

Springtime Greetings!

Welcome to WOMEN'S WEAVE, the "MUSESLETTER" from the Women's Quest staff. This newsletter provides motivation to continue on your quest. Each issue includes practical tips and inspiration for the body, mind and spirit

Isn't it an INSPIRATION to watch the bulbs push forth from what looked like inhospitable ground! The tenacity of the daffodil makes me realize that brightness and health is possible, even in the dreary moments. A line from POOH'S LITTLE INSTRUCTION BOOK: "You can't stay in your corner of the Forest waiting for others to come to you. You have to go to them sometimes." The daffodils know that. Do we?

Beyond living and dreaming  
There is something more important:  
waking up.  
-Antonio Machado

We hope you enjoy our offerings, and that you will keep in touch. Forward WOMEN'S WEAVE on to other women: spread the word! (Unsubscribe info at end).

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WOMEN'S WEAVE: vol. 7 ----- Waking UP!

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1) Body: BREATHING IS INSPIRING

How can I convince you of the power of a deep intentional breath? Breathing is KEY to health!!! Of course, you know how to breathe (or you wouldn't be readin' this), and it may seem silly to practice or improve it. Yet most people breath shallowly at times, particularly during stress. In order to experience the power of intentional breathing, begin by noticing how you breathe, and when you hold your breath or keep it tight. Breathing more fully will allow your body to WAKE UP to more health, and support balance in your emotional wellbeing.

Conscious breathing means using your diaphragm efficiently. To breathe deeply is to begin the breath low in your belly, and then move it up to your chest.

Here's a simple way to practice efficient diaphragmatic breathing:

Place your right hand on your heart, and your left hand on your belly button. As you breathe in, your left hand should move out and away from your body (soften your abdominal muscles). When your left hand is out as far as is comfortable, bring the inhale

up to your chest and allow the right hand (on your chest) to move out also. Then, as you exhale, the reverse movement happens as your right hand moves close to your body first and then your left hand follows. As you do these breaths in succession, you will see that there is an undulating motion as air moves from down to up and from up to down; from the stomach to the chest and from the chest to the stomach.

This movement massages (and tones) your abdominal muscles! Additionally, because the back of the diaphragm (your diaphragm is the muscle at the bottom of the ribcage that you use when you take a full efficient breath) is attached to the lower back muscles, this type of breathing helps **REDUCE LOWER BACK STIFFNESS**. Conscious and full breathing helps the nervous system, and the metabolism find **BALANCE**. When shallow breathing is chronic, frequently people experience headaches. When you are familiar with this pattern (sometimes it takes awhile to break old habits), you can concentrate playfully with efficient breathing while you are exercising.

**MANY** people breath inefficiently, sometimes reversing the pattern of breathing. (A reversal of the pattern is when the belly goes in with the inhalation, and out with the exhalation.) Sometimes tight pants or belts inhibit full breathing (go ahead, wear looser clothes—your body will thank you). When the natural movement of the diaphragm is inhibited (by reverse pattern breathing, tight clothing, or the tendency to breathe shallowly), the habit is to rely on the “secondary respiratory muscles”—the upper back and shoulders (trapezius, intercostals, and levator scapula muscles). When you are using your diaphragm to breathe, your shoulders do not have to work hard to lift your ribs with each breath. Waking up to conscious efficient breathing means more **RELAXED SHOULDERS!** [I remember a study noting that 85% (yikes!) of the population in the US had inefficient breathing patterns. The study proved that conscious diaphragmatic breathing improved sleep, back pain, hypertension...supporting people more alert and healthy!]

**SPIRIT** and **BREATH** are from the same root word: **INSPIRATION** means to Breathe In. Breathing is inspiring. Go ahead, try one of those deep diaphragmatic breaths **NOW!**

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2) Mind: **BLESS THIS OLD CHASSIS**

Jan Menzie, a fabulous woman who attended a past WQ retreat, wrote a section for this Museletter. It provides a great perspective for thinking about our mind and body.

**THE EXTRAORDINARY WOMAN--BLESS THIS OLD CHASSIS**

I will be 52 this June and my body does not really know it. The way I feel reminds me of my husband's car. He drives an 86 Buick wagon- yellow- otherwise fondly known as the Banana Boat. The car has over 200, 000 well driven miles on her chassis, and should for all purposes be in an auto graveyard someplace. You see, my husband could afford a new car anytime, but has chosen instead to have body work done when the first signs of rust appear, keep seat covers over the car seats, take care of all scheduled and unscheduled

maintenance, and last but not least make repairs at the least sign of trouble. Much of what he has done is preventative maintenance, and it shows, because it is a beautiful, well-tuned car. It is reliable, and do not tell my husband but I will be sad when she finally has to go.

I have learned a lot about myself and my body from that old car. First of all, PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE WORKS WONDERS. Avoiding excesses in food, weight, exercise, or anything will allow the parts to wear out slower than they should. I drink lots of water, take naps, and supplement my body. I choose things I do not get from the food I eat, or the things I drink, or to help the natural changes occurring because of menopause. I exercise and make time for me. When I see rust spots starting to appear such as gray hair, or unkempt nails, or a frazzled psyche, I sit back, take a yoga class, and then get to work at polishing up the old self. I give much to friends and family, but realize that sometimes that I too need seat covers over me; that it is not healthy to be exposed to all the elements mentally or physically all the time. And last but not least, I realize that sometimes I need a service check-up. In other words, I need to sit in one place, and have someone pay attention to me. If I do not do this, I know that I could be in for a severe breakdown. This you may see with many women my age. They have worn out their parts and can not do anything because their knees ache, or their back hurts.

Do I have aches and pains? You bet. But then I remember the car rule. When a warning light comes on, I do not wait or it may be too late. I could burn out my engine. I remember if I want to keep this chassis in top form, do not wait. MAINTAIN TODAY.

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3) Spirit: THE STILL POINT IN THE DANCE

Except for the point,  
the still point,  
there would be no dance,  
and there is only the dance. (T.S Eliot)

Aha, life – as a dance – can get fast and wild. Where is the still point? How can we WAKE UP to what is essential and meaningful, amidst the many steps that must be taken.

How about creating a moment STILLPOINT: a breath or two to center yourself, appreciate with gratefulness, and remember an intention, gain perspective, or take a view of the whole forest (rather than just the trees – all the things on the to-do list.) Creating stillpoints during the day is fundamental to dancing through life with rhythm and grace. There must be a point in which the dancing body stops and rests.

A moment of stillness gives energy to the dance, and the dance—life!—is all there is.

Waking up to Stillpoints is simple: stop whatever you are doing, and take a deep breath and focus in. Remember what you need to remember. The remembering part is flexible.

It can mean recalling a belief that motivates you, or a prayer for strength or peace. The stillpoint may be a time to remind yourself of a message that you need to hear at the moment: "You can do it" "You're #\$\$%&-ing AWESOME!" or "One step at a time." Stillpoints have a physical part (being still and breathing), a mental part (remembering, praying, thankfulness, encouraging words)... which makes an INVITATION for SPIRITUAL vibrancy to arise. Stillpoints give your spirit time to catch up with your life.

Stop. Breathe. Remember. Wake up to the DANCE.

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4) SOUL SPARK:

ACROSS THE DOORSILL, by Rumi (12<sup>th</sup> Century)

The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you.  
Don't go back to sleep!  
You must ask for what you really want.  
Don't go back to sleep!  
People are going back and forth across the doorsill  
where the door to the two worlds touch.  
The door is round and open.  
Don't go back to sleep!

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5) Summer Women's Quest RETREAT SCHEDULE!

We love designing retreats for women! We have been planning three AWESOME summer retreats in the Rockies. They will be incredible experiences to connect with the essential parts of yourself and meet women of all ages on quests for health and self-discovery. You will return from a retreat RENEWED.

Check out [www.womensquest.com](http://www.womensquest.com) to see how our programs inspire women of all ages and abilities to manifest vitality and balance in their lives. Each retreat is UNIQUE and EMPOWERING. We vary the theme and activities of each camp to inspire and challenge the women who are "alumni." Consider a 2002 camp for a re-infusion of "SOUL SPARKS" and the rejuvenation that is at the heart of every Women's Quest program.

SUMMER RETREATS IN WINTER PARK, CO

June 25-June 30   Adventures into the Body & Soul #1  
July 9-July 14     Adventures into the Body & Soul #2  
July 30-August 4   Multi-Sport Adventure Retreat (includes the Danskin Triathlon at the end – Super fun!)

We are also doing Wellness Retreats at a luscious SPA this summer (2 co-ed, 1 women-only), and a magnificent adventure in Tuscany, Italy. Journey to [www.womensquest.com](http://www.womensquest.com) for a full listing.

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We welcome comments and suggestions for WOMENS WEAVE MUSELETTER!  
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For information on our camps and programs, see [www.womensquest.com](http://www.womensquest.com).

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