

La maison d'Hortense

She was 97 and still tended her rose garden – her namesake Hortensia bushes, the berry brambles and fruit trees that filled the steeply terraced lot behind the house. Getting up and down those stone steps certainly took effort these days – but oh, that view was remarkable. Hortense loved this home as much as she loved her independence. She worked to quiet the ongoing concerns of her family members over her living alone. What could possibly happen at this point? While she woke grateful for another day each morning, she knew her time here on earth was growing short. How the end would come did not concern her in the least. She was fearless – because wise Hortense had allowed life to fuel her courage rather than spark anxieties.

Hortense insisted on caring for herself and living out her days in her childhood home, where she with her husband, Gaston, happily reared their daughter. The father of Hortense built the three-story home in the early 1930s. He situated it just above the historic center of Foix to take advantage of the sun through the cold winters and offer magnificent views of the mountains. He filled the terraced hillside with fruit and nut trees and arranged a square plot for a kitchen garden just outside the front door. The house served as the family's refuge for nearly a century. Eventually, Hortense's five grandchildren filled the rooms with sweet memories over the days spent here during their school holidays. She could still hear their joyful voices, chasing one another up and down the spiral staircase, making a day of exploring the treasures in the attic and picking their heart's content of whatever fruit was ripe. Of course, they were all grown now, with families of their own. And that is exactly how it should be, she thought. They are now making treasured memories in their own homes.

After giving her roses a quick trim, Hortense made her way to

the kitchen to prepare herself a cup of tea. Carefully carrying it around the corner into the sitting room, she felt an unusual heaviness come upon her. Perhaps the climb up the garden steps was too much for her today. She found a safe spot for her tea on the side table and eased herself onto the sofa. I'll just close my eyes here for a moment, she thought. And that is how Hortense left this world. Peacefully, with a smile on her face, having spent the morning tending to the home she so loved.

My scheduled seminars and succession of flights across Europe have come to an end and finally, the time came to travel from Kyiv to Foix. The first leg of the journey, from Kyiv to Frankfurt, was smooth — and there the delays began. From the very un-German-like chaos at passport control to the grounding of all flights into France, I saw my blissful return to Foix slipping away. And was the car rental process in Toulouse always so excruciatingly slow, or was my impatience getting the best of me? Hunger, exhaustion, 90-degree heat (even at 8 p.m.) and malfunctioning car air conditioning provided a meltdown recipe for sure. But the calm company of my travel buddy and navigator, Lena, helped me stay in check.

The welcome committee to Foix, Cathy and her charming partner Paul, had prepared a lovely evening meal of fresh vegetables and were full of suggestions for my weeks ahead. By the time we moved to the terrace to enjoy the beautiful night sky, it was nearing midnight and I could feel myself nodding off. Seeing my pitiful condition, Cathy ushered me off to my home for the next month, suggesting kindly that we talk more in the morning.

Under different circumstances, I would have jumped at the chance to explore this charming house, but my heavy lids and lack of focus left me no choice. I wanted nothing more than a quick shower and to find my way into bed. Asleep instantly, I slept with the deep peace and satisfaction of having reached

my final destination after the trek across Europe.

I woke to birdsong and the golden light of sunrise peeking over the mountains. The cool air morning air that drifted across my room was a welcome change after weeks in big cities. It was then that I became conscious of a comfort and peace that penetrated the very core of my being. This was a feeling that I associated with a place and time in my life, but where? I didn't dare stir in bed, afraid any movement would disrupt this perfect, dreamlike state. But was I dreaming, or was I awake? The sensation of familiarity was so profound it could not be ignored. I've been here before, I thought, not here physically but here in this feeling that warmed my heart and filled me with joy. This room, this house, had awakened memories so long tucked away — and they were of my grandmother. While my eyes may have delivered a different message, my heart conveyed that I was in my grandmother's house. Now before you (or my children, if they are reading this) begin to fret that I have become delusional, I do know I wasn't in my grandmother's house. And yet, in that moment I went back to 1970, in the tiny bedroom just a few steps from hers, in her Bay Area bungalow.

Growing up, my Grandma Tillie's house was my sanctuary from my childhood home, filled with chaos and trauma. I feel quite fortunate to have found a place of refuge for those first 11 years of my life. It was the only place I knew where I could count on waking up to safety and peace — and be fed meals prepared with love. Her presence was a balm to my young heart and soul.

Unfortunately, when I could have used her most as I approached adolescence, my grandmother passed suddenly. We were all there, picking her up for dinner out at her favorite Chinese restaurant. One moment she was full of life, joking with my father — and then she just sat down and was gone. In that split second, I lost my beloved grandmother — and maybe more important, my island of safety.

This past December, on another trip to Foix, I shared lunch with my new friend, Cathy. She had invited me to celebrate the completion of my book and to bid me farewell. We sat on her terrace soaking in the winter sun, enjoying the spectacular view of the mountains and the delicious meal she had prepared. I marveled at the serenity of her setting, given it was a just a five-minute walk from the downtown market and shops. Teasing Cathy, I tasked her with finding me a house on her street for the upcoming summer. I don't know which one of us was more surprised when she actually did, and it was right next door to hers!

As my summer plans solidified, Cathy contacted the owner of the house next door — Hortense's daughter. She was delighted to have an opportunity to share her mother's house and worked out a simple agreement with Cathy. As it turned out, aside from some cleaning and gardening, the house had been virtually untouched for three years. And if truth be told, it felt like it hadn't been touched since the 60s!

So this is how I came to stay in what is truly still Hortense's home. Her lively energy and determination are still very present — as well as her flair for decorating, which includes the frequent use of crocheted doilies. ☐ My first week has been an interesting opportunity for self-discovery, as there are certainly times in my life when this setting would have felt just a bit creepy. But it actually could not be further from the truth. Here and now, this house is a welcome respite from my teaching and travels, from finally finishing that third book, from a year of moving houses and all that this year of motherhood has delivered. I am grateful to Hortense for creating such a welcome space, and I could not feel more at home. And who knew it would be in the French mid-Pyrenees where I would connect with my long-deceased California grandmother?

Stay tuned, because this story has just begun! I've had quite the week of setting up house and shifting into the slower pace

and simple pleasures of village life. If you'd like to tag along on this journey, you can keep up with my daily adventures on Instagram!

Kyiv

Let me be honest here. On the bucket list of places I'd like to visit in my lifetime, Ukraine was never near the top. Actually, it wasn't even in the top 100. Absolutely no offense intended, but there was never a real curiosity, and after the unrest in 2015 any chances it had were pretty much extinguished. Now that I am here in the city, I've spent considerable time wondering why this was true. Why have I felt an undercurrent of unease since heading farther east?

I discovered the answer easily when I considered some old stories. I'm a child of the Cold War era and a product of Catholic Schools. I am certain there was not a day of my childhood that we didn't pray for those forced to live behind the 'Iron Curtain.' According to Sister Mary Julius, bless her soul, I should never take for granted my freedom to pray and go to church, because there were frightening parts of the world where that was not allowed. And, she continued, children who did go to church would just disappear. For six-year-old Lauren, who already had her own suitcase full of fears, this was really too much to handle. I am pretty sure, along with a host of other vows, I took one then to never to travel beyond that "curtain," whatever that meant!

So here I am, 59 years old and seriously trying to reconcile the beautiful, bustling city of Kyiv and its friendly residents with the ridiculously scary stories from my childhood. Along with that comes a practical question: Why Kyiv, and why now?

Remaining open to invitations that speak to my heart is a skill I've learned over time. It is a middle path that presents itself when you grow beyond the story of your experiences and connect with your true identity or soul. There you can develop the skill of discernment. This is the skill that protects you from impulsively jumping at every offer, as well as its polar opposite: living on the sidelines of life as a doubting skeptic. Both extremes result in their own kind of regrets.

If either of these paths sound familiar to you, know that the balance between them is an art. And it is exactly where you can live out your fullest life. This middle path requires giving yourself permission to *fail* (*although there are no real failures*) and then evolve, embracing the lessons from each experience. Accepting your failures requires self-compassion and an open heart, one that opens wider with time. This opening is growth and will deepen your trust in your innate wisdom.

So, how does this all relate to Kyiv and the fact I am here? The story actually began last September, when Lena appeared online in my Foundations of Gemmotherapy course. My curiosity getting the best of me, I wrote her to ask how someone in Kyiv found my practice. You can read about her answer [here](#). From the start, her determination and grasp of the topics matched her enthusiasm. I recognized Lena's passion as it was similar to what I felt seven years ago. If my travel could support a movement in Kyiv, with Lena at the lead, then it would be well served.

I can now say our mission was successful. Lena has rallied some powerful individuals who I know will each do their part to establish Gemmotherapy in Kyiv and Ukraine. I feel honored to play my part in what will unfold.

My days in Kyiv have been primarily about teaching. Each morning, we packed our bags, picking up fresh juice on the way

to a homeopathic clinic in the city center. There, we met the most remarkably enthusiastic group of students, which included medical doctors, a dentist, osteopath and interested mothers. And when on July 4 this sweet group threw an impromptu celebration for me, my heart was won. They said, "We will take every opportunity to celebrate independence, yours or ours." These are words I will remember each Fourth of July to come.

Each day, we returned home spent from working in two languages, and after some tea and quiet, we would walk. Lena graciously shared her majestic home city with me. I have especially enjoyed my time with Lena's beautiful family in their flat. On the fourth floor of their historic brick building, we were at eye level with the gorgeous, starred domes of St. Volodymyr's Orthodox Cathedral. If I ever forget I am in Kyiv, those domes quickly help me place myself. In fact, I had a magical view of the center golden dome, glistening against the night sky, as I fell asleep each night.

If I consider which European city Kyiv reminds me of, the closest would be Frankfurt. It is also a busy commercial and administrative center with tree-lined boulevards, but that is where the similarity stops. In central Kyiv, there are over 30 unique styles of buildings alone, from art nouveau and Ukrainian baroque to Soviet modernism. Experiencing so many different eras of history within a single block can be a bit mind-blowing. Known for its beautiful domed churches, Kyiv is home to over 950, many of those dating back to the 11th century. St. Sophia's, the UNESCO treasure, is just one example and a short walk from Lena's flat. There you can't help but connect to Kyiv's rich historical past. Commissioned by Vladimir the Great, St. Sophia's foundation was laid in 1011. Thankfully, historians rallied to save it during the Russian Revolution of 1917.

And because no travel story would be complete without a bit about the food, let me just say I've been in veggie paradise,

much to my great surprise. Even though my arrival in Kyiv pushed midnight, I was still greeted with a bowl of soup. Soup, I've been told, is the national dish of Ukraine. And what better soup to mark my first day than Borscht. Here you can find Lena's vegan recipe. Since then I've had an opportunity to experience outstanding meals in restaurants featuring Israeli, Georgian and Odessa cuisine. Nothing makes me happier than an array of vegetable sides, uniquely seasoned and simply prepared from local produce.

I think I was most surprised by the offerings at the Georgian restaurant. Given the scant knowledge I had of Georgia, I am now intrigued. Sondro, Lena's husband, is Georgian and he has proudly shared photos and stories that certainly have me considering a visit. This week I share one of my favorite dishes.

So, Kyiv? It certainly isn't the scary place 6-year-old Lauren pictured. It is cosmopolitan yet traditional, modern yet historical, bustling yet peaceful. And remaining open to this opportunity has left me with not a single regret, but rather a heart full of joy.

Georgian Spinach Pkhali

It was news to me that Georgian food is quite popular in Ukraine. I certainly didn't want to miss an opportunity to try it. Sondro, the husband of my host Lena, is Georgian. So when she guided me to their neighborhood restaurant, I knew it would be good. Now to be clear, many of the most famous Georgian specialties involve bread, cheese and meat, but there is a surprising number of traditional foods that happen to be vegan. Lucky me! Actually, because over 40 percent of the land in Georgia is dedicated to agriculture, produce such as

tomatoes, eggplants, walnuts, spinach and nuts are abundant and frequently featured in traditional foods. For seasoning, aromatic herbs such as tarragon, parsley, cilantro and fenugreek bring the dishes to life and give the distinct Georgian flavor.

As a spinach fan, I was totally intrigued by this spinach and walnut appetizer, which can also be prepared with carrots or beets. It will no doubt become a favorite once I am back in my Texas kitchen. And I will have some wonderful memories of eating it first in a sidewalk cafe in Kyiv.

Ingredients

- 1.5 lb fresh spinach
- 8 oz walnuts
- 1 bunch cilantro, leaves removed and finely chopped (reserving some for serving)
- Up to 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 green onion, minced
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 4 tablespoons walnut oil
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander (or whole seeds toasted and ground with the walnuts)
- 1 teaspoon ground fenugreek
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Pomegranate seeds

Directions

1. In a pot of gently boiling salted water, blanch spinach to soften. Remove with a slotted spoon or tongs and immerse in ice water immediately. This step stops the cooking and maintains the bright green color.
2. Drain spinach well, squeezing out all excess water with your hands. Chop.
3. Grind walnuts to a coarse powder.
4. Combine nuts, spinach and remaining ingredients in a

- large bowl, mixing well with your hands.
5. Season mixture with salt and pepper to taste.
 6. Refrigerate overnight or for six hours to combine flavors.
 7. Shape into balls, topping each with a few pomegranate seeds and a sprinkling of cilantro leaves.

Enjoy! And keep an eye out for more Georgian recipes as I continue to explore this cuisine.

Awesome Raw Falafel

I will admit to being a huge falafel fan – and yet I know well that deep frying doesn't serve my body. All I have to do to remember is eat a few. ☐ So I was thrilled to discover a raw version this week at my favorite Romanian restaurant, Samsara. Of course, everything Samsara offers is exquisite, but these are extra special.

Because I am on the road, I haven't had a chance to play with using my convection oven as a dehydrator, but I hear from very reliable sources it works well. So there is no need to add another cooking tool and take up kitchen space. These falafels are the perfect summer supper – serve them up with sliced tomatoes and a garden fresh green salad.

Ingredients

- 2 cups finely shredded carrots
- 1/2 cup finely chopped flat-leaf parsley
- 1 tsp minced garlic (optional)
- 3 tbsp minced yellow onion
- 1/4 tsp sea salt
- 1/2 tsp curry powder

- 1/8 tsp red pepper flakes
- 1/2 cup sesame seeds
- 1/2 tsp cumin, ground
- 1/4 cup flax seeds
- 1 cup sunflower seeds, raw

Directions

1. Into your food processor add the sunflower seeds, flax seeds, garlic, cumin, curry powder, salt, and pepper flakes, and process until well combined.
2. Adding the onion and parsley, and pulse again until well combined.
3. Add carrots as the final step, pulsing but leaving some texture.
4. Transfer the mixture to a large bowl and stir in sesame seeds until well combined.
5. Using a tablespoon or small ice cream scoop, prepare balls.
6. Place the balls onto mesh sheets and dehydrate or place in a convection oven (140-160 degrees F) for 4-6 hours depending on the size of falafel. You will want them to be slightly crispy on the outside and soft in the middle.

Serve with this cool and creamy cashew-tahini dip.

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup raw cashews, soaked for six hours with cold water, or in hot water for one hour, drained
- Juice from a lemon
- 2 heaping tablespoons of tahini
- 1/4 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 1/4 cup nutritional yeast (optional)
- 1/4 cup of water, or more if needed
- Black cumin seeds

Blend all ingredients except cumin in blender, food processor or in a bowl using an immersion blender. Process until very smooth. Season to taste and sprinkle with black cumin seeds before serving.

Enjoy!

My Love for Romania

Whether you admire or skeptically question my wanderlust, let me be honest – I have my own moments of doubt. Like when the fifth plane required to reach Cluj-Napoca, Romania, was delayed. I stood in line beyond the gate, my forehead pressed up against the glass, and watched the sky suddenly turn black. Sheets of rain pummeled the tarmac, and my fellow passengers let out a collective sigh. Not allowed to return to our gate – and certainly not allowed to dash through the lightning and downpour – we all waited. This pause in nowhere-land, neither departing nor arriving, was just the encouragement my inner critic needed to come alive.

Questions poured in at a rate as fierce as the rain outside. Is this trip really necessary to share my message? What will it serve? Is this a resourceful way to use my energy? Am I getting ahead of myself? The whirling doubt took center stage, accompanied by the tangible ache in my heart that appears when traveling so far from my husband and children.

Then, just as quickly as the storm appeared, it was gone. Sunlight broke through the dark sky, and we were allowed outside to board. The forward motion shifted my doubt, and my own inner wisdom found its voice. A journey in the right direction – the one guided by our sense of purpose – isn't always comfortable. Brene Brown's words rang in my head: "You

can choose courage or you can choose comfort. You can't have both." Really? Well, okay then. Because my greatest lesson over the past year has been that within discomfort lies my most profound opportunity for growth. As I buckled my seatbelt, I thought, "Bring it on," ready to accept whatever this leg of the journey would deliver.

And deliver it did. The gifts of this journey continue to arrive, right up into my final hours in Cluj. Seeing my dear friend, Carmen, fills my heart with joy. Carmen was my primary liaison with our parent company, Plant Extrakt, and with the Romanian Association for Gemmotherapy and Homeopathy (ARGH). And then, I had the opportunity to reunite with my mentor in Gemmotherapy, Dr. Sorina Soescu. What a delight it was to be in her company. She was at my side as translator and co-presenter for my weekend seminar on Restoring Emotional Immunity. Bringing my new ideas on Emotional Immunity and micro-dosing extracts to a room full of physicians and pharmacists could have been intimidating, to say the least. That might have been true in any other circumstances – but not here, not among this group of openhearted and open-minded individuals, all searching for new ways to help their patients. I was so richly rewarded by their enthusiastic response. And at the end of the two days, Romania no longer felt so far from home.

But my time in Cluj didn't end there. Pushing a bit beyond my comfort zone, I found two reasons to stay for a full ten days. First, I committed to intensive lessons and discussion with Dr. Neli Olah, Plant Extrakt's chief biochemist and professor of pharmacology at two local universities. I've dreamt for years of finding a way to integrate my holistic clinical experience with Neli's pharmacological knowledge. Moving to Cluj and enrolling where Neli teaches seemed a bit drastic, so I suggested we collaborate on a book. And to my great surprise, she agreed!

This week, fueled by green tea and local cherries, Neli and I

were successful in our work together on 25 extracts. I think we were both concerned that the gap in our languages and scientific knowledge could get in the way. Instead, it fueled fantastic discussions that I regret were not recorded. I am so grateful for Neli patiently sharing her wisdom and time so generously. I hope this experience has opened the door for many future discussions.

My next goal was to support the start of a Romanian Gemmo Moms group. What a delight it was to gather with health coach extraordinaire Dumitrita Margineanu, pediatrician Dr. Dana Campaen and the first twelve Gemmo Moms of Cluj-Napoca. There is so much to be gained by empowering mothers to care for themselves and the immunity of their children. I know Dana and Dumi will grow this group into something beautiful.

The truth is, I really don't know what it is with me and Romania. After all, it is really far away! It's far from Texas both geographically and culturally – and I don't speak a word of Romanian! When I am here, I do feel worlds away from my family and life in America. Because I am worlds away. As a coach, I would be prompted to ask how that feels. Truthfully, the answer isn't so clear. I feel one part frightened, and another part free.

If I am not connected with my family as a wife and mother, then who am I? Well, how about a 59-year-old woman passionate about sharing what she knows about health and healing, even if it means traveling solo and sitting out a thunderstorm before boarding her fifth flight to reach a destination? It sounds like the truth, and I wouldn't have missed this experience for the world.

Teaching in Dreamy Belgium

It's been an honor for me to teach on Belgian soil, where Gemmotherapy became a standardized therapeutic resource. Add a generous host, engaged students, and a dreamlike rural setting, and the experience rises to a level of its own.

Although I traveled to Belgium during my previous life in Europe, it has been seventeen years since my last trip. My visits at that time had a very different focus. They were to the towns of Liege and Tongeren, famous for bustling, city-wide antique markets. Fueled by a passion for collecting and restoring unique pieces, I made many trips from my homes in both England and Germany. In this current chapter of my life, hustling through those crowds feels far from appealing. I was delighted to be in rural Belgium – Lillois, to be exact – where the ancient brick buildings, fields of flax and rolling hills, dotted with sheep and cows, captured my heart.

Two things rank at the top when I travel to teach. The first is access to good vegan food (it's true!) and the second is teaching in a setting filled with light and access to nature. The food was covered beyond my wildest dreams by my host Brigitte's husband, who is a master in the kitchen. He turned out meals which I will dream of months from now. As for the setting, even approaching this ancient farm made my heart soar.

Over four days, I shared my Gemmotherapy curriculum with a backdrop of rolling fields and forests, a cobblestone, sun-drenched courtyard where we met for lunch, and footpaths to wander and clear our heads between sessions. If this sounds dreamy to you ☐– it was (and I do hope you join me in the future).

I had planned to teach my standard Foundations of Gemmotherapy modules, but it only seemed fitting to seize this opportunity

and share a preview of my latest work. A few weeks ago, I introduced the topic of Emotional Immunity. My work draws parallels between physical and emotional immunity – and continues to evolve thanks to Christine Terrell, my designer. With the patience of a saint, she hears me out and provides creative graphics that communicate the ideas behind Emotional Inflammation. This inflammation, just like physical inflammation, accumulates over time and leads to chronic symptoms.

Here you can see the parallel roles of the physical and emotional immune systems:



When our nervous system spends days, weeks and months in the sympathetic state (commonly know as Fight, Flight or Freeze), and emotional inflammation builds, these symptoms begin to develop:

- Poor attention span/memory loss
- Mood instability
- Sleep disruptions
- Fear and anxiety
- Overwhelm
- Depression/grief
- Absence of creativity
- Loss of joy

You may recognize some of these symptoms and even observe that over time, one that was acute can become chronic. After years working with Gemmotherapy extracts to restore optimal elimination, I am thrilled to discover their impact on the subtle emotional body via the nervous system. By easing the return of the parasympathetic state (commonly known as Rest and Digest) with micro-doses (1-6 drops) of very specific extracts, I am seeing remarkable results.

Our casual setting in Belgium provided the perfect opportunity

for a first run of my findings, allowing me to smooth out any bumps before presenting to a room full of physicians in Romania.

Speaking of Romania, it is beautiful timing that I am making new connections between Emotional Immunity and the nervous system just before reconnecting with my first mentor in Gemmotherapy, Dr. Sorina Soescu, and the brilliant biochemist for Plant Extrakt, Dr. Olah Neli. Trust me – a few hours bouncing ideas around with these two made the entire trip across Europe completely worthwhile. Check in with me next week to see how my time in Romania unfolded.

Sweet and Spicy Roasted Plantains

When my cookbook-collecting daughter shared a copy of her latest find, Provisions, I immediately took notice. With 150 Caribbean-inspired vegetarian recipes, there was plenty to keep my interest. Plantains are a favorite in the Hubele home, so I was immediately intrigued by the Roasted Ripe Plantain with African Pepper Compote recipe.

It's a simple, straightforward recipe, great for weeknights. Just be sure to plan far enough ahead so your plantains have ripened. I found the perfect opportunity to test the recipe last Saturday after a long morning on the San Marcos River. I popped the plantains in the oven, and by the time I had the car unloaded and sauces made, they were ready to eat! This combination of creamy and crunchy textures, along with the sweet and spicy seasoning, makes it a real hit.

Ingredients

- 4 whole ripe plantains
- 1 cup raw peanuts with skins (I replaced these with almonds. While not traditional, they were great!)
- 2 large avocados ($\frac{1}{2}$ avocado per plantain)
- Juice of 3 limes
- 1 teaspoon paprika (I used smoked paprika)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of cayenne pepper
- Salt to taste
- African Pepper Sauce

Directions

1. Roast ripe plantains in their skin in a 400-degree F oven for 35-40 minutes on a baking sheet.
2. While plantains are baking, slice avocados in half, remove pits, scooping out each half with a spoon. In a shallow bowl, mash slightly, careful to leave plenty of texture.
3. Add to the avocado mash: lime juice, spices and salt to taste.
4. Prepare pepper sauce according to recipe.
5. Place nuts on a baking sheet and heat in the oven until fragrant during the final 10 minutes of roasting the plantains. Coarsely chop nuts.
6. Slice each plantain lengthwise and lightly mash flesh with a fork. Top with seasoned avocado, pepper sauce and nuts.

Adapted from Provisions, The Roots of Caribbean Cooking

Photo by La.Catholique

Coaching Stories: Barbara

With a heart as big as Texas, Barbara serves her clients as an Intuitive Healer, Chinese Medicine Practitioner/Licensed Acupuncturist and Emotional/Spiritual Coach. However, she shared that she was pretty desperate when reached out with interest in a coaching series several months ago. She had looked at her past few years and realized she was just not getting better.

As a practitioner, Barbara is often told how good she is at doing her job – helping others regain their health and life balance. But she had reached a point where she struggled to do the same for herself.

“I had horrible incontinence, a weak cough, lots of phlegm, no energy or drive, and I was totally exhausted. I looked at this as an opportunity to restore my vibrant health and strength so I could continue to support my patients and be fully present for my new husband.”

Here’s what Barbara shared in an interview as her coaching program came to a close:

How are you different now?

I am really close to being at the top of my game. My incontinence is limited to only a small leak with a hard cough or sneeze, my energy is better, and the cough is gone.

How do you feel about yourself given these changes?

I’ve gained real confidence that my body is not the enemy, which is an old familial belief system. I am worthy of whatever it takes to take great care of my body and to relish in it.

What are your key learnings?

I love my sessions with Lauren. I find that when I say out loud what I am thinking is going on with my body – it really makes little sense, and Lauren has a beautiful way of making me think about what is going on. Even though I work every day with my clients, clearing old, limiting thought patterns – its crazy how mine were popping up. I came into this process with Lauren with lots of old “body image” issues that I thought I’d dealt with in the past. But here they come again!!! My old patterns of being and doing really showed up. I think my biggest learning is about being gentle and loving to my body! I look at life and my body so much differently now.

Is there unfinished business that might bring you back for further coaching?

Absolutely there is. I’ve enjoyed the journey of learning more about myself, but I think the best part is having Lauren as a beautiful mirror to reflect back to me what I need to look at, to help me see what I am blinded to. Her loving manner doesn’t add more shame to the mix, but just the opposite – all the positives in the grand design.

What opportunities are now available given your new skills or perspective?

I can continue to offer my loving services to my clients and move forward with my new healing center and offerings.

How was the experience of being coached?

I joyfully look forward to my sessions with Lauren, with no fear or shame of not having performed well enough. I know she is on my side and has such a wonderful empathy about her – and she knew just what to offer me via advice, coaching, Gemmos or homeopathy. I have loved the learning experience and look forward to delving further into Gemmos for my patients. Prior to this, as hard as I tried, I couldn’t absorb the information from the classes and was just in survival mode with my move to a new home, my new marriage, move of my practice and life in

general.

What advice would I share with readers considering a coaching commitment?

Don't even hesitate! Lauren's loving guidance is enough, her prices are easy – AND you owe it to yourself!

Vegan Corn and Kale Chowder

Here's a satisfying way to use sweet and tender fresh corn. Combining it with other seasonal vegetables makes this chowder a meal on its own. The smoky paprika adds a nice depth of flavor, complemented by the tang of fresh lime juice added before serving.

Ingredients

- 5 ears of fresh corn, husks removed and sliced off the cob
- 1 small red onion, diced
- 1 sweet red bell pepper, diced
- 1 jalapeno, diced and seeds removed
- 3 cups red or Yukon Gold potatoes, diced (leaving the peel on)
- 1 bunch of Tuscan kale, stems removed and sliced into fine strips
- $\frac{1}{2}$ bunch of cilantro, coarsely chopped
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- Olive oil
- 3 cups prepared vegetable broth (I use Rapunzel cubes with boiling water)
- 1 can coconut milk or 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of cashew milk

- Salt, pepper and red chili flakes to taste
- Lime wedges for serving

Directions

1. Heat the olive oil in a large Dutch oven over medium heat. Add the onion and a few pinches of salt. Cook until soft, then add peppers, sweet and jalapeno, and potatoes.
2. Continue cooking until peppers are soft. Add kale to the pan with enough broth just to cover. Simmer until potatoes are tender. Stir in spices and set aside, off heat.
3. In a cast iron or heavy skillet on medium-high heat, roast corn kernels until lightly charred. Mix corn kernels and coconut milk into the cooked vegetables and simmer to blend flavors.
4. Remove half of the mixture, and lightly blend the remaining ingredients with an immersion blender, leaving some texture. Combine all ingredients again, adjusting the amount of liquids and seasonings as needed.
5. Ladle into bowls, topping with a pinch of fresh cilantro and a sprinkle of paprika. Serve with a wedge of lime and extra pepper flakes on the side.

Enjoy!

Vulnerability Check

“Vulnerability is the birthplace of connection and the path to the feeling of worthiness.”

– Brene Brown

Have a look at that picture above and see, can you spot yours truly? Yep, that's me in the back. If you take a closer look, you will see the face of vulnerability smiling back at you. That's my face that says, "I can't believe I am really doing this, but I am."

So, how did I end up in that picture – and what's with the vulnerability? Good question! It all began when I decided to put some focused effort into busting out of my routine and learning something new. Over the years, I have dabbled in crafts now and again, but never real art. All of my creative energy of late has been directed at bringing forth ideas on healing and writing. I felt the call to step out of the limits I put on my creativity and challenge myself.

Registering for an all-day mixed media class at our local co-op gallery seemed to be the perfect start. And it was – until I arrived and discovered my classmates were all professionally trained, practicing artists from a wide variety of backgrounds. Of course, they were all arriving with their personal selection of real artist materials, clearly ready for some serious work. Feeling way out of my league, and having shown up empty-handed, I found myself retreating. I quickly searched the room for a back door to sneak out. None was handy, and bolting for the front door felt a bit too obvious. Oh dear, I was stuck – and there was literally no place to hide. And... you know what? It turned out to be a very, very good thing. Unbeknownst to me, when I signed up I got the bonus ticket for a personal growth course in being vulnerable.

What happened next was really quite sweet because the uber-talented instructor-artist Susan Best didn't even flinch when I exposed my zero credentials for being there. After her insightful introduction to the elements of design and how they relate to mixed media collage, everyone was invited to begin. The act of doing always gets me out of my head and my cycle of thoughts, so I didn't waste any time. I knew from experience that if I hesitated, I would lose any morsel of courage I had

found. Off I went to peruse the shared materials table. Within minutes of sifting through the eclectic mix of papers, my innate, yet untrained, love for color and pattern overrode my discomfort. Suddenly it didn't matter who else was in the room or what their credentials were. It was just me and my own experience using my brain in a way I haven't for years.

Connecting with this inner but often neglected passion was my ticket to stay. The next three hours flew by, and as our time drew to a close, I found myself wanting to hold on to something very special that was bubbling up from within. I was challenged at the time to put a name to it – then I read Brene Brown's quote and saw one of the words I was looking for: worthiness. Webster's says worthiness is the "quality of being good enough" and that was certainly true. Seeing the class through – and engaging to create something I never would have ordinarily made – felt by far good enough. It had nothing to do with the quality of my work, trust me, but rather the sense of pleasure that comes when you are able to drop all expectations and just be. Just beyond the thin veil of vulnerability, there was a rich fulfillment in just being me, no title, no labels, or illusions. What a wonderful reward for trying something new.

What Gemmotherapy Can Do for Emotional Immunity

No doubt you are familiar with your physical immunity, but what about your emotional immunity? A sister of physical immunity, your emotional immunity also acts as a filter between you and the outside world. While your physical immunity is filtering tangible substances, your emotional

immunity processes your day-to-day experiences.

Both immune systems have a 24/7 built-in discerning process. It is the job of our physical immune system to determine whether substances will fortify your body and should be integrated OR neutralized and eliminated. The same is true for experiences and your emotional immunity.

Here are two simple examples:

1. You give a presentation at work about a project near and dear to your heart, and you walk away feeling strong and confident. Later, a colleague makes a slightly passive-aggressive comment.

Whether that comment is internalized and allowed to take root depends on the health of your emotional immunity at that moment. In this case, because you walked away from your talk feeling strong and confident, the likelihood you can shake it off (neutralize and eliminate) is quite strong. However, had you been feeling emotionally unstable and vulnerable about your talk, that comment might well make it past your filter.

2. As a child, did you ever get lost? Maybe you were separated from your mother for a few minutes in a store, or for hours during a family hike! Your response to that event would have been determined by your emotional immunity. Perhaps you were feeling resilient and experienced it as an adventure. Or, if the opposite were true, it likely registered as trauma.

Just like physical immunity, there are times our emotional immunity functions at a high level, and there are times it isn't up to the task (neutralizing and eliminating harmful pathogens). It is during these weakened states that you may enter a toxic relationship or make choices that don't support your health and well-being.

So, what makes emotional immunity strong, and what weakens it?

Answering that question has become the focus of my recent work. Over the past year, I have been observing what Gemmotherapy can do to build emotional immunity, and the results are intriguing. This is an evolving topic. However, here are some of my observations:

- There is a direct link between emotional and physical immunity. When one is weak, the other is more vulnerable. And when one is strong, it supports the other. Two examples I've seen include: A woman plagued with chronic physical exhaustion improves, and then she is able to see and address toxicity in the relationship with her partner. A mother struggling with feelings of overwhelm and anxiety improves, and then she is able to make lifestyle changes to support her physical health.
- When the nervous system is supported in its ability to regulate between the parasympathetic state (rest and digest) and sympathetic (flight or flight) states, emotional and physical immunity improve.
- Micro-doses (1-6 drops) rather than conventional dosing (12-24 drops) of a D1 dilution Gemmotherapy extract seems to be more effective in supporting the nervous system. The smaller doses appear to interact with the body in a way that cannot be achieved with standard amounts.

I am excited to share my current theories about this topic during my talk in Cluj, Romania, later this month. While I have isolated a dozen or so extracts that interact with the central and peripheral nervous system, there are several I have found to be the most gentle-acting. Those include:

- Silver Lime, *Tilia tomentosa*
- Common Fig, *Ficus carica*
- White Willow, *Salix alba*
- Field Maple, *Acer campestre*
- Hazel, *Corylus avellana*
- Sea Buckthorn, *Hippophae rhamnoides*

If you would like further information on Gemmotherapy extracts, you'll want to read my Beginner's Guide to Gemmotherapy. Specific information on dosing Gemmotherapy extracts can be found in my books, "An Introduction to Acute Care" and "Building Immunity in Babies and Children."

For individualized support, I recommend you consult with a practitioner trained in Gemmotherapy to restore immunity, or consider working directly with me. Looking for a deeper understanding? Consider taking my next Foundations of Gemmotherapy series.

The information above is for educational purposes and not meant to replace the care and guidance of your health care practitioner.

Smoky Black Bean and Quinoa Burgers

One look at Minimalist Baker's latest veggie burger recipe, and I knew I had to make it. For me, the challenge was skipping the barbecue sauce (not a winner among the German guys I feed) and still achieve a well-seasoned result. I'd call the experiment a success! (and if you happen to be a barbecue sauce fan, you will find a link to the original recipe below)

Fair warning: You'll need to set aside a full hour to prep this mixture. Even with my best efforts to simplify steps, it still took time. The results were worth it, and once formed, the patties can be frozen for quick future meals.

Ingredients

- 1 cup cooked quinoa (cook with a veggie bouillon cube for more flavor)
- 1 15-ounce can black beans (rinsed and dried in 350 degree oven for 15 minutes on a baking sheet to remove moisture)
- 3/4 cup finely ground nuts (I use Pamela's Nut Flour Blend)
- 1 Tbsp coconut or avocado oil (plus more for cooking burgers)
- 1 heaping cup sliced and peeled sweet potato (steamed until tender and cooled)
- 2 heaping cups thinly sliced cremini or button mushrooms (saute and drain any liquid)
- 2 Tbsp coconut aminos (optional)
- 1/2 tsp sea salt (plus more to taste)
- 2 1/2 tsp smoked paprika
- 2 1/2 tsp cumin powder

Directions

1. Once sweet potato, beans, mushrooms and quinoa are cooled, you can begin to assemble your burgers.
2. Mix beans and nuts in a food processor and gently pulse into a loose meal (leaving texture).
3. Add cooked sweet potato, mushrooms, half the quinoa, sea salt, smoked paprika, cumin and coconut aminos, and pulse a few times to combine (keeping some texture to the mix).
4. Transfer to a mixing bowl and stir in the rest of the quinoa. Adjust seasonings to taste.
5. If the mixture appears too wet, add more ground nuts. If it looks too dry, add more coconut aminos to moisten.
6. Divide the mixture into evenly sized balls and form into patties with your hands. Refrigerate burgers for a minimum of 30 minutes (burgers can also be frozen at

this point).

7. Once chilled, heat a cast-iron or heavy metal pan over medium heat. Once hot, add a bit of oil and the burgers. Cook 4-5 minutes. Carefully flip and cook 4-5 minutes on the other side.
8. Transfer browned patties to a baking sheet lined with parchment paper and bake 15 minutes at 375° F.

You may enjoy this spicy avocado mayo to serve as a condiment. It was delicious!

Enjoy!

Adapted from Minimalist Baker

Photo by Melissa Rae Dale