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After the display of fireworks, a new year quietly dawns

Fresh beginnings are exciting, so often filled with hope and the prospect of beautiful dreams coming true. As we move forward into the dawning of Aquarius (2023), there's sure to be some shaky ground coming up with life lessons to be learned. Or old lessons repeated, yet to be learned.

Heartache, pain, hope, wonder – all wrapped up in a shiny bow ready to be opened for the new year. Perhaps some of us already have opened this Pandora's box and are walking on some shaky ground right about now. Whether firmly footed or not, the new year certainly has begun.

Will this year pan out differently than last year? Could the wisdom gained in 2022 finally take hold? Was any wisdom really gained in 2022? What do you think? I sure wonder.

I'm hoping our minister has some



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effective new year insights on this type of reflective strangeness. He's usually spot on with inspirations.

"We're each evolving as a spiral," he begins.

Going up or down? I wonder.

"Going up!" he bellows.

He's read my mind! This guy's insightful. But come on, there's so many problems in the world, it seems like a never-ending swirl of difficulties. When one problem calms down, another one revs up.

"Once you've seen the light, you can't go backward even if you try. Because you now know. Your spiral

continues upward. Not that you won't fight it and attempt to resist the upward movement. Finding balance will make the inevitable upward movement easier," he says.

Keep going, minister. I'm feeling the lift. Maybe you're on to something. "Before fixing the world, fix yourself."

OK, I knew this couldn't be easy.

"Find quiet time," he explains.

"Time to be still. Time to really listen. Just listen."

He pauses then ever so softly,

"Shhh ... listen."

Silence.

More silence.

Pin drops.

And when the dropping pin disrupts my quiet mind, I turn to my breath and slightly raise a finger or thumb to keep my busy thoughts at

bay so I can truly listen.

First a thumb – inhale/exhale.

Next a finger – inhale/exhale.

And so on with each finger or thumb, inhaling and exhaling.

Heck, sometimes even my toes get involved to help declutter that busy mind.

Until ready to sit quietly and gratefully again in silence. My eyes/ears/mind focused on truly listening.

Shhhhhh.

Listen.

"Only one whose joy is inward, inward his peace, inward his vision, goes to that paradise sun."

• Joan Budilovsky can be reached at editorial@kcchronicle.com or at her Yoyoga.com website.

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It's not whether you win or lose, it's how you hang around

Are you feeling overwhelmed? Could you be stuck in a problem? Maybe you've got a persistent headache?

If you resonate with any of these concerns, I have a stretch for you! Just pull up a sturdy chair and here we go.

Stand behind the chair. Place your hands on the top of the backrest. Space your hands about shoulders width apart. If you don't have a chair, place your hands flat against a wall at chest level.

With your hands holding the top of the chair or resting flat against the wall, take a giant step back. As you



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exhale, slowly bend forward with a flat back. Bend your knees so that the back remains supple. As you bend your knees, feel your tailbone lifting. If your shoulders hurt, bend your elbows. Lengthen your spine, letting your head relax down, then slowly bring your neck in line with the spine. Your head, shoulders, back hang at a right angle to the floor. Breathe deeply here for several breaths.

As you breathe, let your breath caress your shoulders. Watch as the tension falls away and the space between your shoulder blades opens. Hang out here as long as possible. Be sure to move and jostle a bit as you hang to help the muscles relax and release. It's important not to get stuck in the stretch, but rather feel like there's room left to stretch a bit further. Envision your body loose and flowing. Don't push. Just hang out.

When you're ready, step back up and straighten your body with chest open and shoulders down away from your ears. Breathe deeply.

For those of you who are familiar

with yoga poses, this is a standing version of Downward Dog. Not only does this simple stretch release tension in the shoulders and neck, it helps to revitalize the body to make you ready for a fresh new outlook on life.

As the day moves along and you find yourself shouldering more and more responsibilities, turn to this simple stretch often. And don't hesitate to share it with others.

For as tough as your times may be, a finer day is just a stretch away.

• *Joan Budilovsky can be reached at editorial@kcchronicle.com or her website Yoyoga.com.*

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Let's flip the book – what's 'stressed' spelled backward?

How many of the following statements can you relate to?

1. You're looking for something, but when you get to the room you think it's in, you forget what you're looking for.
2. You lock your keys in your car. Sometimes while it's running.
3. Once you hit 30, you gain more than 10 pounds per decade.
4. You drink more coffee than orange juice.
5. Sweating in a sauna sounds more appealing than in a workout.
6. You prefer not to sweat. Where's the chocolate?

All of the above are related to stress in some way. Yet not all stressors are bad. In fact, some are quite good. For example, it was stressful putting that project together at work but it paid off



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because a raise came out of it. Or it was stressful getting to the post office before closing but it got the needed package delivered on time.

Can you think of a stressor in life that's helping you move forward? Perhaps one that's motivating you to do better in some way. If you can't think of one, here's one: Your inhale is stressing your lungs to expand. And your exhale is saying thank you for that.

You might find it easier to find negative stressors. Which ones are creating havoc in your life? What do you think your life would be like without

these stressors in it? Would it be all rosiness and carefree? Most of us simply replace one stressor with another. For example, we give up smoking and start drinking.

So here's a suggestion on eliminating negative stressors in life: Don't. Transform them instead!

Here's how: Sit quietly in the comfort (or discomfort) of your own mind. As you watch the judgments pour in, pull one aside at a time and begin the transformation process.

Replace:

Anger with compassion,
Arrogance with humor,
Sadness with wonder,

Just one judgment, one breath at a time.

Next time a downer daydream drifts through your mind, let a simple

breath transform it into a contemplation of compassion – whether this be toward yourself or another.

You can do it. You're in charge. It's all up to you. Or it's all up to me, depending on who's mind you're in. Actually, it's all up to each one of us in our very own mind.

And through all this there's something absolutely, positively, without even a small dollop of a doubt we can count on:

Your kind thoughts will not only make your world a better one to live in, they'll make my world a heck of a nicer place to live in, too.

And vice versa.

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A soft couch, a warm fireplace and some firewood

It was located somewhere between “Wonderland” and “East of Eden.”

I was surfing through the children’s section as my friend was gliding along the books for big people.

I actually think I like picture books more now than I did when I was a kid – vibrant, catchy, not too verbose. Similar in ways to short YouTube videos. Though YouTube is not as educational.

“Here’s a really great book, Joan,” Barb said as she handed me a massive, heavy, dictionary-laden looking novel.

Since we’re new friends, I didn’t want to hurt our budding friendship by saying, “Are you kidding me? I really have no desire to read 500 pages of incredibly small type.”

So instead I said, “Cool.”

And then held Barbara Kingsolver’s “The Poisonwood Bible,” thinking, “No bloody way.”

Yet since I’ve been trying to get into better shape by lifting weights, I didn’t



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put it down immediately. Instead, I carried it along with me as I continued to peruse Dr. Seuss’s life lessons.

When it came time to check out our library books, I was still holding “The Poisonwood Bible” (appropriately named), along with two of my favorite picture books, “I Am Sam-I-Am (Seuss)” and “The Remarkable Farkle McBride (Lithgow).” I checked out all three and continued on my weightlifting journey home.

Later that night, curled up on my comfy couch by the fireplace, I creaked the poison book open just to be honest and tell my friend I had. As the warmth of the fire crackled nearby, the sentences rolled out like soft velvet across my mind. How could

anyone write so exquisitely? To say I was immediately engaged would be an understatement.

Who in the world could ever find a 500-plus page novel difficult to put down? Me!

It takes place in the Congo. Before reading it, I honestly didn’t know much about the Congo other than my faraway dreams of going on a safari to Africa someday.

Each chapter is written through the eyes of a different family member. There are six family members. They travel together as misguided missionaries under their dominating father’s leadership. Each gradually and profoundly changes through their many Congo challenges. Each moves forward in uniquely distinctive ways.

For example, when was the last time giant ants woke you up at 2 a.m. attacking you from head to toe and everyone in your family and all in your entire neighborhood at the same

time? I hope never.

But that happened to them.

Scary.

As well as tragic and awe-inspiring. Within every experience, each person on every page of this magnificent African adventure is keenly illuminated through stunning literary eloquence.

So now my goal for 2023 is to read every single Barbara Kingsolver book there is. I’m finding out there are many. Next I’ll be joining her for a “Prodigal Summer” in the Appalachian Mountains. I can hardly wait for our new travels together to start. I’ll get ready and throw another log on the fire.

Wow! Thanks, Barb! Move over Dr. Seuss. There’s just not enough room near the fireplace tonight for all of us.

• Joan Budilovsky can be reached at editorial@kcchronicle.com or through her website at Yoyoga.com.



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Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to me, happy birthday everybody!

It was one of those birthdays that comes up without much of a hurrah. In fact, the only person who remembered was a faraway friend from another state. On the birthday card was a simple three-inch round button to pin on a jacket with bright stenciled lettering:

"It's My Birthday!"

I grinned and pinned it on. It was a way to carry my friend with me throughout the tough day ahead.

Before I got too far down the street, a passing stranger called out, Happy birthday!

Why thanks! I replied.

That was just the beginning to a flood of good wishes.



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Yep, thanks! Over and over again.

When's yours? I'd ask, wanting to wish a happy day back even if in advance. All those positive vibes turned my tough day into a terrific one.

That night I went to sleep grateful for my faraway friend. I packed the button up for next year and considered it my good luck charm.

Sure enough, when the next birthday rolled around, more people noticed.

Or maybe it was me pointing at the button. I especially made a point of doing so when someone seemed to be giving me grief about something or other.

Give me a break, I'd say, pointing to that big beautiful button.

Oh! Happy birthday my friend! It worked like a charm.

In fact, that handy dandy button worked so great I decided to wear it longer – a few days, then a week. Heck, I'm still wearing it. And I admit I rather enjoy it reminding me that every sunrise offers an opportunity to start anew. Hallelujah! Born again.

Now some of you may see this as seeking attention. But I see it as catching kindness. Perfect strangers who

barely would give me the time of day instead wish me happiness galore. With only a short glance, frowns turn into smiles. Magic.

So as we try to contemplate how to be less angry and stressed in this crazy, mixed-up world, I've got a crazy cool answer that'll hopefully push some buttons: "It's My Birthday" buttons. The gift that keeps on giving.

** Joan Budilovsky can be reached at editorial@kcchronicle.com or her website, Yoyoga.com. For enlightened quotes from young children on everything from birthdays to butterflies, check out her new book, "Sages of Young Ages."*

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Learning the serene art of sitting in silence

What is meditation?

Webster's Dictionary has two definitions for it: 1. a discourse intended to express its author's reflections or to guide others in contemplation

This makes sense.

2. the act or process of meditating

Oh, brother, so now I have to look up "meditating."

Here's what Webster has to say about "meditating": 1. to engage in contemplation or reflection

OK, this fact checks Meditation definition No. 1 above.

2. to engage in mental exercise (such as concentration on one's breathing or repetition of a mantra) for the purpose of reaching a heightened level of spiritual awareness.

OK, so "spiritual awareness" happens. But what does that mean? There's no definition in Webster for it. So sepa-



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rating the words, I find "spiritual" has more than five vague definitions.

I'll pick this one:

Spiritual: relating to sacred matters.

And for awareness:

Awareness: the quality or state of being aware.

Oh, brother! So now let's look up "aware."

Aware: having or showing realization, perception or knowledge.

By now you're hopefully seeing how circular and ongoing this Webster search is. Every step along the way requires further research or interpretation.

As a meditation teacher, I've traveled around this spiraling block for decades. So coming to you now from a Midwestern meditator's den are some real-life examples of mind patterns experienced while sitting in the stillness of a meditative practice.

Me, me, me, me, me ...

I hurt, I need to check my phone, I need to scratch my nose ...

I am anxious over hurting, checking phone, scratching nose ...

I observe image of myself hurting. I release this image of myself hurting and the anxiousness.

I observe myself checking phone.

I release this image of myself checking phone and the anxiousness.

I observe image of myself scratching nose.

I release this image of myself scratching nose and the anxiousness.

With every image that comes to mind, you become the observer and learn the emotions attached to that image. You develop the ability to release negative emotions by first acknowledging them and then becoming the observer of them. You learn the constant shifting of observations and emotions of your life do not define who you really are.

So, who are you? Really, who are you?

From Asia to Portugal to the Midwest of the U.S. and everywhere around and between, regularly unraveling and exploring this vital question of "Who am I?" is the essence of a meditator's journey.

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Try yoga for those times when pain comes a knockin'

Years ago, I developed and taught a course for the College of DuPage called Yoga for Chronic Pain. I had studied this subject for years and really wanted in some way to help all the many loved ones I knew who had these issues.

I didn't have any problems with pain at that time, but my heart and mind were brimming with creative ways to help others. The classes were packed and people came with a variety of ailments. Most wanted to find new ways to ease their pain that didn't involve medication. With the opioid crisis yet to be on the horizon, they obviously were wise beyond their years.

With each class and each new chronic condition walking or rolling through that school door, I believe I ended up learning more than my students did. One of the common denominators in every class I taught was the importance of breathing exercises in managing and some-



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times even alleviating pain.

I went on to be a consultant for B.K.S. Iyengar's book "Yoga the Path to Holistic Health" (2001). Iyengar (1918-2014) was then, and still is considered today, one of the leading masters of Hatha yoga. In fact, there's a whole study of yoga named after him - Iyengar yoga. His long-established high level of experience and expertise certainly surpassed mine. To be asked to be a consultant on his book was humbling to say the least. I gave it my best. Again, I learned far more than I believe I was able to give. He devoted a whole section of this remarkable book on yoga to chronic ailments. Thank you from the bottom of my heart, dear Mr. Iyengar.

Out of all the exercises I taught in those chronic pain classes of yesteryear and still teach in classes today, there's one that stands out as extremely effective during the most intense moments of pain - Savasana or Corpse pose. Corpse pose is about transcendence or letting go. Letting go of the pain by first acknowledging it, living it, accepting it. So here's how it goes:

Let's assume it's the back that's troubling you. Focus on this area of the back. It probably won't be hard to do as it screams to you with pain.

Breathe in deeply with focused awareness on this painful area of the back.

As you exhale, say to it softly and gently: Relax my back.

With each slow exhale repeat this over and over again: Relax my back.

Move to other parts of the body that are troubling you.

For example, a painful headache: Deep focused inhale, slow exhale. Relax my forehead.

Moving around the head to all sections of trouble.

Deep focused inhale, slow exhale of kindness: Relax my scalp, relax my eyes, etc.

The key steps are awareness, focus, kindness, release.

It's hard to be kind when in pain. Yet self-love is an important step in the process. Caress the pain with kindness. No hurry. No rush. Breathe deep. Slow exhales.

As the pain eventually subsides (and it will subside) some poetry to reflect upon:

"Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding." - Khalil Gibran

• Joan Budilovsky can be reached at editorial@kccronicle.com or through her website at Yoyoga.com. She will be teaching July classes in "Yoga for Chronic Pain" at the Burlington Public Library in Burlington, Wisconsin.

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Breathe, breathe in the air

The deal is sealed.

New York City is bringing mandatory mindful breathing classes to all public schools from pre-K to 12th grade. With all the difficulties public schools face, the focus on mindful breathing could be seen as gasping for straws.

But if you don't take NYC's scholastic endorsement of breath work, surely you'll take Oprah's. She's offering newly formed classes in "Breathwork and Transformation." Could Oprah be on to something?

The U.S. Navy SEALs might have the answer.

Navy SEALs' training includes the study and practice of "tactical breathing." These breathing techniques have been scientifically proved to calm the nervous system, promoting balance and evenness, which in turn reduces agitation and anxiety. Successfully used in military training, tactical breathing helps soldiers to make the "right decisions at the right time."

The first steps of this Navy SEALs breathing method can be found in the text of the Hatha Yoga Pradipika of 1350. Its Sanskrit name is Dirgha Shvasam. The Sanskrit word Dirgha means "long in space or time." Shvasam means "breath."

If we search deeper, the importance



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of breath work can be found even further back to 800 BCE within the ancient texts of the Upanishads. And before this text, the actual practice of breath work had been disseminated from teacher to student for hundreds of years.

But last things first. Here's an entrance into the Navy SEALs tactical breathing method:

Place your right hand on your belly – big exhale.

Breathe through your nose as you inhale, bringing the breath from the belly to the upper chest.

Exhale, first lowering the upper chest, then your belly.

Once comfortable with doing this several times, try extending your exhales twice as long as your inhales.

The yogis use a three-part breath step. It's best practiced lying down with spine flat on floor and knees bent. One hand on the belly and the other on the upper chest near the clavicle. In this position you can clearly feel the movement of the breath.

Inhale through the nose in this

order: Raise belly, raise lower chest, raise upper chest.

Exhale through nose, reverse order: lower upper chest, then lower chest, then belly.

The Navy SEALs and yogi techniques improve the strength and functioning of the diaphragm muscle, an important muscle in breathing located right below the rib cage.

So there you have it. The Navy SEALs and the yogis – what a cool combo.

Cool as a sage who long ago told his son:

"Just as a bird tied by a string flies off in all directions and on not reaching any other place to stay, returns to where it is tied, in the very same way, dear boy, the mind flies off in all directions and on not reaching any other place to stay, returns to the breath. For the mind, dear boy, is tied to the breath." – Chandogya Upanishad (6.8.2), 800 BCE

• Joan Budilovsky can be reached at editorial@kcchronicle.com or through her website at Yoyoga.com. She will be teaching a seminar in "Ancient Breath Steps" on Wednesday, Aug. 16, at the Burlington Senior Center in Burlington, Wisconsin.

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It can all start with just a little whistle

"Whenever I feel afraid, I hold my head erect and whistle a happy tune so no one will suspect I'm afraid," – Rodgers and Hammerstein, "The King and I."



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Can you name that tune? I haven't seen the movie in years, but can still sing all the lyrics to that song at the drop of a hat. And living around the Windy City, hats flying by on their way to dropping are a pretty common sight.

Perhaps it's that connection between the whistle, the breath and the mind that entrances me. Oh, heck, "Whistle a Happy Tune" is just a great song.

So I try to whistle along my way as often as I can without being too obnoxious.

"Pardon me, just want to interject a little whistle here if you don't mind too much."

And if you do, I'll just tweet it

inside me so you won't even hear it. Phweee, whooee-ueeet, Phweee ... (I don't really know how to spell a whistling sound, but you get the idea).

On particularly sunny days or when I feel a strong whistle coming on, I'll take my small harp with me, too. Sometimes I'll take my large one, but jeez that one's hard to carry. Large or small, I find it fun learning to play these beautifully stringed instruments, so consequently I've been learning for a very long time. Their lyrical sounds lift me up just like a whistle and also deeply calm my sense of being.

First developed in ancient Egypt about 3000 B.C., the harp is one of the oldest instruments in the world. At

first it was used by priests as a way to communicate with the gods. In those times long ago, there were only a few strings to it. Those simple harps of yesteryear developed eventually into the multi-stringed harps of today.

Is there a musical instrument that makes you happy? Or could there perhaps be one that calms you in ways hard to describe? Instruments are funny that way. I know someone who's soothed by bagpipes. Have you heard bagpipes lately? Those pipes are mighty loud! And they're pretty old, too.

Bagpipes are another one from ancient Egypt, but they are a little younger to us than the harp. The bagpipes were born about 400 B.C. My friend says that blowing those big pipes pushes all other sounds away for some peace of mind. Whew – that takes some strong pushing!

Apart from the many choices of musical instruments, there's the music

of the mind. We've each got one of those to play. What stations are you tuned into today? Are they happy? Are they fun? Are they tragic? Are they sad?

Music in all its forms can be captivating as well as reflective of the changing seasons in our lives. Music can help us get through the fun times or the tough times. And it can all start with just a little whistle.

"The result of this deception is very strange to tell. For when I fool the people, I fear I fool myself as well."

"I whistle a happy tune. And every single time, the happiness in the tune convinces me that I'm not afraid."

• Joan Budilovsky can be reached at editorial@kcchronicle.com or through her website at Yoyoga.com. She will be playing "Harp Meditations" on Sundays in September at the Enlightened Living Center of Burlington, Wisconsin. For more information, call

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KANE COUNTY CHRONICLE
Thursday, October 5, 2023
Kane County Chronicle/shawlocal.com/kane-county-chronicle

Lions and tigers and what? Oh my, it's Halloween 2023!

With a heigh-heigh-heigh and a ho-ho-ho ...
I walk into the big-box store to buy a few lightbulbs for the office.
When what to my wondering eyes should appear ...

An enormous pair of bloody eyes with long, dripping red fingernails holding a baby doll at eye level and muttering something sinister about the bundle and then twisting its head off.

Yup. Welcome to Halloween 2023 folks.

It's no longer kiddie nightmares of the Wicked Witch zooming around on her broom in the occasional Oz movie. Now she's out greeting us all at eye



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level in the neighborhood store, on bloody steroids and with no Good Witch floating nearby.

It makes me long to hear a sweet voice, "Everything's going to be all right. Just close your eyes and tap your heels together three times."

"I'll do it!" I close my eyes and conjure up the soft angelic features of the Good Witch.

Whew. I feel so much better think-

ing of her. There's no place like home. There's no place like home. There's ...
"Nooooooo!"

I open my eyes and before me stands an uglier than ugly queen of loathsome witches stirring a huge black kettle telling me she thinks my eyeballs would fit well into it.

Say what?! Get me out of here fast! Forget the bulbs. I'll light some candles.

On my scramble to the exit, I see a father carrying his 2-year old son, passing one-by-one through the foul life-size mess of horror and pressing buttons to hear each of their awful sadistic ramblings. Each one more gruesome sounding, more bloodier

looking than the next. Daddy's having a great time laughing with each push of a big red button.

"Look at that," he giggles, "haha-haha ..."

I noticed his wide-eyed child wasn't laughing one bit, though. Maybe because it wasn't one bit funny. I'm with you kid.

But I happen to know, dear little one, there really are good witches out there. There really are.

Sometimes you just have to close your eyes to see one.

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'Tis the season for an attitude of gratitude

Gratitude has been expressed through the ages within many spiritual and religious traditions.

For example:

Christianity

Bible: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-17

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances."

Judaism

Torah: Deuteronomy 28:11, 27:7, 28:47

"The key to experiencing real joy in life is through gratitude and the cultivation of a good heart."

Islam

Qu'ran: 31:12

"Anyone who is grateful does so to the profit of his own soul."



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Hinduism

Dhanya Vad, meaning I am grateful.

A Sanskrit mantra used to calm the mind and repeat throughout the day.

Buddhism

Buddhist monks begin each day with chants of gratitude for the gifts of food, shelter, friendship and teachings that benefit all.

All these traditions and more cultivate expressions of gratitude and consider thankfulness an important moral virtue.

So in the spirit of this blessed month of Thanksgiving, here's yet another expression of thanks. It's a meditation that could be shared together as a family or expressed alone in simple quiet contemplation.

A gratitude meditation

Think of the things in life you are grateful for – a morning cup of coffee, the bed you sleep in, the light on your doorstep.

Silently thank the sweet things in your life.

Think of nature you are grateful for.

The birds in the morning, the frogs at night, the grass beneath your feet.

Silently express your thanks.

Now think of a person you are thankful for.

Imagine this person sitting in front of you.

Look into their eyes with a silent expression of thank you.

Think of someone who has died, think of them happy

and silently express your thanks. Think of a spiritual leader sitting across from you,

Look into their eyes and silently express your thanks.

Sit in quiet contemplation of all you are thankful for.

The many people, The many things,

The many beings, The many parts of life,

Thank you.

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KANE COUNTY CHRONICLE

SERVING ST. CHARLES, GENEVA & BATAVIA

The many gifts of the season – where to start?

*“If you can dream – and not make
dreams your master.” – Rudyard
Kipling*

That most magical time of the year is here. Wind ‘em up, watch ‘em go, knock ‘em down – toys abound! Nothing’s better than watching a gleeful child open gifts and then hanging out to play along with their fun new toys.

But with each advancing age, the gifts become more complicated and the price tags soar to the moon (and don’t come back). Building blocks, toy trucks or cuddly soft dollies no longer cut it. Teenagers want the real thing. And adults, where to start?

Well, here’s a start, a simple gift for those of us with less than gleeful eyes. It’s a poem written in 1895 by Rudyard Kipling called “If.” Soft on the pocket-book, engaging for the seasoned mind and easy to frame, too. This poem meant so much to “The Greatest” Muhammad Ali, he kept it in his pocket. So here’s a gift from good ‘ol



YO JOAN

**Joan
Budilovsky**

Rudy that just keeps on giving.

“If” by Rudyard Kipling

“If you can keep your head when all about you

Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;

If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,

But make allowance for their doubting too;

If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,

Or, being lied about, don’t deal in lies,

Or, being hated, don’t give way to hating,

And yet don’t look too good, nor talk too wise;

If you can dream – and not make

dreams your master;

If you can think – and not make thoughts your aim;

If you can meet with triumph and disaster

And treat those two impostors just the same;

If you can bear to hear the truth you’ve spoken

Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,

Or watch the things you gave your life to broken,

And stoop and build ‘em up with worn out tools;

If you can make one heap of all your winnings

And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,

And lose, and start again at your beginnings

And never breathe a word about your loss;

If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew

To serve your turn long after they

are gone,

And so hold on when there is nothing in you

Except the Will which says to them: “Hold on”;

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,

Or walk with kings – nor lose the common touch;

If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you;

If all men count with you, but none too much;

If you can fill the unforgiving minute With sixty seconds’ worth of distance run —

Yours is the Earth and everything that’s in it,

And – which is more – you’ll be a Man, my son!”

My hopes are for many more such blessings to surround you this holiday season.

Happy Holidays!

Joan