railing and placed pots of all different sizes with brightly coloured flowers on the tables so I could have privacy from the neighbours.

Besides being pretty to look at, there are lots of benefits to gain from planting flower pots. Planting or gardening get your body moving and strengthens your muscles. It requires bending squatting, stretching and pulling. If you have back or knee trouble, you can always put your pot on a table or higher surface so you are not straining yourself, and plant while standing or even sitting on a chair. You get Vitamin D while out planting in the sun.

Gardening can also reduce stress by decreasing cortisol levels and raising serotonin. I always feel calm and in a good mood when I'm planting my flowers. Finally, science has found that gardening (like crosswords) can decrease the risk of dementia. The physical demands of gardening, as well as the thinking required when determining what to plant and how to take care of a given plant are all things that can help reduce your chances of getting Alzheimer's.

From that humble beginning many years ago, my flower pot garden has grown. Each year, I increase where I put my pots and how many I use in a particular spot. A few years ago, I counted over fifty pots. I've definitely added since then!

You can plant as much or as little as you want. You don't need to go overboard like I do. A few beautiful plants in a pot or even in the ground in your favourite colours will give you lots of colour all summer long. Not only do you have something pretty to look at, but you also get the health benefits that come along with it. Why not give it a try!

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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