



FREE

Transgender Soliloquy

Understand backgrounds on those who are born as the wrong gender

Promote Brain Health

Raise awareness and get involved with the Alzheimer's Association

Summertime Safety Tips

Pinpoint the signs of dehydration and understand sunscreen application

Your Bliss Editorial Team

Meet the executive creators and contributors to our publication



June 2025





Feel good about the skin you're in.

One of the most important things you can do to have healthy skin is to protect it from dangerous UV radiation, which can damage your skin and have long-term effects like premature aging and skin cancer.

It is important to schedule a yearly visit for a skin examination and if you have issues such as acne, rashes, nail disorders, hair loss, unusual growths or changes to moles you should see your doctor immediately.

If you would like more information on how to maintain healthy skin or have a concern about a skin condition, please schedule an appointment at one of our WNY Medical locations today.

Amherst
4979 Harlem Road

Amherst
4985 Harlem Road

Buffalo
135 Grant Street

Cheektowaga
3884 Broadway Street

Depew
3218 Walden Avenue

Derby
6970 Erie Road

East Amherst *NEW*
8600 Transit Road, #102

Niagara Falls *NEW*
909 Pine Avenue

Lackawanna
2600 South Park Avenue

Orchard Park
3320 N. Benzing Road



WNY MEDICAL, PC (716) 923-4380 | WNymedical.com



4011 Bailey Avenue (716) 362-7849
Amherst, NY 14226 YourBliss.us



@YourBlissWNY @YourBliss Magazine

Submit your article, recipe, or event!
Send to: submit@YourBliss.us

© 2025, SunSpin Media Productions. All rights reserved.
Reproduction in part or its whole without permission is prohibited.

Our Mission

Your Bliss Magazine explores the power of overall wellness. We look to push past the boundaries of physical health and explore aspects of mental, financial and spiritual health. Our goal is to bring you information that you can use to live a happy, healthy and spirited life. We find tips for the short term as well as more expansive information for the long term.

With the ever-expanding nature of technology, knowledge and evolution of the healthcare field, there is a growing supply of data to take from. With Your Bliss, we find the information for you and put it all in one place. Every month we bring you new articles on a wide range of topics so you can live a more fulfilled and whole life.

Our Team

Staff Writers and Contributors	Alex Tilton Alice Moonlight Alzheimer's Association Deanna Kania Laura Ott, LCSW Dr. Riffat Sadiq Victoria H Vivien Draven
Editor-in-Chief	Faizan Haq
Executive Editor	Katy Defazio
Account Manager	Yahya Alaryani
Design Editor	Rachael Bannen
Graphic Design	SunSpin Media
Print Publication	SunSpin Media
Copy Editors	Alex Tilton Beth Hatcher Victoria H
Editorial Board	Farina Mirza Joe Serghany, MD CEO, Western New York MRI John M. Hatcher CEO, JMH Advisement, LLC Ralph Hernandez Riffat Sadiq, MD CEO, WNY Medical, PC Victoria H

Table of Contents

4	Summertime Safety Tips
5	EMDR Therapy for PTSD
6	Pride Month: Transgender Allies
7	Alzheimer's Awareness Month
10	Meet the Your Bliss Editorial Team
12	Easing Headaches and Migraines
13	Media Corner: Mare of Easttown
14	Recipe of the Month
15	Coloring & Activity Corner

Heat and Summertime Safety Tips

By: Victoria H

The weather is getting warmer and summer is approaching! Pretty soon, everyone will be itching to get outdoors to play, attend barbecues, festivals, or take a dip in the pool. As glorious as it is to bask in the sunshine, the heat can be very dangerous. It's important to protect yourself and your babies as the temperature rises.

Be sure to dress lightly. A single layer of natural and breathable clothing like cotton or linen is perfect for hot weather. Carrying a light blanket or cardigan for a quick cover up can come in handy when spending long periods of time in air conditioning. Remember that babies cannot regulate their body temperature as well as adults so wearing appropriate clothes will help.

Make sure to protect exposed skin. Applying sunscreen liberally 30 minutes before going outside is best for children 6 months or older. Sunscreens with at least 30 SPF that protect against UVA and UVB rays are preferred. Mineral sunscreen is a great alternative for traditional chemical sunscreen if you have sensitive skin. An acceptable sunscreen substitute for you and babies under 6 months old is to wear rash guards, visors, sun hats, and parasols.

Staying hydrated is important when the temperature rises, especially if you are breastfeeding. Make sure everyone has access to water whenever possible. Babies under 6 months cannot rely on water as hydration and will need extra formula or breastmilk during these times. Make sure to offer more fluids than normal throughout the day to avoid dehydration.

Sometimes the best option is to avoid the heat altogether. Keeping activities earlier or later in the evening can help you avoid the midday heat. Most



weather platforms can provide a forecast by the hour to help you identify the temperature changes ahead. Make sure you plan your outings wisely to avoid the sweltering heat and get the most out of your day safely.

It is beneficial to educate yourself on the signs of overheating. Someone who is dangerously hot will have flushed skin, breathe rapidly, be irritable, and feel warm to the touch. Avoid car seat covers and being in tight spaces with no airflow. It doesn't take much for one to succumb to the heat and knowing how to interfere is essential. If you notice someone is overheating, calmly get them to a cooler area, take off extra clothes, offer liquids, and fan them.

The car is a common place to overheat. Open the doors and windows to keep airflow moving until the car reaches a safe temperature. Take the time to turn on the air conditioning before placing children inside. Feel buckles and seats to ensure that they are not too hot to avoid burning your little one. Check to make sure you have your keys before shutting any doors or trunk of the car to avoid locking children inside. Remember that it only takes seconds for the car to become dangerously hot, so don't leave your family or pets in the car unattended under any circumstances. Parking in the shade or covering your windows and car seat mirrors from the sun can make a huge impact on the internal temperature while away.

Spending time in the summer heat doesn't have to be stressful when you are prepared. Planning ahead and staying hydrated will help everyone stay cool this summer. You and your family deserve to enjoy this season so have fun and stay safe!

EMDR for PTSD: Healing That Reaches the Root

By: Laura Ott, LCSW, PMH-C

As a trauma therapist, I often meet people who are carrying heavy stories. They may seem fine on the outside—showing up to work, caring for their families—but inside, they feel stuck in something painful. Flashbacks, panic, nightmares, guilt, shame, and the sense that danger is always around the corner are just some of the ways trauma can show up.

Sometimes people think they should be “over it by now,” especially if the trauma happened years ago. But that's not how trauma works, and it's definitely not a sign of weakness. It's a sign your nervous system is still trying to protect you. One of the tools I use to help people find relief is EMDR.

What is EMDR?

EMDR stands for Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing. It's a type of therapy that helps people heal from traumatic or distressing experiences by working directly with the way those memories are stored in the brain and body.

You don't have to talk through every detail of what happened. Instead, EMDR uses something called bilateral stimulation. This can be guided eye movements or tapping to help your brain reprocess the memory. The goal is to shift how it's stored, so that you can remember the experience without reliving it.

Why I Use It

In my practice, EMDR has helped people who felt stuck for years finally move forward. Clients often say things like, “It still happened, but it doesn't have power over me anymore,” or “I finally feel like myself again.” That kind of transformation is why I keep using this approach.

Research backs this up. Multiple studies show EMDR to be highly effective in treating PTSD. In fact, the Department of Veterans Affairs and the World Health Organization both recognize EMDR as a first-line treatment for trauma. One large-scale analysis found that 84–90% of single-trauma survivors no longer met the criteria for PTSD after just three to six sessions.

Who Can Benefit?

You don't have to be a combat veteran or survivor of a single, massive event. EMDR helps with all kinds of trauma including: medical trauma, birth trauma, abuse, neglect, bullying, or even experiences that are hard to name but still linger. At my practice, our therapists work with a wide range of trauma and attachment-related concerns, including perinatal trauma and complications surrounding pregnancy, birth, and early parenting.

If something painful from the past keeps showing up in your present, EMDR might help. When we begin EMDR, we go at a pace that works for you. It's a collaborative process, and you're always in control. This helps clients feel safe and supported to work through the stressors and traumas of their past.

A Final Word

Healing from trauma isn't about forgetting. It's about finding freedom from the hold those experiences have had on your life. If your nervous system feels like it's still stuck in survival mode, that doesn't mean you're broken. It just means you might need the right kind of help. EMDR can be a powerful part of that healing.



Pride Month: Understanding our Transgender Allies

By: Miscellaneous Contributors

Meet Alice Moonlight!

To me, it's like this.

I've known who I am for a long time. You feel it in yourself to be that way. It's an undeniable understanding I think most people reach in life. I've never tried to fight it or apologize for it. It's a truth that simmers within you, waiting to bloom openly in the best of times and stays hidden when you aren't in the places you feel safest.

I was born in Buffalo but much of my childhood and indeed, upraising, was centered around the dogmatic belief of the rural South and the Pentecostal Brimstone that had stayed superior in my times living with my grandparents of Bristol, VA. Like all those who want to value their loved ones, it was a learned value all the same to keep who I really was in all facets, a secret. It was in err to be named an outsider, a heathen, and a possible usurper to the structure already adhered to for generations.

And though maybe for one point or another, I confided, when given opportunity to spell out my true name, I flourished. Far more than I ever thought possible.

That was in music of untamed potential, art that was not burdened by limits, and the creative mind and like of genius that was the other; the wistful unknown to those who chose not to allow such things to ever reach their ears.

I felt my will to women, femininity, and the understanding of unconditional love burgeon from my mother, who, with all her worldly knowledge created an expansive look to the universe, one that never truly defined any one being as



a binary facet, instead building my understanding of the human race as an ever in-flux journey throughout.

I knew then I realized myself. I was not a man nor a woman trapped in a man's body. I wasn't yet to be defined.

I was just me. Alice.

A person at the end of the day, who like all things, will live a life I choose till I'm claimed by time.

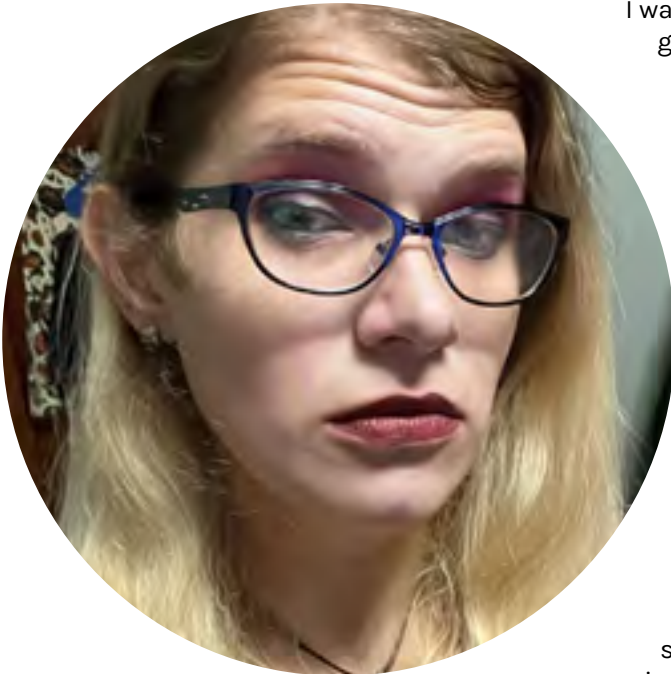
There is no limit to our potential if we allow all of us to be who we are. These ideas of closure and ignorance of love hold us back, tighten our yet untold futures, and create a world of stagnation and fear. We are far better. We can create so much without these tethers.

Trans rights are human rights. And always will be.

Meet Deanna Kania!

Coming out, especially as trans in a Polish Roman Catholic household was not easy. I was asked by people "why not just be gay" but being trans is not a sexual thing. I would be lying to myself. I spent 15+ years in therapy before I transitioned, and countless nights crying since I was six wishing I woke up as a girl.

It's been 5+ years since I've been on hormones, and I would not change a thing. Many people think negatively of trans people, thinking it's a sexual thing, but that's the farthest thing from the truth. I didn't give up a \$52k job at 29, just to decide one day I was trans, and throw it all away. Many people think it's to invade women's spaces, but what's stopping a cis man from entering a woman's bathroom? NOTHING!



The stigma against trans people not only affects trans people, but cis as well, as we see more incidents of cis people being harassed in bathrooms. In reality, we just want to go on about our lives and be happy, and I will defend ANY of my trans siblings from hate or harassment by ANYONE threatening them.

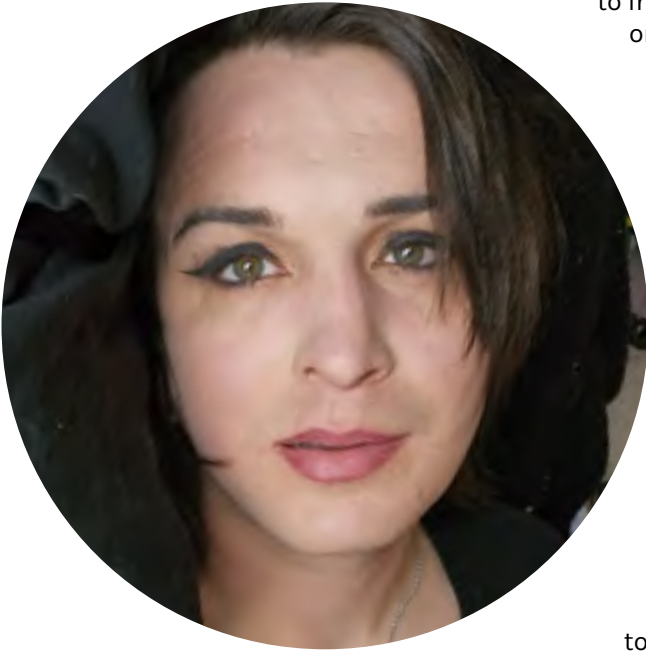
Meet Vivien Draven!

My name is Vivien. I'm 33 years old, left-handed, and a Gemini. I'm a mother, a martial artist, an avid explorer of the outdoors and abandoned locations, and a woman of a million hobbies that all rotate in focus constantly.

I also just so happen to be a trans woman. Trying to give a genuine answer to the question "what is it like being trans" is an exercise in frustration.

Arguably the most important place to start is that transgenderism is NOT inherently sexual. I feel that much of the confusion from cis people can be traced to this specific misconception. While trans people can and absolutely do enjoy sexual activities at the same rate as their cis counterparts, transgenderism is simply so much bigger than that miniscule slice of the human experience and often is a very distant secondary focus for many of us. It's the expression of gender, not sexuality, meaning that the "point of being trans" is to express yourself and present to society in such a way that you are recognized as your "authentic" gender.

Another common source of confusion is how gender expression for trans people can often be misunderstood or negated by cis people, depending on their internal assumptions. Seeing facial hair, body parts, or the pitch of how someone speaks, all tend to be used to invalidate our existence, intentionally or not. There are cisgender people who don't sound/look/talk/act like they're "supposed to," yet whenever a trans

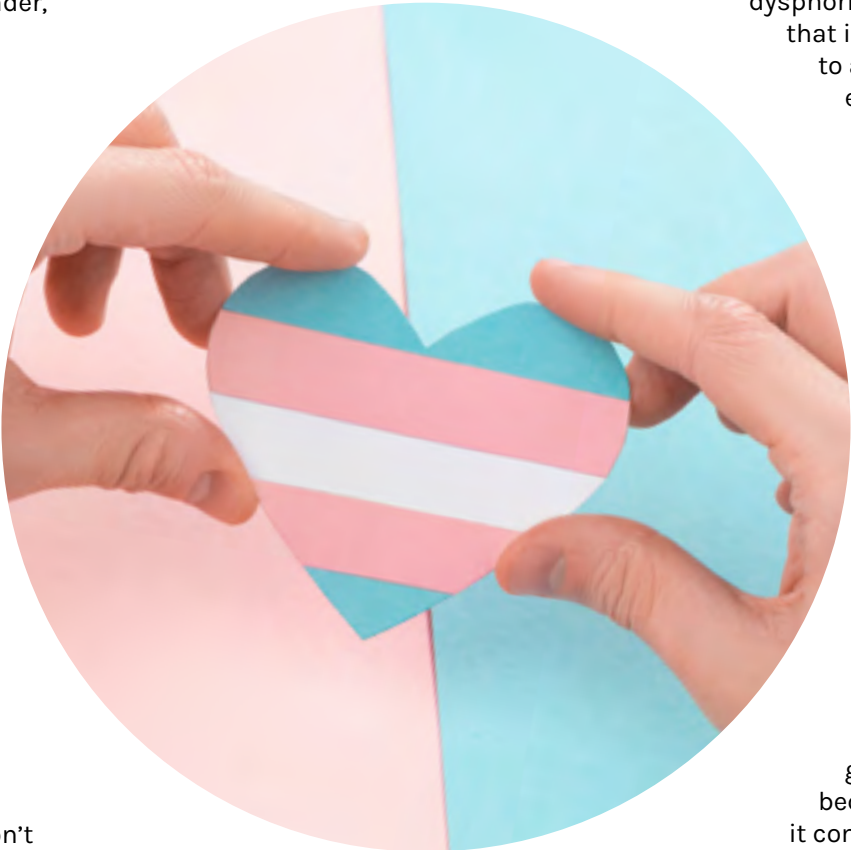


person shares these qualities, they are used to invalidate from who we are based on "not doing good enough." Even ignoring the universal aspects of gender that everyone must navigate, there is a clear double standard when it comes to gender expression and how much is needed for your gender to be "accepted." Whereas a cis woman might be uncomfortable with the idea of going out of the house without makeup but still go out and be called "she/her/miss/ma'am," trans women such as myself cannot go out into the world without any makeup on and expect the same treatment. The phrase "you have to work twice as hard to get half as far" in this case feels very applicable.

The last point I want to discuss is the idea of "gender dysphoria." When transgenderism was categorized as a mental illness, the main symptom they looked for was this "gender dysphoria," also known as aversion at your own body deviating from what you yourself wish to look like. This was (and in most of the world still is) the main symptom needed to be able to authorize the prescriptions of hormones/surgeries.

There are two main arguments I have against this as our standard, however. While yes, many of us do experience some form of gender dysphoria, I think it's easy to argue that if we were being listened to and having our gender expression respected at an equal level of respect, we would not experience nearly the same levels of dysphoria in the trans community.

All in all, the "trans experience" and "cis experience" have far more in common with each other than they have differences. The only major difference between us is simply whether we identify with our gender assigned at birth based on our sex, or not. And once we can get past that obstacle, it becomes very clear that when it comes to trans people, our being trans is very often the least interesting thing about us.



ALZHEIMER'S & BRAIN awareness month

ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION



JUNE IS ALZHEIMER'S & BRAIN AWARENESS MONTH

Take charge of your brain health today

June is both Pride Month and Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month. During this time, the Alzheimer's Association® encourages you to take charge of your brain health. As we celebrate the diversity and resilience of the LGBTQ+ community, hundreds of thousands of LGBTQ+ Americans are living with Alzheimer's or another dementia. While each person's experience is unique, those who identify as LGBTQ+ may face particular challenges, such as finding inclusive health care, concerns about stigma, and higher rates of poverty and social isolation.

While there is currently no cure for Alzheimer's, we know more than ever about brain health, risk reduction and ways to live well with the disease. Here are a few easy steps you can take today for your brain health and the cause:

- **Build healthy habits.** Research shows that adopting healthy behaviors — like getting exercise and good quality sleep — may reduce the risk of cognitive decline. alz.org/healthyhabits
- **Know the signs.** Learn to recognize common signs of Alzheimer's and dementia and next steps to take, including how to talk to the doctor. alz.org/10signs
- **Get checked.** Early detection of Alzheimer's offers significant benefits for the person diagnosed and their loved ones, including greater access to treatment options and the ability to plan for the future. alz.org/getchecked
- **Find information.** Learn more about the impact of Alzheimer's on LGBTQ+ communities and resources that can help. alz.org/LGBTQ
- **Join the fight.** Volunteer, advocate or participate in an Alzheimer's Association signature fundraising event to advance Alzheimer's care, support and research. alz.org/getinvolved
- **Go purple.** Wear purple — the color of the Alzheimer's movement — to raise awareness of the disease. Share your story on social media using the hashtag [#ENDALZ](https://twitter.com/ENDALZ).

To learn more about actions you can take during Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month, visit alz.org/abam.

alz.org/abam

June is Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month

By: The Alzheimer's Association

This June during Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month, the Alzheimer's Association® is encouraging all Americans to take charge of their brain health.

Today, there are nearly 7 million Americans living with Alzheimer's. The lifetime risk for the disease at age 45 is 1 in 5 for women and 1 in 10 for men. The brain changes that cause Alzheimer's are thought to begin 20 years or more before symptoms start, which suggests that there may be a substantial window of time in which we can intervene in the progression of the disease.

Experts believe there isn't a single cause of Alzheimer's. It's likely the disease develops as a result of multiple factors, such as genetics, lifestyle and environment. While not a direct cause of Alzheimer's, the greatest known risk factor is advancing age. Although some risk factors like age cannot be changed, others — including physical activity, smoking, education, social and mental activity, blood pressure and diet — may be modified to reduce a person's risk.

The Lancet Commission on dementia prevention, intervention and care suggest that addressing modifiable risk factors might prevent or delay up to 40% of dementia cases. Based on mounting scientific evidence, the Alzheimer's Association has outlined 10 healthy habits that can help you take control of your brain health. These habits include challenging your mind, staying in school, getting moving, protecting your head, being smoke-free, controlling your blood pressure, managing diabetes, eating right, maintaining a healthy weight, and staying off screens before bed. These habits are simple everyday actions that can reduce the risk of cognitive decline and dementia.

Be Proactive in Addressing Brain Changes

The Alzheimer's Association provides a comprehensive list of 10 early warning signs and symptoms of Alzheimer's and related dementias. These signs can include memory loss that disrupts daily life, challenges in planning or solving problems, difficulty completing familiar tasks, confusion with time or place, trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships, new problems with words in speaking or writing, misplacing things and not being able to retrace steps, decreased or poor judgment, and withdrawal from work or social activities. It's important to note that individuals may experience these signs in varying degrees, and not all individuals will experience every sign. If you or someone you know is experiencing these signs, it is crucial to seek medical evaluation.



Early detection and diagnosis of Alzheimer's and other dementia offers the best opportunity for care, management and treatment. It also provides diagnosed individuals more time to plan for the future, adopt lifestyle changes that may help slow disease progression, participate in clinical trials and to live with a higher quality of life, for as long as possible.

There are now treatments that may slow disease progression for people in the early stage of Alzheimer's, making a timely diagnosis critically important. If you or a family is experiencing memory or thinking problems, it is important to get it checked. Talk to your doctor so you can make an informed decision on available treatments to determine if they are right for you.

Join the Fight to End Alzheimer's

During Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month, the Alzheimer's Association invites everyone to join in the fight to end Alzheimer's and all other dementia. Here's what you can do:

- **Adopt the 10 Healthy Habits:** It is never too early or too late to start taking positive actions for your brain. Visit alz.org/healthyhabits to learn more!
- **Go purple:** On June 1 and throughout the month, go purple — the color of the Alzheimer's movement — to raise awareness of the disease. Dress in purple and share your story on social media using the hashtag [#ENDALZ](https://twitter.com/ENDALZ).
- **Join the fight:** Advance the care, support and research efforts of the Alzheimer's Association by participating in our signature fundraising events — Walk to End Alzheimer's®, The Longest Day® and Ride to End ALZ®. Visit alz.org/fundraisingevents.
- **Volunteer:** As an Alzheimer's Association volunteer, you can help people in your community take steps to reduce their dementia risk and recognize the signs of Alzheimer's. Visit alz.org/volunteer.
- **Advocate:** Urge lawmakers to pass the bipartisan BOLD Reauthorization Act, to continue strengthening the dementia public health infrastructure in communities nationwide. Visit alzimpact.org/BOLD— Reauthorization.
- **Accelerate research:** Alzheimer's Association TrialMatch® is a free, easy-to-use service that connects individuals living with Alzheimer's, caregivers and healthy volunteers to clinical trials that may advance Alzheimer's research. Visit alz.org/trialmatch.
- **Donate:** Empower people at every age and stage of life to take charge of their brain health — support the Alzheimer's Association! Visit alz.org/donate.

Meet the Your Bliss Editorial Team

By: The Editorial Team at Your Bliss Magazine

Meet Katy Defazio!

Katy (left) is the Executive Editor for Your Bliss Magazine, as well as the Creative Director and Site Leader for SunSpin Media. She has been with the team since February 2017. She was an intern in the Fall 2016 semester, before getting hired on permanently. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree in Graphic Design from Buffalo State University in December 2016. She also received her Associate of Applied Science Degree in Graphic Design from Bryant & Stratton College in December 2012.



In her role, she has been involved in many facets of Your Bliss Magazine, including advertisement design, coloring corner illustrations, infographics and more. Rachael's approach emphasizes focus on detail and being adaptive for different topics and types of design, as necessary.

Rachael has a love for all things outdoors, travel and, of course design. Get in touch with her today to talk about your design and print needs.

It's hard to say how an average day goes for her, because there is always something new going on. From developing editorial calendars, to seeking advertisers, there isn't one day identical to the next. Her favorite part of Your Bliss Magazine is her co-workers. "We're a small company, so we have to work closely with each other every day. It gives you a chance to get to know one another of a whole new level."

On top of constant discussions about cats, music, and her niece and nephews, you'll always see Katy hard at work getting your favorite local magazine ready every month. Get in touch with Katy today to spread the word about your business or favorite topic of interest.

Meet Rachael Bannen!

Rachael (right) is the Design Editor for Your Bliss Magazine, as well as the Graphic Designer for SunSpin Media. She joined SunSpin Media and became involved in Your Bliss Magazine during her internship. Following her graduation from college with her degree in Graphic Design Rachael joined the team as a full time member.



Meet Faizan Haq!

Faizan (below) is the Editor-in-Chief for Your Bliss Magazine. He has been a lecturer for Intercultural Communication at Buffalo State University since 2004.

Haq taught Islamic Cultural History along with, U.S.A. relations with the Muslim World at University at Buffalo for over twenty years.

In addition to Islamic Studies, his academic interests include: Intercultural Studies, International Relations, and Media Analysis. He also has taught courses on Islam and Democracy. Presently, Haq is developing courses on Muslim perception in the Media, Contemporary Middle Eastern Politics, and Relations between the Islamic world and The United States.

His research interests include; relationship between organizational achievements and individual Behaviors, Islam and modernity, and postmodern communication paradigms and their effects on cultural identity.

Give your business the edge that it needs!

PrimoMso
 8600 Transit Road
 East Amherst, NY 14051
 primomso.com
 (716) 923-4385
 info@primomso.com

We use a unified platform to manage all our work, make data-driven decisions, collaborate effectively, and track progress with software that adjusts to your working style.



Member Services

- Financial & Accounting Services
- Human Resources
- Physician Practice Management
- Consulting
- Procurement Services
- IT Support Services
- Coding & Regulatory Compliance
- Contract and Compliance
- Real Estate Consulting



Rejuvenating rural home available immediately for summertime activities and relaxed homey environment!

Rental property centrally located 4 miles from Albion, 13 miles from Batavia, 12 miles from Medina, 45 miles from Niagara Falls, and 33 miles from Rochester.

Enjoy classic architecture, quaint coffee shops, antique stores, and various fairs and festivals in the nearby towns. Watch horse grazing from the back door!

Come see the Albion Strawberry Festival on June 13 & 14, as well as the Lyndonville 4th of July firework display!

Are you attending a graduation or an event in the area? Do you wish to host an event, meeting, or party? Rent a room by day, week or month. Includes a shared space as follows: Living room, dining room, family room, kitchen with full appliances. Call 716-536-9595 to stay with us.

How to Ease Headaches and Migraines

By: Dr. Riffat Sadiq, CEO of WNY Medical PC, Channel Creator



According to a study by the American Headache Society in 2015 “The prevalence of migraine headaches is high , affecting roughly 1 out of every 7 Americans annually...” There are three main types of headaches to consider, including migraines, cluster headaches, and tension headaches. Of the individuals who experience headaches, 60% of them are migraines. How can we tell the difference between a tension headache and a migraine? A tension headache occurs in the back of the head, neck and shoulder area. A migraine can happen on one or both sides of the head, and typically comes with symptoms like nausea, vomiting, and changes in vision called auras.

There is not a specific trigger that causes a migraine. The causes and side effects are different for everyone. The most common causes of migraines are stress-induced. Other causes of migraines include lack of or too much sleep, lack of or too much exercise, and consumption of too much chocolate, caffeine, or salt.



Dr. Riffat Sadiq: Restoring Self

Want more tips on improving your wellness and restoring yourself? Watch videos on YouTube, DrRSMD.



Hypersensitivity to scents and lights can also be a trigger for migraines. Too much of anything is never good for anyone.

When it comes to taking care of your body, you should consider all aspects of health. Fasting is an effective way to stay in shape and lose weight, but it can also trigger headaches. Even medications, like nitroglycerine and pain medications, can be a trigger for migraines and headaches. Hormonal and environmental changes can be a trigger for headaches and migraines too.

What can we do to manage migraines and headaches? There are preventative medications that can help with migraines, and there are treatment medications that can help with migraines. If acetaminophen helps with your headaches, but it comes back frequently, it is best to seek medical advice from your doctor. It is always better to be safe than sorry. Ice packs, heating pads, exercise, and massage therapy can help treat headaches and migraines.

It is best to consult with your doctor about your specific symptoms to figure out the best solution for you and your body. Discuss your triggers and come to a solution that is best for you.

Media Corner: Review of Mare of Easttown (2021)

By: Alex Tilton

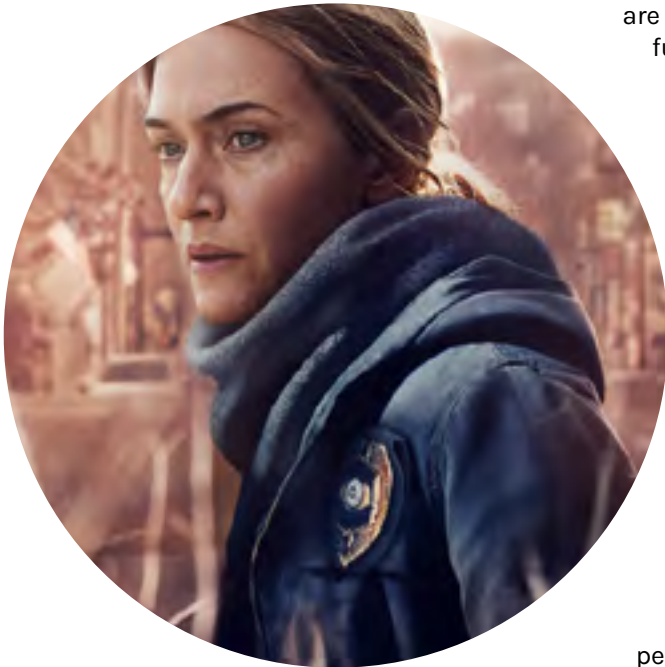
Realism in fiction is a choice. You can ignore it, worship it, or build your own but you can't be inconsistent. But sometimes reality is so weird you have to tone it down or the audience won't be able to take it seriously. And occasionally reality is so oppressively, *grindingly* sad that the end result simply isn't enjoyable to watch.

Mare of Easttown flirts with this line from the opening of the first episode until the credits roll on the finale. The last thing I saw that was this gritty and depressing was *All Quiet on the Western Front*. To be absolutely clear, the show is a masterpiece. It's on par with *The Wire* and *Deadwood*. But there were times when we almost switched it off because the misery these characters are put through is so convincing and relentless that it was physically painful to watch.

The show follows a small-town detective named Mare (short for Marianne). When the story starts Mare is already dealing with a lot of grim realities. She's a grandparent at age 43, and she's raising her grandson Drew with her ex-husband because their mentally ill drug-addicted son Kevin died by suicide a few years prior to the start of the series. Drew's mother is a longtime heroin addict who has been in and out of rehab for years. Meanwhile Mare has to deal with attacks on her reputation by the grieving mother of a missing girl whose case has gone cold, and her ex-husband living next door with his new fiancé.

And this is our baseline. This is the resting level of pain these characters are forced to deal with. There are a few bright spots. Mare's daughter Siobhan is an artistically gifted, kindhearted and hardworking student on the verge of going to college. Her home situation clearly forced her to grow up quickly, but she handles it well. Mare herself is very well respected in the community and much appreciated by the people she helps. But that's about it.

With the stage set, we then have a murder to get the plot going. A young teen mother named Erin is found dead in a creek. The last anyone saw of her she was at a party in the woods being beaten up by her baby's father's new girlfriend...



And it gets worse. A lot worse. Frequently. The pain and suffering is (somewhat) balanced out by occasional moments of warmth and humor. In spite of the pain-bath all the characters are sharing this show manages to be funny when it wants to be. It also avoids all of my pet peeves. People behave believably; they never go inexplicably out of character for the sake of the plot. The characters do occasionally make bad choices that make the situation worse for themselves, but none of them are relentlessly stupid for the sake of manufacturing drama. Character motivations are clear and they follow through on their goals in intelligent, believable ways. The secondary characters have their own plots with solid arcs and all of them contribute to the main story. The people who made this show absolutely put in the work.

Mare of Easttown also does some of the best misdirection I've ever seen. The tone is so bleak that you're primed to believe the worst will happen, but then sometimes it doesn't. I wouldn't go so far as to say the characters catch a break, but there are definitely times when you'd expect the situation to get a lot worse and they manage to avoid it. Motivations and actions that seem clear at first are given new context later and their importance gets a radical shift.

There are several themes at work here. The most obvious one is protecting what matters to you. But another closely related theme is paranoia and the loss of trust. The murder that kicks off the show has a whole host of nasty ripple effects. False accusations, knee-jerk reactions, exhaustion, burnout, and re-activation of buried trauma all plague the residents of Easttown. Not everybody makes it to the end, and the ones who do have obvious wounds that will take years to heal, if they ever do.

It's one of the best done shows I've ever watched, but the situations the characters are put through could easily be too depressing for some viewers. Proceed accordingly.

Image Source: Amazon.com



White Bean and Sun-Dried Tomato Gnocchi

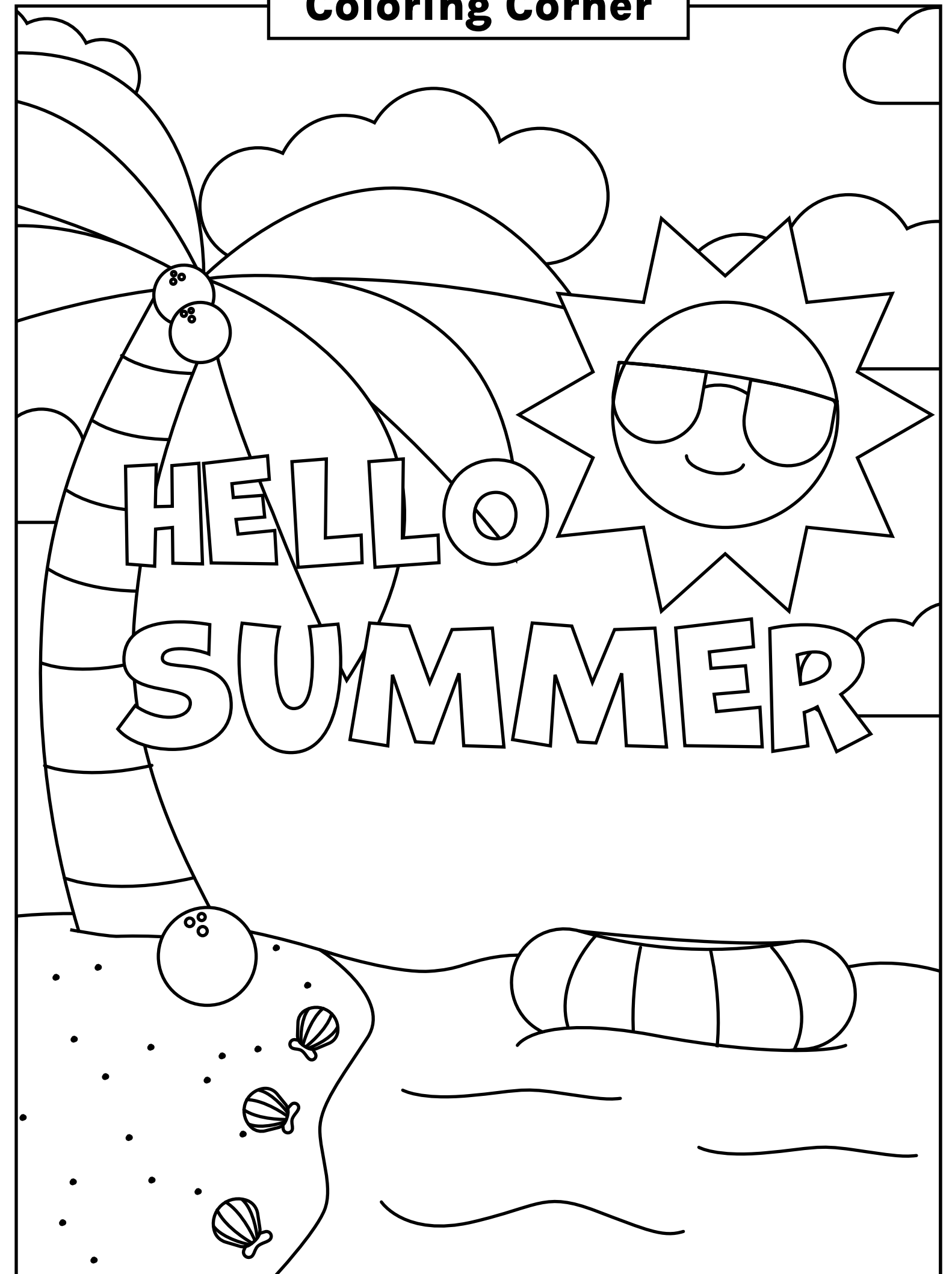
Ingredients

- 1/2 cup sliced oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes plus 2 tablespoons oil from the jar, divided
- 1 (16 ounce) package shelf-stable gnocchi
- 1 (15 ounce) can low-sodium cannellini beans, rinsed
- 1 (5 ounce) package baby spinach
- 1 large shallot, minced
- 1/3 cup low-sodium chicken broth
- 1/3 cup heavy cream
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ground pepper
- 3 tablespoons fresh basil leaves

Directions

- 1) Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add gnocchi and cook, stirring often, until plumped and starting to brown, about 5 minutes. Add beans and spinach and cook until the spinach is wilted, about 1 minute. Transfer to a plate.
- 2) Add the remaining 1 tablespoon oil to the pan and heat over medium heat. Add sun-dried tomatoes and shallot; cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Increase heat to high and add broth. Cook until the liquid has mostly evaporated, about 2 minutes.
- 3) Reduce heat to medium and stir in cream, lemon juice, salt and pepper. Return the gnocchi mixture to the pan and stir to coat with the sauce. Serve topped with basil.

Coloring Corner





Happy FATHER'S

June 15, 2025

Day

We've got a sweet treat for Dads!

Free Smoothie for every Father
with a **\$15** purchase or more.

Dine in only

Keep up on our social media
for more **upcoming deals!**

 Apna Dera & Mister Dee's

 apnadera_misterdees



(716) 839-9440

ApnaDera.net

450 Beach Rd, Cheektowaga, NY 14225