

SPIRITUAL TEACHERS WE TRUST

Spirituality & Health

The Soul/Body Connection™

Wayne Dyer
LIVE FROM A PLACE OF LOVE

Better Sex
Fertility cycles
hold the key

LIFE'S **5** BIG QUESTIONS
Loving answers for your kids (& yourself)

3 Soothing Escapes

Meditations for Energy Healing

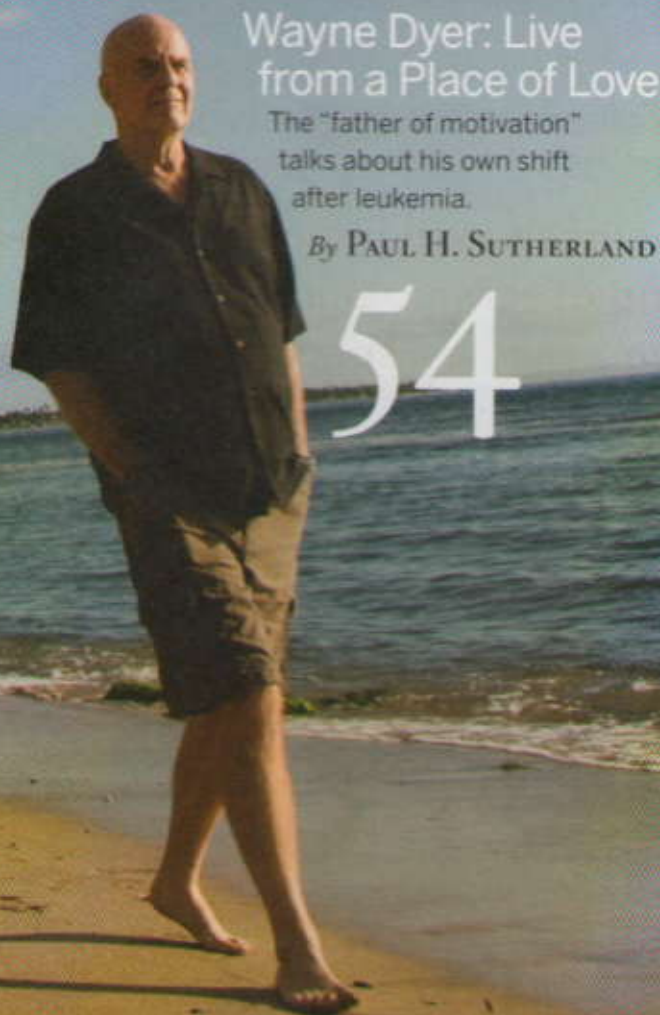
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**Is Yoga
Safe?**

MARCH / APRIL 2012



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The Soul/Body Connection™



Wayne Dyer: Live from a Place of Love

The "father of motivation" talks about his own shift after leukemia.

By PAUL H. SUTHERLAND

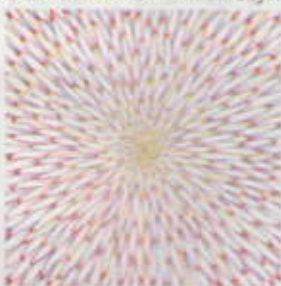
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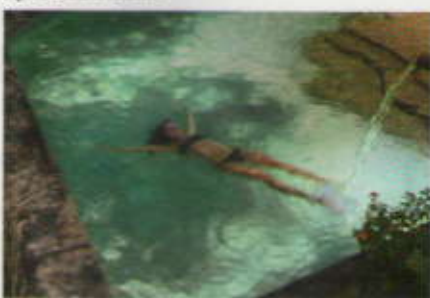
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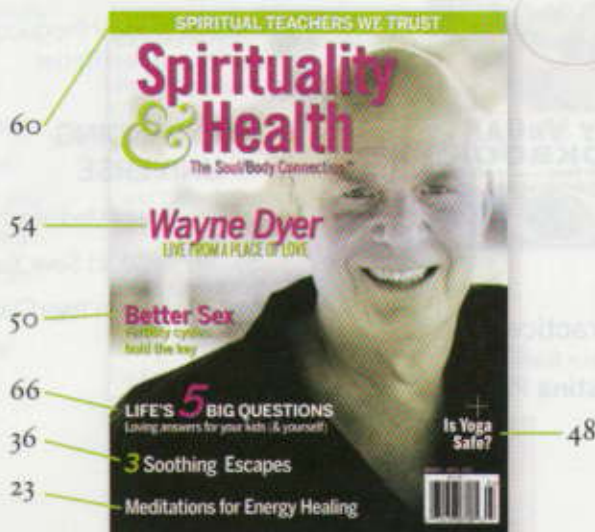
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Cover Photograph by BRENDAN HARRINGTON

Take Care of Your Tube

"Who am I?" I ask myself.

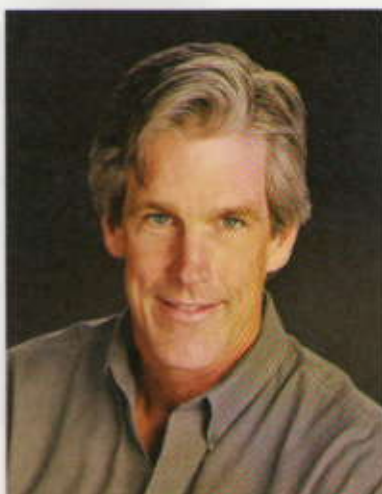
"You are a tube," writes Rabbi Rami. And as I listened to the wonderful doctors and healers at the annual Natural Supplements conference at the Scripps Center for Integrative Medicine, I learned just how true the rabbi's words are. As far as health is concerned, these doctors agreed. What they said is, "The gut is the seat of the soul."

So the first and most important health question one can ask is simply, "Am I taking good care of my tube?" And to do that properly, you have to ask where your tube came from (page 66). It's all kid stuff, and if kids knew it and adults lived it, the world's problems would be well on their way to being solved.

But of course, we make it more complicated, and so we need teachers to help us look after our precious tubes. Whom should we trust? How do we expand our circles of trust? We have some answers on page 60.

We also discover surprising benefits when we pay close attention to our tubes. Take fertility, for example. Becoming intimate with the ebb and flow of fertility is not only a safe way to control conception, but it brings couples closer together for better sex. Meanwhile, messing with natural cycles carries hidden risks that we probably never would imagine (page 50).

The real test is when things go really wrong — like when Wayne Dyer got leukemia. That's when the true teachers come through. In Paul Sutherland's interview (page 54), we learn about Dr. Dyer's healing experience, as well as his shift in thinking on self-reliance: "I think that the only choice that we have in life is whether we align ourselves with God or not." Such is the wisdom of a very happy tube.



Best,
Steve

STEPHEN KIESLING
editor-in-chief

OUR MISSION *Spirituality & Health* is for people who wish to explore the spiritual journey — the journey to self-knowledge, authenticity, and integration. We draw from the wisdom of many traditions and cultures with an emphasis on sharing spiritual practices. We look to science to help provide a context for the spiritual quest. We explore the health of body, mind, and spirit, and we recognize the interdependence of our health, our communities, and our environment. We acknowledge that in our language the words "whole," "health," and "holy" share a common root. We invite you to enjoy our extensive website — SpiritualityHealth.com — including more than 1,400 articles from back issues, self-assessments, and other resources.

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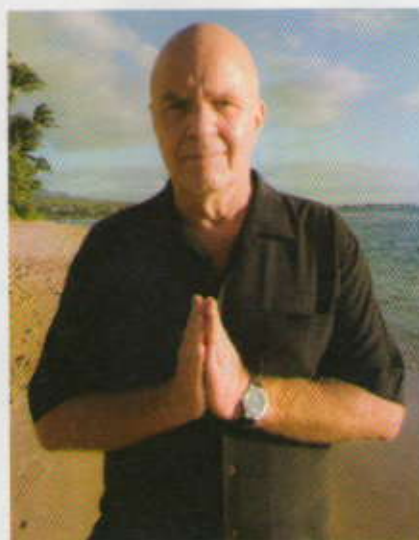
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Contributors



Wayne Dyer has been called the "father of motivation." Through his thirty-plus books, speaking engagements, PBS television specials, and, most recently, *The Shift*, a movie exploring "the spiritual journey ... when we long to find purpose that is our unique contribution to the world," Dr. Dyer has spread hope and enthusiasm to millions of people. *S&H* columnist Paul Sutherland sat down with him on Maui to discuss Dyer's own recent dramatic shift after being diagnosed with leukemia (page 54).

Pamela Turczyn is a visual artist who was introduced to vibrational healing by a Reiki Master and began infusing her paintings with an "energy signature"



embodying love, hope, compassion, and vitality. She often works with layers of resin, gold leaf, powdered bronze,

mother-of-pearl, and abalone. Her artwork has been featured in New York City's Chelsea Art Museum, the Metropolitan Museum and Art Center in Coral Gables, Florida, the Museum for Textiles in

Toronto, and the Pacific Design Center in Los Angeles. We feature her floral healing mandalas on exhibit at the Omega Institute (page 23).

Prema Gaia is a spiritual adventurer living in New Mexico who wrote previously about leaving the fast life in LA and spending four years living "ultra light," taking to the road with the clothes on her back and no money at all. In her seeking, she hitchhiked more than 20,000 miles and walked more than 250, often sleeping under the stars. In this issue she profiles a workshop on fertility awareness as a path to deeper intimacy (page 50).



Christina Pirello was diagnosed with leukemia at age 26 and given little hope for survival. Within just two months of diligently adopting a diet based on beans, greens, and whole grains her condition improved dramatically and after fourteen months her cancer had disappeared. The Emmy Award-winning host of *Christina Cooks!*, and the author of several cookbooks including her latest: *I'm Mad as Hell, and I'm not going to Eat It Anymore*, she offers a "Best Practice" to break our high-fructose corn syrup habit (page 96).

Coming Soon

Your Spiritual Legacy / Making sense of your life and understanding how to tell your own story will enable you to preserve your heritage for future generations.

The Best of Botanical Beauty / What we put on our skin, we put into ourselves. Here's a guide to the most natural organic and biodynamic skin products.

The Power of Everyday Activists / How regular people with small amounts of money are making enormous differences.

After having tried various birth control methods ranging from the pill to condoms to methods recommended by my local herbalist, I was thirsty for a more empowered understanding of my body's natural cycles — and a natural alternative and wisdom that would enable me to take charge of my fertility. Here's what I discovered.

The Hidden Wisdom of Fertility Awareness

By PREMA GAIA

Illustration by MARIE BERTRAND

Several months ago, I heard about a practice developed in the 1980s called the Fertility Awareness Method (FAM), a natural form of birth control that a study in the journal *Human Reproduction Today* found to be 99.4 to 99.6 percent effective. I became inspired by the possibility of becoming fluent with my natural cycles and rhythms and gaining enough confidence in my self-awareness to say good-bye to artificial barrier methods and pills. I was also intrigued when I heard that this method increases intimacy between partners, by attuning women more deeply to their body's wisdom and healing gifts. So I decided to attend a weekend FAM workshop called Womb Wisdom: Understanding Cycles of Fertility, taught by Sarah Bly, a fertility expert and midwife who has been teaching workshops for seven years (graceofthemoon.com).

Much to my surprise, the workshop included both women and men in almost equal number, and all of us were on the edge of our seats as Bly began to explain how to track which times of the month are safe to have unprotected intercourse without the fear of unwanted pregnancy. Of course, that's what we all wanted to know first, but what we learned is that this answer is different for every woman and every cycle. And that's actually the beauty of the practice. FAM is not about getting the right prescription or being fitted for a diaphragm. Instead, it is about gaining the tools to pay close attention to one's own body, which is in an ongoing cycle of change. I was surprised to realize how little I knew about my anatomy and my cycles, but the feeling seemed common.



Our Cycles Ourselves

Bly explained that throughout a natural menstrual cycle, hormonal fluctuation can alter a woman's facial appearance, body odor, waist-to-hip ratio, vocal pitch, mood, habits of dress, and even language. When ovulating, these changes make women more attractive to men because they indicate fertility; in fact, one scientific study I read about later found that strippers have their peak earnings on the days when they are ovulating. These cycles also affect what type of men a woman finds attractive (women tend to be attracted to high testosterone macho types while ovulating and more nurturing men during the rest of the cycle). In short, a woman's cycles affect how she thinks, how she feels, and how she behaves. Bly explained that our natural cycles are the full expression of ourselves. When a woman takes a birth control pill, which tricks the body into thinking its already pregnant, she is making a bigger change than she may imagine. Beyond obvious side effects like headaches, irritability, and bloating, Bly says, "The birth control pill emotionally flatlines a woman in a way that supports her ability to participate in the workforce, but does not support the ecstatic or transcendent qualities of masculine and feminine union."

Reclaiming My Wholeness

The two full days of information shared during the workshop was designed to teach us to become intimate with cycles and ourselves as much as how to pay close attention to these changes and to confidently know when we are fertile and when we are not. Bly also stressed that knowledge is not the same thing as experience. Bly recommended emphatically that we chart our cycles thoroughly for at least three months before starting to rely on FAM as a primary method of birth control — and to use that time to create support from our partner, teacher, or women's group. (She also stressed that FAM offers no protection from STDs and is intended for monogamous relationships.) One of the students mentioned that intentional communities, such as Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage in Missouri, have a fertility awareness charting board in a community room, where the women of the community can all track their cycles together. Hearing Bly's personal experiences and teachings about

female sexuality, fertility, and anatomy told with ease and grace, it felt like I was reclaiming a piece of my wholeness.

The two main books that Bly and many FAM practitioners consider as the bibles of fertility awareness are *The Garden of Fertility* by Katie Singer (gardenoffertility.com) and *Taking Charge of Your Fertility* by Toni Weschle (tcoyf.com). The books and workshops teach how to follow and chart three primary signs of fertility: cervical fluid, basal body temperature, and cervical changes.

Three Markers for Fertility

CERVICAL FLUID. We learned about the broad range of types and consistencies of cervical fluids that a woman may experience each month, ranging from extremely fertile fluid, which has the appearance and texture of a raw egg white, to the scant and pasty fluid that may be present on infertile days. Bly explained in detail how the pattern of cervical fluids may vary greatly from woman to woman and from month to month. Cervical fluid patterns can be a great indicator of hormonal imbalances, which can be a valuable call to action for dietary and lifestyle changes.

TEMPERATURE. The second primary sign of fertility is daily checking of basal body temperature, first thing upon waking in the morning. Body temperature rises after

Getting In Touch With the Moon

In my 20s, I stopped taking the pill and became more aware of my cycles and how they affected my moods. Now that I'm 45 and have been very conscious of my cycle for a long time, I can predict quite accurately when I'm going to ovulate. I've been in committed relationships for many years and have never gotten pregnant, which was my choice. The gravitational pull of the moon influences our mental health and wellness, and I have a very intuitive connection with the cycles of the moon. I'm not surprised when I look up at the moon and feel a certain way, which is a reflection of the moon phase.

Seane Corn, international yoga instructor and co-creator of Off the Mat, Into the World (seanecorn.com)

3 Reasons to be Wary of The Pill

RELATIONSHIP INCOMPATIBILITY

In 1995, Swiss biological researcher Claus Wedekind published the results of what is now known as the Sweaty T-shirt Experiment. He asked women to sniff T-shirts that men had worn for a few days without perfumes, soaps, or showers. Wedekind found that "most of the women were attracted to the scent of men whose major histocompatibility complex (MHC) differed from their own. Children born of parents with different immunities are likely to benefit from a broader, more robust immune response themselves." Women taking birth control pills, however, don't seem to show the same responsiveness to these male scent cues. "Women who were using birth control pills chose men's T-shirts randomly or, even worse, showed a preference for men with similar immunity to their own." Subsequent research reported in *Scientific*

American has not only confirmed these findings but suggests that the pill "may disrupt an instinctive mechanism that brings together people with complementary genes and immune systems. Going on or off the pill during a relationship, therefore, may tempt a woman away from her man."

DEPRESSION

Professor Jayashri Kulkarni, from the School of Psychology at Australia's Monash University, found that "women using the pill had an average depression rating scale score of 17.6, compared to 9.8 in the non-user group. The women involved in the study were aged over 18, not pregnant or lactating, had no clinical history of depression, and had not been on anti-depressant medication in the previous 12 months." Subsequent research conducted by aphroditewomenshealth.com found that "57 percent of respondents

reported mood swings, and 69 percent felt anxious and depressed after taking hormonal contraceptives. Over 50 percent of respondents who were taking anti-depressant medication were doing so to treat depression that occurred after beginning hormonal contraceptives."

SEXUAL DYSFUNCTION

A 2011 study from Indiana University found that women using the pill and other hormonal methods reported feeling generally less sexy than those using non-hormonal protection. They had fewer orgasms, less frequent sex, and found it more difficult to get aroused. A similar study in the *Journal of Sexual Medicine* found that women on the pill reported higher rates of "problems with orgasm, desire, satisfaction, lubrication, pain, and arousal," compared with women who were using no contraception or non-hormonal contraception.

ovulation and remains high for the rest of the cycle. For example, I've noticed that my temperature tends to be about 97.6° before I ovulate and approximately 98.2° after ovulation. It is possible for a woman to release two eggs in one cycle, but if that does happen, both eggs will be released within a 24-hour period. An unfertilized egg can only live for a maximum of 24 hours.

CERVICAL CHANGES. A final and optional fertility indicator is touching and checking the cervix, in order to note the cervical changes that occur throughout the month. Around the time of ovulation, a woman's cervix will become soft, will shift to a higher position in the vaginal canal, and will have a noticeably larger opening at what is called the *cervical os*, through which sperm may travel.

With the help of charts and thorough discussion, Bly illustrated the four phases of a woman's monthly cycle: the menses phase, the "early dry days," the fertile phase, and the luteal phase. We then went over samples of women's charts to learn about possible variations in the quality and length of a woman's cycle.

Through speaking with several women from many walks of life who have studied FAM, I discovered that fertility awareness has been a gateway to many different experiences and awakenings. The benefits they listed include accessing their body wisdom and intuition, deepening transformational sacred union in partnerships, healing emotional trauma that has been stored in the womb, feeling more in touch with their bodies and in tune with the cycles of nature, and — when the time is right — conscious conception. The predominant sentiment from everyone with whom I spoke was an overall sense of empowerment and gratitude. The most commonly asked question: Why was I never taught any of this stuff before?

Prema Gaia is a spiritual adventurer, global pilgrim, and co-founder of the Goddess Temple of Ashland. After four years of hitch-hiking across this continent, Prema found her home with a loving community in Taos, New Mexico, and is currently compiling a book of women's spiritual awakening stories.