

# KANE COUNTY CHRONICLE

SERVING ST. CHARLES, GENEVA & BATAVIA

30

## OPINIONS

**THE FIRST AMENDMENT** • Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

# Thinking about conscience and conscious

*"We see people and things not as they are, but as we are." – Anthony DeMello*

You may have to look at the words conscience and conscious a couple of times to see the difference. I did. Slightly different letters but quite different meanings. So close, yet so far. In these upside-down, all-around times of trying to figure out COVID-19, politics and what's for dinner at the same time, let's try something different to get us on course.

### Conscience vs. consciousness

Conscience is that little canary on your shoulder telling you what's good or bad.

Consciousness is seeing sharply straight ahead with the birdie off your shoulder.



**YO JOAN!**  
**Joan Budilovsky**

Those canaries can help us, but they can hurt us, too, especially when they stay too long and poop all over our shoulders. When we shoo those little birdies away, our vision expands. Perhaps we'll even be able to see each other. Wow!

What's guiding you? Your conscience or consciousness?

Here's an experiment to try.

Think of a comment someone made to you at some point that offended you. A comment that made you simmer.

Imagine that same comment being said to someone different from you, someone from a different upbringing or

a different culture. How might this person respond to this same comment? Put yourself for a moment in their shoes.

Now imagine that insult being hurled at a comedian you think is funny. Can you imagine their response?

From your unique bird's-eye view, you'll likely see reality somewhat differently than what your neighbor sees or I see and most definitely what that comedian sees, which is a good reason why we love comedians. They remind us the world can be spun left or right and transformed into a new vision. The best comedians bring up experiences we're all familiar with, twist them into new shapes, see them through new lenses, and develop hilarious scenarios out of what started out as commonly shared irks. They help us roar into laughter rather than charge into combat. They expand

upon our vision.

So the next time an offensive remark makes you recoil, think of how someone different from you might respond – think of someone perhaps with kind eyes and a half grin (OK, my birdie suggested that). This simple exercise can help us realize there are multiple ways to respond to any given situation. There are so many canaries hanging around out there on so many shoulders. Try shooing yours away every once in a while to gain a new view. Let 'em fly! Rest assured that canary will be back, hopefully with an enlightened perspective.

*Joan Budilovsky can be reached at [editorial@kcchronicle.com](mailto:editorial@kcchronicle.com). She is a resident of St. Charles. Her new book "Sages of Young Ages" is coming out this fall. Her website is [Yoyoga.com](http://Yoyoga.com).*

KANE COUNTY CHRONICLE  
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## A Meditation of Tenderness during the holiday season

*“Try a little tenderness.” – Otis Redding*

Happy Thanksgiving, you say? With the suggested restrictions on travel and family gatherings, Thanksgiving has taken on a different tone this year. A tone that is familiar to scores of people who struggle through the holidays without a loving family. Many young, many old and many in between experience the holidays with nary a home to gather in.

If you're mourning the loss of a loved one, the constant reminders of "happy holidays" can foster strong desires to go into hiding till the holidays are over. It's not that you want pity or to ruin anyone's good times. It's just that it's hard playing the game of happiness when you are mourning. Putting on a make-believe smile when your heart is breaking isn't easy to do. It's utterly exhausting.



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If you're a sensitive soul who wants to reach out and help, well, it's complicated from 6 feet away. Masks hide warm smiles. They also fog up glasses, making kind eyes difficult to see. Zoom and Facebook – try as they may – don't replace hugs or hand holding, which are considered by many to be vital gestures of hope and goodwill.

In an odd way, the pandemic has put us on sad equal footing. Separation, whether physical or emotional, can be painful and heart-breaking.

I used to teach college courses in yoga for chronic ailments. These classes filled up fast. People came with debilitating problems and were

searching for answers they weren't finding through the traditional medical system. My classes largely were focused on breath and movement. It's amazing the way breath can bring us together – in seriously troubling ways such as the transmission of a virus, but also in incredibly inspiring ways such as the healing of pain.

One of the meditation techniques I taught in my classes I called "The Meditation of Tenderness."

Although I came up with the name, the meditation has been around since the 8th century.

It's really quite simple. It involves the key foundational steps in meditation – awareness and focus.

I encourage you to try this meditation whenever you're in pain and to share this exercise freely with others. You may be surprised to learn how many people are searching for answers to painful problems. In

breathing a little tenderness, you may help yourself through your pain and possibly help someone else through theirs, too.

### The Meditation of Tenderness

**Inhale:** I am aware of the pain.

**Exhale:** I surround it with tenderness.

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# Overwhelmed by emotions? Focus on the feet

*Choreography is writing on your feet. - Bob Fosse*

Yes, the feet! Sometimes it's important to flip the book and turn it upside down. If you find yourself overwhelmed by your emotions, either in angry outbursts or mean verbal onslaughts, here's a simple technique to help you change course quickly: Shift all your focus to your feet.

Next time your anger takes over and you sense your emotions ready to fly out in verbal or physically abusive ways, shift your attention from an aggressive stance to a grounding neutral point in your body - the soles of your feet. By shifting your full focus to your feet, there is a resulting sense of calm



**YO  
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whether you're standing or sitting. Just make sure both feet are flat on the floor.

So, soles knows and here goes ...  
1. With both feet flat on the floor, breathe naturally. Don't force your breath. Just stand or sit there.

2. Think of the incident that made you angry. Maybe you'll be right in the midst of it. If not, conjure it up so you can see how to work with this soleful technique effectively. Stay with the anger.

3. These thoughts of anger race through your mind. Your breathing might change and become faster. Stay with the feeling.

4. Quickly shift your attention to your feet. Move your toes. Feel the arch of your feet. Notice how the socks or the ground feel against them. Keep studying the textures around your feet. Observe the sensations your feet feel.

5. Breathe naturally. Keep your focus on your feet until you calm down.

If you're in the midst of an angry and difficult encounter, this quick shift of focus can help you clear your mind and be more level-headed in your response. It need not last long to be effective. This foot-focused stress-reducing technique originally

was developed many years ago for people with autism to help manage sensory overload that resulted in aggressive outbursts. This foot-focus technique has proved very effective in managing aggressive behavior. Some of us are much more sensitive in how much sensory overload we can tolerate. And these days we all have a hefty share of stress to manage. So here's to a new yet old happy feet technique!

You can do it!  
You can control your anger - right there on your feet.

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# Using your tongue to help you relax

*I just stick my tongue out because I hate smiling in pictures. It's so awkward. - Miley Cyrus*

As if these times are not odd enough, school for many is back in session but summer's still here. So I've got a little exercise that's odd and fitting with these times. Yet as strange as it appears, it's also healing. It's a meditative cooling breath to savor these last few weeks of an utterly bizarre summer. It uses your tongue!

Can you roll your tongue into a tube? Basically, can you bring the sides of your tongue up so that the center appears like a tube?

Some of us can do this easily.



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Many of us, though, are simply not as talented with our tongues as Cyrus. Rolling the tongue may seem a strange and distant exercise in futility. Let's face it, it's absurd anyway you look at it, right? But this particular meditative technique has been around thousands of years, so let's give it a go and see if we can keep it going for another thousand or so. If rolling your tongue is not your cup o' tea, try just following along pretend-

ing you can do it. Use your incredibly vivid imagination!

Roll your tongue into a tube and keep it slightly outside your mouth. Draw in your breath through your tongue as if you're sipping through a straw.

When your lungs are full, bring your tongue into your mouth and close your mouth. Lower your chin slightly and retain the breath for a few seconds.

As you do so, relax your tongue, mouth and face.

Then exhale slowly through your nose.

Repeat this cooling breath technique several times. Not only is this

considered a calming meditative breathing exercise, it also can cool the body down from excessive heat. So as you savor these last few weeks of summer, you have this new cooling exercise for those remaining hot summer days to help keep your spirits up. For as another renowned great tongue roller once said:

*Life is too short to have anything but delusional notions about yourself.*  
- Gene Simmons

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## Find the joys of first experiences in your life

*"An honest man is always a child."*  
— Socrates

When was the last time you did something for the first time?

Life can get so busy, we often overlook firsts. Children have a way of reminding us of the here and now. It's so much fun to watch as a child takes his or her first steps in life. They prompt us to cherish small moments, the gift of every tender breath.

Can you remember how exciting it was to see for the first time a big fat bumblebee exploring a flower or the first feeling of being wrapped in a soft blanket or jumping for joy into a pile of fallen leaves? As we get older, we lose sight of these personal childhood experiences as if we never had them. We've grown up. And in that process of maturing, we start to develop an attitude of "been there, done that" and



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forget to see, to look, to listen. Children come along into our adult lives and remind us what fun really is. We laugh at their inquisitive nature. Life is so new through their eyes, so refreshing to see.

What if you were able to approach each day as a jubilant child, full of exuberance, trust and joyful expectation? That's quite a challenge! After all, the longer one lives, the more heartaches, betrayals and disappointments pile up. But what if you were able to turn these piles of obstacles into heaps of opportunities? Not as a witty cliché but as real life choices. Obstacles to opportunities. What if you were able to see

### Write to us

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clearly again and find the joy of a first experience?

Within the past few hours, what's

been a first for you? You may be thinking, "Ha, today's been the same ol', same ol' – boring." But it's actually never that way. The cells in each of our bodies are constantly transforming. In fact, you're a different person now than when you started reading this sentence. Some cells in your body have moved around and totally changed – poof! The air around you and in you has changed. The clouds in the sky have shifted. The earth has moved under my feet and yours.

The one stable thing in each of our lives is change.

This moment is definitely a first. Let's together make the most of it.

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## A calming exercise to try during these stressful times

*"The times they are a-changin' " – Bob Dylan, Nobel Prize in literature, 2016*

"The Times They Are a-Changin' " is a popular song written by Bob Dylan in 1964. It is on an album of the same name. The album is about social unrest, poverty and racism – all raging in society alongside a horrifying war in Vietnam. A time of significant struggles in our country and worldwide. Stress definitely was part of the scene then as it is today with the COVID-19 pandemic. Stress isn't a new phenomenon.

The following meditative technique has quite a history, too. It was developed thousands of years ago in India. It's a sense withdrawal technique based on the concept that sometimes it's important to tune out before tuning in. It gives the senses a kind of spa-like retreat before they get the best of us and turn into a negative whirlwind of chaos. This exercise takes only a few moments to do and has the ability to quickly create or restore a sense of calm.



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Read these directions first because it involves closing your eyes. As far as I know, it's easier to read with your eyes open. Your face and all of your fingers are part of the exercise, so wash your hands.

Start with all 10 fingers spread out and raised in front of your face.

The left hand will be used for the left side of face and the right hand for the right side.

Begin by placing your thumbs in your ears.

Close your eyes and place your first fingers lightly over your lower eye lids/eyelashes.

The next fingers rest on the tip of your nose.

The next over the top of your lips.

Place your little fingers over the bottom of your lips.

Gently hold every point closed except for the nose so

you can easily breathe. No need to press hard. Be gentle.

Continue this quieting of the senses as long as needed. Hear the deep resonant movement of your breath.

Quiet the senses. Quiet the busy mind.

This is a popular calming technique for those with autism and those who are extremely sensitive to sensory stimulation.

Sensory overload isn't something new – it's relative to the times. Even though these times are a-changin,' stress is still around.

It's common to experience some form of sensory overload. Some of us are more sensitive to this overload than others. Multitasking can create havoc to stress levels, but there are ways to handle negative stress effectively such as this calming exercise.

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## We are all interconnected by the air that we breathe

A tree grows in Brooklyn and one grows close to you. What do you suppose came first – the tree or the seed? To reflect upon a seed falling from a tree forming into a tree, which produces more seeds to become new trees, is a reflection upon the cycle of life. What an awe-inspiring cycle it is! We see the cycle of life manifest itself through all of creation in amazing ways – the seedling process of birth to life to death to birth to life to ... a beautiful cycle of creation.

Although the beginning of the cycle of life for humans is usually referred to as the point of conception, we often overlook that there was a part of us in our mother and a part of us in our father before conception. And before that, there was a part of us



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in each of our grandparents and before that our great-grandparents and on and on it goes. So, where does life actually start and where does it end?

Sometimes it's easy to look at great-great-grandparents or any of our ancestors as separate beings from times long gone by. But could it be that we were right there in the midst of it back then, too? Even if but a remote twinkle in an ancestor's eye. If we look at our ancestors not as separate beings from a long time ago but as our life being experienced through

them a long time ago, we start to understand how important history is. We start to understand how essential it is to unravel mistakes and accomplishments made back then so we can live better in this life we are leading now. You and I are part of a multitude of generations before us. Perhaps not simply as observers but as active participants within these vast generations.

Being in the midst of COVID-19 helps us see how intermingled we are as people. Your breath affects mine. It always has, but a virus helps us to see how important your breath is to my life – how truly precious it is. The virus clearly demonstrates how intimately connected we are even at 6 feet apart. There is no denying that

we share the air of this world. And just like our ancestors shared a part of us, we share a part of them today. We have an opportunity to use the knowledge today of the numerous generations that live within us from yesteryear.

So now is the time to gather the inner knowledge we have gained from the experiences of a multitude of generations of trials and tribulations.

Dig deep. Use our inner knowledge. Vote!

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## The wise ways of dogs surely can help in these times

*"Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible." – Dalai Lama*

Malakoff was a large Newfoundland dog that lived in Paris and protected the store of a jeweler. There was an apprentice who worked for the jeweler who Malakoff didn't like. The feeling was mutual. The apprentice decided to kill the big dog.

One day, he led Malakoff to the River Seine and with the help of a few friends tied a heavy stone around the dog's neck and pushed him into the turbulent waters. The current moved faster than Malakoff could swim. The water quickly overpowered him, but he fiercely fought back. It took incredible strength for him to stay afloat. With his strong hefty frame,



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he somehow managed to get close to shore even with a heavy stone weighing him down. As he approached calmer water, he heard sounds behind him and turned his head to see his attacker had fallen into the rushing water, too! The apprentice didn't know how to swim and was going down fast, gasping for air.

Malakoff swiftly turned around to swim back into the turbulence to try to help his attacker. He strained against the fast-moving water – the heavy stone around his neck pulling

him down with each stroke. With great effort, he reached the point where he last saw his attacker go down. The man was able to reach up to grab hold of the dog's fur and bring his head above the water. Malakoff was too weak now to swim with the panicky man back to shore. He powerfully treaded water with the struggling apprentice until rescuers came for them.

Once they were safely on shore, the grateful apprentice begged for the dog's forgiveness. Word spread and Malakoff became a heroic legend throughout Paris. When the dog died, his funeral procession was lined with many apprentices who honored him as an inspiration of hope and valor.

The story of Malakoff is true. He

was a great teacher – most dogs are. They aren't Republican or Democrat and will gladly listen to and accept your political leanings. They don't judge by the color of your skin or the money in your pocket. If you give a dog some kindness, a dog likely will return it tenfold. And as far as forgiveness goes, if only we all could turn the tide and be like Malakoff. Every day in every way, a dash of kindness sprinkled with forgiveness can surely doggone help.

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# Check in with yourself this holiday season

*"So this is Christmas  
And what have you done.  
Another year over.  
A new one just begun."  
— John Lennon*



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Budilovsky

*"Happy Holidays! How ya doing?"  
"Good."  
Really?  
How are you doing?  
How's your health? How are your  
loved ones? How's your pet? How  
are you doing with your bills? Your  
responsibilities? The stresses of life?  
How are you handling things? How's  
the balancing act going? Is it balanc-  
ing? Is it an act?"*

assuming we have family and/or people who care. When everyone is fa-la-la-la-la-ing, it's a bummer to be the one off key.

When things aren't going as planned, it's easier to just go along pretending to others that everything's fine. Hey, it's even good – la-la-la-la-la! Yet it's only a matter of time before the song ends, company leaves, and the cracks in the china begin to appear. The la-la's become loo-loose.

"Bah humbug," you mutter under your breath.

One thing is certain this year and every single year, it's not a "ho ho" Christmas for all.

### Write to us

The Kane County Chronicle welcomes original letters on public issues. Letters must include the author's full name, home address and telephone number. We limit letters to 400 words. All letters are subject to editing for length and clarity. Letters can be emailed to [letters@kcchronicle.com](mailto:letters@kcchronicle.com)

And so, this is Christmas. A time to look up at the stars and realize it only takes the inspiration of one bright light to lead to magnificence. Maybe that bright light is in you ready to shine forth and see the great hope in our midst – even if it's in the midst of

an old tattered barn with straw as a bed.

Next time you ask someone "How ya doing?" take a pause for the response. Listen. Really listen – perhaps checking in twice. Maybe, just maybe, you'll get an honest answer one of these days. And maybe, just maybe, your holiday, along with someone else's, will be all the happier for it.

*"To the world, you might be just one person,  
but to one person you might just be the world."*

Joan Budilovsky can be reached at [editorial@kcchronicle.com](mailto:editorial@kcchronicle.com). She is a resident of St. Charles. Her book "Sages of Young Ages" has been newly released this holiday season on Amazon. Her website is [Yoyoga.com](http://Yoyoga.com).

# KANE COUNTY CHRONICLE

SERVING ST. CHARLES, GENEVA & BATAVIA

## Reflections on 2020 and a tip on keeping your resolutions

*"We'll take a cup o' kindness yet  
For days of auld lang syne."*  
- Robert Burns

With 2021 underway, you're probably well into (or hopefully not already out of) your New Year's resolutions. If you're into it, "Yay! Keep going!" If you're out of it, "Don't despair!" I have a tip that hopefully can help whether you're in, out or somewhere in between.

Many of us would like to forget 2020 existed with all the serious health trials and difficulties of the year, but now is a good time to reflect with 20/20 hindsight. Coincidentally, reflection is the last part of every yoga pose.

Here's the tip:



**YO  
JOAN!**  
**Joan  
Budilovsky**

Take a piece of paper and draw a line down the center of it.

In the left column, write down positive things that happened last year. They need not be grandiose accomplishments. It could be as simple as:

- I met a new neighbor I liked.
- I got an "A" in spelling.
- I held my mother's hand.

Write down as many things that you can think of. Think of things that gave you joy, whether big or small.

In the right column, write your disappointments. These could be

huge losses or small hurts. Leave space under each disappointment. For example:

- I got a bad haircut.  
(Skip a line)
- I got a "D" in science.  
(Skip a line)
- My heart broke over the death of my loved one.

After you write down your disappointments, write underneath each disappointment something you learned from the experience. For example:

- I got a bad haircut.  
Show better pictures to hairstylist.
- I got a "D" in science.  
I need my teacher's help.
- My heart broke over the death of my loved one.

I have a heart with capacity for great love.

Lastly, choose experiences from 2020 you'd like to further expand upon in this new year.

For example:  
2021

- Meet more neighbors I like.
- Hold my mother's hand more.
- Show better pictures to hair stylist.
- Ask my teachers for help when needed.

Be patient as my heart grows in its capacity for great love.

Wishing you a beautiful new year.

*Joan Budilovsky is a resident of St Charles. She can be reached at editorial@kcchronicle.com. Her website is Yoyoga.com.*

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