

About Integrative Medicine

A GUIDE TO SELF-CARE AND SUPPORT | WINTER 2021



Jun Mao, MD, MSCE
Chief, Integrative Medicine Service

CHIEF'S NOTE

Happy New Year! As we enter 2021, we are ready to help you welcome the coming months with hope, strength, and joy. I invite you to explore our exciting slate of virtual programming so that we can continue to gather safely as a community to support each other in mind, body, and spirit.

It's a great time to set new goals for your health and wellness. In this issue, we discuss strategies for staying motivated and celebrating your self-care milestones — large and small. We also talk with MSK mind-body instructor Beth Sandweiss about the art of mindful self-compassion and how you can bring this wonderful skill into your life. In addition, we learn about elderberry in the "About Herbs" feature and highlight the new guided imagery addition to our *About Mind-Body Therapies* database. Finally, patient advocate Jodi MacLeod shares the benefits of including our Integrative Medicine at Home membership program in her routine and how you can make it a part of yours.

Best wishes and be well,
Jun

Setting Fitness Goals and Celebrating Your Wins in the New Year

By Lauren DeMarzo

For many of us, words like adversity, resilience, and strength took on new meaning in 2020. We have adjusted our lifestyles to practice social distancing, work remotely, and limit our travel. Coping with unexpected changes and stress is certainly familiar when you or someone you love has been impacted by cancer.

As we balance these challenges, regular physical activity can feel like a chore. In fact, researchers at MSK found that difficulty getting motivated and remaining committed to a plan are among the top reasons people diagnosed with cancer do not exercise (Romero SAD, et al. *J Cancer Surviv.* 2018). But focusing our attention on small, attainable goals and celebrating simple milestones can have a lasting impact.

To get 2021 off to a great start, we spoke with two MSK experts — Lauren Chiarello Mika, MSK fitness instructor and Hodgkin lymphoma survivor, and Dr. Nirupa Raghunathan, MSK Director of Pediatric Integrative Medicine — about staying motivated, setting goals, and creating more balance in our daily routines.

Start small.

When you are not feeling well, or feel short on time, setting aside precious minutes just for yourself is hard. Dr. Raghunathan advises starting with small changes that add up over time. "Many people find fatigue a big barrier that keeps them from exercising," says Dr. Raghunathan. "However, physical activity can actually reduce your fatigue. If this is a concern for you, try breaking up your exercise into chunks of five to ten minutes through the day to keep your energy up."



Lauren Chiarello Mika



Nirupa J. Raghunathan, MD

Make a plan with specific, actionable goals.

But be flexible. Lauren, a new mom of twins, says, "Write down your goals and say them aloud. Then adjust them depending on how your day or week unfolds. For example, I may have a goal to take a 30-minute cardio strength class three days per week. But I'm happy to do a 15-minute workout a few of those days and fit in more time when I can."

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Memorial Sloan Kettering
Cancer Center

Beth Sandweiss, Mind-Body Therapist on Mindful Self-Compassion



Has there been any research conducted in this field?

Yes, early research shows that self-compassion is strongly associated with emotional well-being, coping, lower levels of anxiety and depression, healthy habits such as diet and exercise, and more satisfying personal relationships.

Why is mindful self-compassion an important practice for someone affected by cancer?

People who have been diagnosed with cancer experience many kinds of feelings. They are often taught to be strong and courageous, which can mean avoiding feeling weak or vulnerable. They may also struggle to acknowledge their experience of physical and emotional suffering. MSC helps us to be with whatever feeling we have. Mindfulness keeps us aware of what's happening, and self-compassion adds warmth to the person who is being aware. Often, those experiencing cancer want this kind of validation and kindness, but they don't know how to give it to themselves. Fortunately, self-compassion can be learned by anyone.

Beth is offering a virtual six-week series, Mindful Self-Compassion, on Sundays from 7:00 PM to 8:30 PM starting on January 10th. To learn more, see Upcoming Online Programming in right sidebar.

Do you have a question for our integrative medicine experts?

Email us with "Ask the Expert" in the subject line at aboutherbs@mskcc.org. We may feature your question in an upcoming issue!

What is mindful self-compassion?

Mindful self-compassion (MSC) is an eight-week program designed to cultivate the skills of self-compassion. Kristin Neff, PhD, the pioneering researcher in the field of self-compassion, and Christopher Germer, PhD, a leader in the areas of mindfulness, compassion, and psychotherapy, developed MSC.

According to this model, compassion involves having an awareness of suffering in other people, being emotionally moved by that suffering, having an intention to relieve this suffering, and acting to this end. With self-compassion, we take a U-turn — but also a "you" turn — to direct that compassion toward ourselves by recognizing our own suffering and having an active wish to bring relief to our struggle. Self-compassion has three parts: mindfulness, in which we recognize we are having a hard time and that this won't always be the case; common humanity, in which we understand that we are interconnected and heal in community; and self-kindness, where we practice treating ourselves with kindness, care, and support.

ABOUT HERBS

ELDERBERRY

By Jyothirmai Gubili

A flowering shrub prevalent in Europe, elderberry is now cultivated in many parts of the world. Its flowers and fruit are used to relieve cold and flu symptoms, sinus infections, constipation, and to reduce inflammation and treat respiratory diseases. Supplemental forms include syrups, gummies, lozenges, capsules, and teas.

In laboratory and animal studies, elderberry strengthened the immune system and showed anti-viral, anti-bacterial, anti-diabetic, and anti-inflammatory effects. But clinical data to support its use for flu symptoms are very limited. The safety of its long-term use is also yet to be determined.

Because elderberry contains plant toxins known as cyanogenic glycosides, consuming raw or unripe fruits, leaves, and stems can cause cyanide toxicity. The US Food and Drug Administration has recently warned companies marketing elderberry with false claims of preventing or treating COVID-19.



UPCOMING ONLINE PROGRAMMING

To learn more and register, visit <https://bit.ly/MSKMindBodyWorkshops>.

Workshop: Martial Arts and Meditation for Functional Everyday Movement

Saturday, January 9th
11:00 AM to 12:00 PM EST

Price: \$25 general public
\$20 members

Instructors: Rocco Caputo, LMT, NMT, and Robin Hardbattle, LAC

Martial arts are based on movements that support the joints, conserve energy, and generate power. In this workshop, you will use your body to improve posture, stamina, and flexibility.

Series: Mindful Self-Compassion

Sundays, January 10th through February 14th

7:00 PM to 8:30 PM EST

Price: \$155 general public
\$125 members

Instructor: Beth Sandweiss, MA, MSW, LPC

Most of us feel compassion for our close friends when they are struggling. What would it be like to receive the same caring attention from yourself when you need it most? This six-week virtual course will help you cultivate self-compassion, one of the greatest resources for coping and resilience.

Series: Yoga for Core Strength

Mondays, January 11th through February 22nd

6:00 PM to 7:00 PM EST

Price: \$125 general public
\$100 members

Instructor: Clare Patterson, E-RYT, Yoga 4 Cancer™ certified teacher

Learn breath awareness meditations with a purposeful mix of floor, seated, and standing yoga exercises to safely build core muscles while protecting joints and the lower back.

Workshop: Massage and Movement for Lymphatic Flow

Tuesday, January 19th
7:00 PM to 8:15 PM EST

Instructors: Donna Wilson, RN, MSN, RRT, and Jane Greene, RN, LMT

Price: \$25 general public
\$20 for members

In this live online workshop, an MSK clinical fitness specialist will teach you exercises to improve posture and strengthen and support the upper back and shoulders. An MSK massage therapist will demonstrate a self-manual lymph drainage sequence and guide you through gentle movements that support lymphatic flow.

Workshop: Yoga for Chemotherapy-Induced Peripheral Neuropathy

Saturday, January 23rd
12:00 PM to 1:15 PM EST

Price: \$25 general public
\$20 members

Instructors: Ting Bao, MD, DABMA; Clare Patterson, E-RYT, certified Yoga 4 Cancer™; Tina Paul, MS, C-IAYT, E-RYT 500

In this workshop, you will hear from an MSK integrative medicine doctor and two MSK yoga instructors about new research supporting yoga as an effective movement therapy to reduce CIPN symptoms, increase range of motion, and improve balance.

Workshop: Osteoporosis: How to Build Bones with Exercise, Nutrition, and Yoga

Thursday, February 4th
1:00 PM to 2:15 PM

Price: \$25 general public
\$20 members

Instructors: Donna Wilson, MSN, RRT, and Tina Paul, MS, C-IAYT, E-RYT 500

In this workshop, an MSK clinical fitness specialist and an MSK yoga therapist will discuss how to improve bone health through diet, resistance training exercises, yoga postures, resistance training exercises, and yoga postures.

Workshop: Relax Yourself to Sleep

Saturday, February 20th
2:00 PM to 3:15 PM

Price: \$25 general public
\$20 members

Instructors: Eugenie Spiguel, MSN, ANP-BC, and Beth Sandweiss, MA, MSW, LPC

In this workshop, an MSK nurse practitioner and sleep expert and an MSK mind-body therapist will discuss normal sleep patterns and share habits that may impact your ability to sleep well. You will learn mind-body techniques to promote relaxation and help you to drift off to sleep.

New to About Mind-Body Therapies Database: Guided Imagery

MSK's *About Mind-Body Therapies* database has a new addition: guided imagery. This practice, which has existed for hundreds of years, involves using imagination and relaxation techniques to promote mind-body healing. It has been found to be useful in cancer settings for improving quality of life, alleviating anxiety, and reducing stress and fatigue among other benefits.

To learn more about the latest evidence for guided imagery and other mind-body therapies, including acupuncture, meditation, tai chi, yoga, and more, visit <https://www.mskcc.org/mind-body>.

Bendheim Integrative Medicine Center
1429 First Avenue at East 74th Street

Appointments: 646-888-0800

www.mskcc.org/integrativemedicine

▶ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1, SETTING FITNESS GOALS AND CELEBRATING YOUR WINS IN THE NEW YEAR

Find an instructor, a community, or style of exercise that you like. “When you connect with someone or something that is enjoyable, you will keep going,” says Lauren. “All of MSK’s group fitness classes are now taught virtually through our **Integrative Medicine at Home** membership program. Our community in these virtual classes is so warm, and there is a shared understanding of what we (people diagnosed with cancer) have all gone through, which you may not get in other at-home fitness programs.”

Keep yourself, and your friends, accountable. “Aim to exercise around the same time of day if you can. This way it becomes another healthy habit, like brushing your teeth,” says Dr. Raghunathan. While group exercise programs may not be everyone’s favorite, Lauren says that sharing your goals with a partner, friend, or caregiver can up the accountability factor. “It is so easy to not do something. Find a friend you can share your goals with so they can check in with you. We can all achieve more when we support each other.”

Bringing Integrative Medicine Home: The Patient Perspective

By Jodi MacLeod



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.

As someone whose life has been affected by cancer, I have felt the isolation and additional anxiety caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, since last summer, through the MSK Integrative Medicine at Home (IM at Home) membership program, I have been learning ways to manage fear and distress through research-informed integrative practices. Designed and led by the Integrative Medicine Service’s team of expert clinicians, this online program offers supportive and welcoming weekly classes.

Classes include mind-body practices, such as morning and evening meditation, which help me pay gentle attention to my breath and guide me into gratefulness and self-acceptance. Chair and Mat Yoga classes bring my awareness into my body and calm my nervous system through *pranayama*, or breath work. I also enjoy learning tai chi, which improves balance and helps manage cancer fatigue.

Four different cardio fitness classes add playful freedom of movement and a safe space to express emotions that arise. Similarly, music therapy sessions offer relaxation through the gentle acoustic guitar melodies and a chance to sing along to familiar songs.

IM at Home offers a supportive community where we can build mind-body practices that help us process our cancer experience and empower us with a sense of control during these times of uncertainty. I hope you will join me and experience the benefits of these effective practices for yourself. And of course, always consult your doctor before beginning a new exercise or mind-body program.

Integrative Medicine at Home Membership Program

Start your membership today.
Call 646-888-0800.

Membership Fees

Monthly membership: \$25
Three-month membership: \$60
Six-month membership: \$120, plus one free workshop

As a member, you can enjoy:

- unlimited access to daily fitness and mind-body classes
- discounts on our small-group workshops and mind-body series
- connecting with your cancer community
- staying active while practicing social distancing
- learning new skills to increase resilience and decrease stress