

# About Integrative Medicine

A Guide to Self-Care and Support | Winter 2023

## CHIEF'S NOTE



*Jun Mao, MD, MSCE  
Chief, Integrative Medicine Service*

Winter is a time for introspection and reflection, but it is also important to take steps to stay connected to our communities and engage with our loved ones. We aim to provide this nourishment for you and your loved ones through our clinical care, education opportunities, and research programs.

In this issue, we share our martial arts program, a collaboration with Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem — we created this program with the guidance and support of their senior pastor, the remarkable Rev. Dr. Calvin O. Butts III, who passed away this fall. We also welcome our new integrative medicine nurse practitioner, Alyona “Ally” Weinstein; meditation instructor Beth Sandweiss invites us to embrace hope in the new year; and we discover the evidence for cinnamon in our About Herbs feature.

As always, we invite you to join us for our upcoming online series and workshops.

Happy New Year!  
Jun

## Expanding Access to Tai Chi With Abyssinian Baptist Church

by Christina Seluzicki

People have practiced martial arts for thousands of years to promote self-defense and to improve a range of health outcomes, including physical, mental, and spiritual. Through these exercises, participants can improve balance and whole-body coordination and reduce physical and mental stress.

This fall, in partnership with Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, MSK Integrative Medicine’s Health Equity in Integrative Medicine (HEIM) initiative launched a free martial arts program for adults. The goal of HEIM is to expand access to and increase the reach of integrative medicine modalities like tai chi to traditionally underserved communities. Through a series of free weekly in-person classes, MSK mind-body instructor Malik Cadwell, a grandmaster of martial arts with more than four decades of experience, introduced students to the basic concepts, exercises, and techniques of tai chi.



The Abyssinian Baptist Church is one of the oldest African American Baptist churches in the nation and the first in New York. The Rev. Dr. Calvin O. Butts III, the senior pastor who led Abyssinian for decades and passed away in October, was at the heart of this collaboration. “Rev. Dr. Butts was a giant in the

community for his loving care and support,” says Malik. “He wanted us to work together to help improve health outcomes using martial arts because he appreciated its positive impact on health, wellness, and community.”

Dr. Jun J. Mao, Chief of Integrative Medicine, says: “We have been deeply saddened by the loss of Rev. Dr. Butts. We are extremely grateful for his profound leadership and for embracing us in Integrative Medicine. We thank the entire Abyssinian congregation for their openness to this important community partnership and look forward to working together to improve mind, body, and spirit.”

“His kindness, caring, and advocacy will be sorely missed,” adds Malik, “But we will continue to support people through integrative medicine with compassion and dedication in honor of his legacy.”



## Embracing Hope in the New Year Through Mindfulness

By Beth Sandweiss



*Beth Sandweiss is a certified Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction instructor who*

*teaches mindful meditation to patients, their families, and healthcare providers. Here, Beth weighs in on mindfulness and hope.*

### How can mindfulness and meditation help us to embrace hope?

Mindfulness practices help shift our mindset. We are hardwired to protect ourselves from threat and danger. This is not bad, but it often leads us to pay more attention to the difficulties in our lives. This is a normal part of our human experience. Mindfulness can help us direct our attention to things that give us hope and optimism. There is something fierce in maintaining hope amid challenges. It takes courage to have hope.

Sometimes we feel afraid to feel hopeful or optimistic because of

what can go wrong, but things can always go wrong. Mindfulness and meditation can help to bolster our courage and encourage us. The presence of other people in our communities also gives us the support for these practices that are quite hard to do in isolation.

When we consider embracing hope and optimism, we want to be compassionate to ourselves and others and acknowledge the very hard times. We are not choosing one over the other but learning to live with both the ups and downs we experience and training our minds and our attention.

### What are some ways that we can practice hope and optimism in our daily lives?

Two simple ways to explore this practice are through savoring and gratitude.

Savoring: When we savor, we not only appreciate what is already happening, but we also take the time to pause and bring in all our senses to experience simple acts and their purpose. Consider moments such as petting your cat, sipping your coffee, or taking a shower.

Gratitude: When we experience gratitude, we take ourselves out of the preoccupation with what is wrong and shift to something that is already right that we can appreciate.

I encourage people to keep a gratitude journal. Keep it simple: Write down five things that you are grateful for. They can be mundane, such as being grateful for a favorite scarf or a beautiful flower, or they can be bigger, but this is not necessary.

These practices help us to shift our attention to more optimistic and positive states of mind. This is not to say that we should cover up or ignore what is wrong. We do not want to ignore what is harsh in our lives — and we can't control what happens to us. But we can control what we pay attention to, what we nurture, and what we fortify.

*Beth is offering an online six-week series, "Fundamentals of Mindfulness," starting on Sunday, January 22nd. To learn more, see our Upcoming Online Programming (page 4). You can also join Beth throughout the week for meditation classes in our [Integrative Medicine at Home](#) membership program.*

## Integrative Medicine at Home Membership Program



Start your membership online today.

Visit [msk.org/athome](https://msk.org/athome).

### MEMBERSHIP FEES

Monthly membership: **\$25**

Three-month membership: **\$60**

Six-month membership: **\$120**  
(includes one free workshop)

### AS A MEMBER, YOU CAN ENJOY:

- › Connecting with your cancer community
- › Staying active with guidance from MSK experts
- › Learning new skills to increase resilience and decrease stress
- › Unlimited access to daily fitness and mind-body classes
- › Dedicated website with on-demand videos to help keep you moving on your schedule
- › Discounts on our small group workshops and mind-body series



## Welcome Nurse Practitioner Alyona Weinstein to Integrative Medicine

By Jodi MacLeod, Patient Advocate



*Jodi MacLeod is a patient advocate and cancer survivor who contributes to patient-centered outcomes research trials in MSK's Integrative Medicine Service. She also serves as secretary of the Society for Integrative Oncology (SIO) and is co-chair of the SIO Patient Advocate Committee.*

I recently had the pleasure of interviewing Alyona “Ally” Weinstein, NP, who joined the Integrative Medicine Service at MSK this fall. Ally is passionate about seeing each of her patients as individuals with unique needs who deserve her attentive care.

### Tell me about your background.

As a child, I spent time in a sanatorium based at a former monastery in the Ukrainian mountains where my great-grandmother was the physician-in-charge. She also ran the hydrotherapy clinic there, which offered healing modalities such as water massage and aromatherapy for restoration of pulmonary function and the overall health of mine workers. My grandmother was also an amazing physician who touched the lives of many. My formal training, however, started with music and classical piano, and I spent several years teaching children. Eventually, I followed my family path to healing and trained as a registered nurse in Russia. Later, I trained as a family medicine nurse practitioner in the U.S.



Nurse practitioner Alyona “Ally” Weinstein

### What brought you to MSK and to the Integrative Medicine Service?

The loss of a loved one from cancer and my background in cancer care brought me to MSK. My passion for holistic healing led me to complete the University of Arizona Integrative Medicine Fellowship and to become a certified yoga instructor through the Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health. “Kripalu” translates to “compassion,” and this is at the heart of the care I want to provide for my patients. I spent the past 10 years at MSK working with patients affected by melanoma before joining Integrative Medicine.

### How do you introduce integrative medicine to your patients?

Integrative medicine is a science-based, healing-oriented medicine that considers the whole person — body, mind, spirit — and works with standard medicine to attain the best results. Each patient is a unique person, and I want to nourish that uniqueness. I foresee their cancer diagnosis as part of a personal journey, and I am hoping to be a part of that journey and to provide the guidance that helps each one to experience the vibrancy of this life and to enjoy what holds meaning to them.

### And how do your patients respond to this whole-person care?

My patients enjoy the ability to perceive their lives and their personal journey with cancer as an opportunity to grow and to be equipped with knowledge about immune system support and stress and symptom management. This enables them to enjoy life to its fullest prior to, during, and after cancer treatment. Integrative medicine provides many ways to touch patients’ hearts on so many levels.

*If you are interested in scheduling an Integrative Medicine consultation with Ally Weinstein, please call [646-608-8550](tel:646-608-8550).*

## Cinnamon

by Jyothirmai Gubili

A culinary spice, cinnamon is obtained from the bark of plants native to Southeast Asia. It also has a long medicinal history of stimulating appetite, treating indigestion and colds, and decreasing inflammation. Cinnamon is promoted as a dietary supplement for diabetes and gastrointestinal disorders.



Cinnamon was found to prevent or delay cell damage, modulate the immune system, decrease inflammation, kill microorganisms, and inhibit tumor

growth in studies done in the laboratory and in animal models. Clinical findings of its effectiveness against Type 2 diabetes are conflicting but suggest improvements in glycemic control (maintaining an optimal blood glucose level), along with reductions in levels of blood triglycerides (a type of fat that circulates in the blood) and total cholesterol. Cinnamon extracts were also reported beneficial in decreasing insulin resistance in women with polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), in improving metabolic syndrome (insulin resistance syndrome), and in decreasing dental plaque and gingivitis in healthy adults.

Cinnamon use has been associated with gastrointestinal upset and allergic reactions that were found to be self-limiting in many cases. But some cinnamon products have excessive coumarin (a chemical compound), which, in high doses, can cause liver toxicity.

For more details about cinnamon, see our [full monograph](#) on the About Herbs website or download the About Herbs app (available for Android via [Google Play](#) and iOS via the [App Store](#)).

## Upcoming Online Programming

Register today to join one of [our wellness programs](#). Scan the QR code with your phone to sign up online or call **646-449-1010**.



Learn about the benefits of [tai chi](#), [meditation](#), [yoga](#), and more on our [About Herbs website](#).

### COST

**Workshops:** \$20 for members; \$25 regular price

**Regular series:** \$100 for members; \$125 regular price

**Meditation series:** \$125 for members; \$155 regular price

### JANUARY

- › **Workshop:** Mobilization Stretching for Movement, Flexibility, and Balance  
Tuesday, January 17, 7 p.m. to 8:15 p.m.
- › **Series:** Fundamentals of Mindfulness  
Sundays, January 22 to February 26, 7 p.m. to 8:15 p.m.
- › **Workshop:** Building Body Awareness With Core Strength and Yoga  
Monday, January 23, 1 p.m. to 2:15 p.m.

### FEBRUARY

- › **Series:** Tai Chi for Healthy Aging: Intermediate Level  
Thursdays, February 9 to March 16, 6 p.m. to 7 p.m.
- › **Workshop:** Massage and Movement for Lymphatic Flow  
Monday, February 27, 1 p.m. to 2:15 p.m.

### MARCH

- › **Workshop:** Fight Fatigue With Food and Yoga  
Thursday, March 9, 1 p.m. to 2:15 p.m.
- › **Series:** Yoga Flow for Energy & Vitality  
Thursdays, March 16 to April 20, 1 p.m. to 2 p.m.
- › **Workshop:** Mechanics of Breathing: Perfect Exchange  
Tuesday, March 21, 1 p.m. to 2:15 p.m.

### About Herbs App Available for Android and iOS

Would you like help figuring out the value of using common herbs and other dietary supplements? Learn the latest evidence for 290 herbs and supplements.

Download the app for Android via [Google Play](#) and for iOS via the [App Store](#)