

Healing Holistically Through Veganism

Written by Carole Audet
Photography by Jeremie Dupont



Miranda and John Sheppard are a multitalented couple with a wide and impressive circle of friends. Miranda comes from an art and design background, and her creative work has been featured in *Canadian House & Home*, *Log Home Living* and *The Financial Post*, to name a few.

John runs his own sales business and he's also known as Farmer John in their neck of the woods for the abundant and thriving garden he tends along with Miranda.

With newfound clarity from leaving animals off their plates, they now use their skills, creativity, and connections to help the animals, the planet, and humanity.

During the summer of 2015, while studying ahimsa—meaning nonviolence, compassion and kindness to all sentient beings—Miranda Sheppard had an experience that would profoundly change her life. While in meditation, she began to witness the suffering of animals; she describes it as a “vibrational connection and complete match in which these animals were existing.” This continued to happen day after day.

In her studies with davidji, she was learning that she could get clear guidance while sitting in silence. On August 4, while in deep meditation, she asked to be shown why she was witnessing this suffering.

“It was at that moment that a beautiful voice whispered in my ear: ‘It’s all about the energetics. The animals that you are consuming have lived tortured lives full of great misery. When you consume their flesh, you are absorbing all of the suffering, torment, ache and distress that they have experienced in their lifetime at a cellular level.’

“I received a profound calling to immediately drop all animal products from my life, and to explore the links

between mindfulness, diet, the environment and all of its creatures,” reflects Miranda.

“I went on this journey, and because it was a heartfelt decision, it was easy. There was no struggling for the right recipe. There was no looking for ingredients. It just flowed effortlessly and beautifully. That decision changed my life because I truly believe once you get the stress and the death off your plate, you’re now becoming a clear vessel,” explains Miranda.

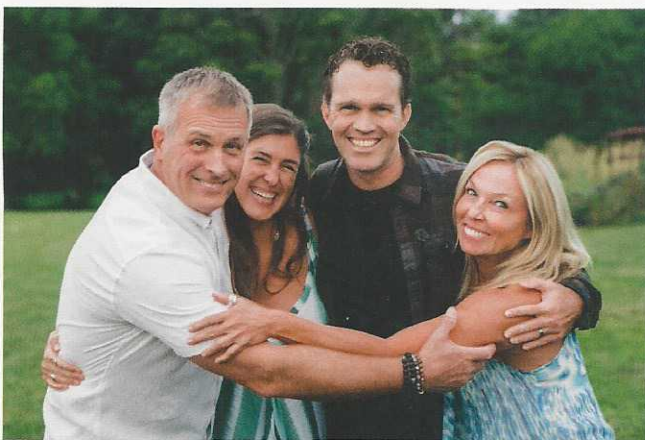
Healing Garden

On a two-acre plot of land outside the small community of Uxbridge, Ontario, an abundance of vegetables and herbs flourish amongst the bees from the two healthy hives on the property, and the beautiful home expertly designed by Miranda. For two people with little gardening experience, this bounty of regenerative agriculture is awe-inspiring.

When John and Miranda first arrived on this property, they spent time getting to know the land and the community. Two years after their arrival, they started their garden, which has continued to expand each year.

“We wanted to grow our own food, so we started experimenting with that. Then we learned about closing the loop, so we started creating our own compost so no waste is leaving our land,” says Miranda.

Dr. Zach Bush, a man they met while on a retreat in Italy hosted by Rich Roll and Julie Piatt, was the person who first introduced them to regenerative agriculture. “Zach Bush was one of the guest presenters. We literally lived with him for a week and we learned all there was to know and understand about soil health,” says Miranda.



Dr. Zach Bush and his wife Jenn Perell Bush who joined Miranda and John in their backyard August 2019 for a 3-day reunion/retreat. The Sheppards met him May 2019 in Italy where he introduced them to regenerative agriculture and living in harmony with Mother Earth. He was a huge part of what the Sheppards describe as discovering their purpose on this planet.



The couple credits Bush with teaching them about the connection between the health of the soil food is grown in, and the health of the human consuming it.

John and Miranda continue to learn about regenerative agriculture through the Kiss the Ground online soil advocate training course. "It's a lot of what we already know, but it's being reminded and then there's a certification that goes along with it. We are now certified in regenerative agriculture practices," says Miranda.

While they grow enough food to feed several families,

Miranda and John have no plans to sell their produce. Instead, they give it away to friends and family and freeze much of it to keep them going during the winter months. "I'm also going to explore some preserves and medicinal balms, so I'm looking at making sure that nothing gets wasted; I'm still in the process of learning that right now." Miranda is currently enrolled in the herbalist program at Pacific Rim College.

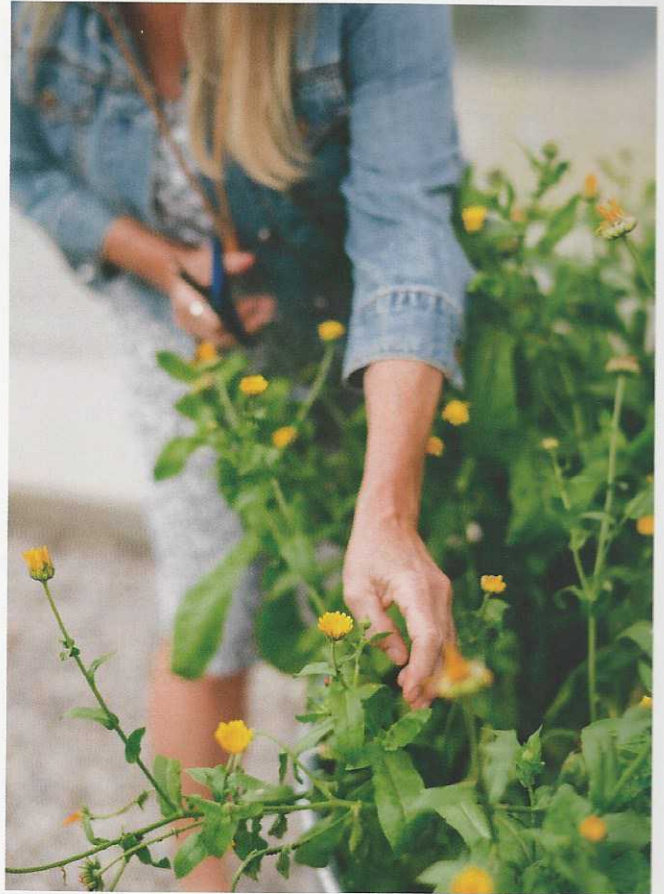
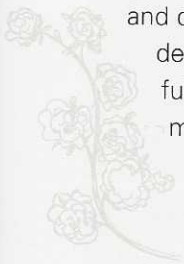
This isn't the only course of study for Miranda. She's learned about plant biology, has received a plant-



based nutrition certificate from T. Colin Campbell's Center for Nutrition Studies, and she's currently taking the Forks Over Knives Professional Plant-Based Certification program.

Their garden is pollinated by the two beehives they keep on their property, and their beekeeper has had to educate them about the nature of bees and the honey they produce. "We quickly found out the honeybees only have so much space when they're storing honey. If they run out of space, that's when you get a swarm where the queen will leave along with the entire colony. You have to harvest excess honey to continue to give them space."

Being vegans and determined not to exploit the bees, they were totally against their beekeeper selling the excess honey. They had cases of honey and didn't know what to do with it. They decided to give it away to those who have a full appreciation for what they're doing, and money never changes hands.



Harvesting calendula in the medicine garden.



Miranda and Farmer John in the garden. A place they describe as pure joy.

Healing Community

Miranda and John are committed to sharing the benefits of a plant-based diet. John calls it “calories without casualties™” and Miranda calls it “peaceful plates”. It’s something they’ve been doing since becoming vegan themselves, but they are never pushy or in-your-face about it.

“It’s really by way of gentle introduction. It’s creating beautiful plant-based dishes and bringing people to our table, to our backyard, sharing delicious meals, and showing them how wonderful it can be.”

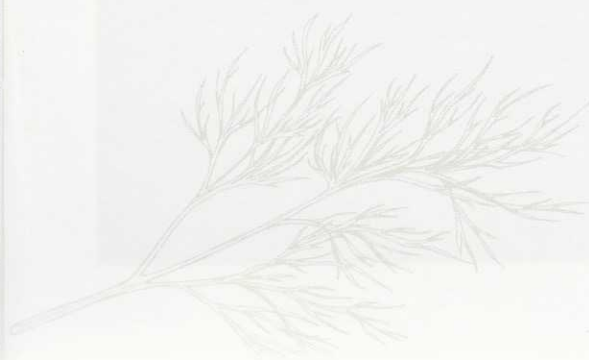
“We found that when it comes to plant-based eating, I always say, you can’t push a rope. You have to lead by example and pull people along with you. That’s been our experience. If we invite people into our home and they experience a delicious meal and everything that goes with it, they say, ‘Wow, that’s not what I expected,’” says John.

Of course, their meals are prepared with fresh produce from the garden, so they often invite their guests to harvest the foods they will be enjoying. “We try to involve them as much as possible. It’s shocking how many people have never pulled a carrot from the ground! The thrill that they get when we invite them to our backyard to do so—it’s like they’re little kids. They’re giddy as they pull carrots and vegetables from the ground and peas from the vine. There’s this beautiful excitement that happens,” reflects Miranda.

This gentle introduction to plant-based eating has converted many of John and Miranda’s family members and friends to this way of life. They estimate they have inspired about 40 people to become vegan.

“In that 40 are some that we never in a million years thought would go plant-based,” laughs John.

John and Miranda plan to continue to lead by example. “I realize that’s my calling on this planet at this time,” says Miranda.



Healing Room

Inside their beautiful home, John and Miranda have built a healing room and invite practitioners in to offer healing sessions. Modalities included are meditation, Reiki, sound bathing, astrology readings, acupuncture and vegan lifestyle instruction.

Miranda's awakening that led this couple to a new life happened during meditation, and daily meditation has become an important part of both their lives.

"Meditation goes hand in hand with living a plant-based lifestyle because when you meditate, you're focusing on what's inside, you're blocking out everything else. You become more aware of yourself, your impact and everything that you do," says John.

Leaving animal products off his plate, along with his daily meditation practice, created a remarkable shift in John's personality.

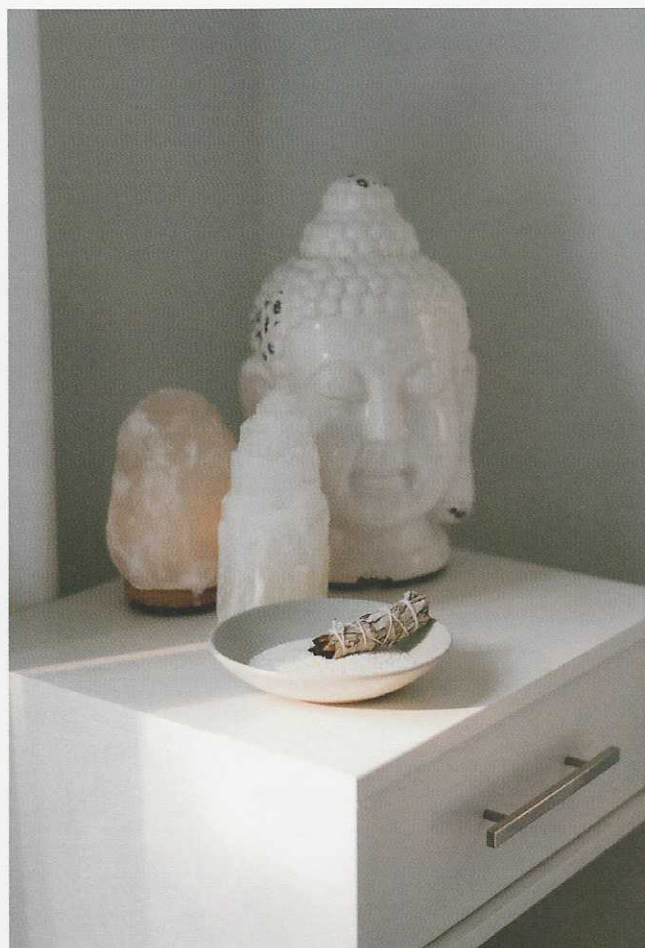
"Meditation has transformed our lives. It's unbelievable the impact that it's had, but it's also in conjunction with plant-based living. I went from being what I would consider a very aggressive and stubborn person to being somebody who is much more willing to see other people's points of view, modest, humble, and compassionate. In business, I was not a team player. But now I'm much more willing to admit when I'm wrong," reveals John.

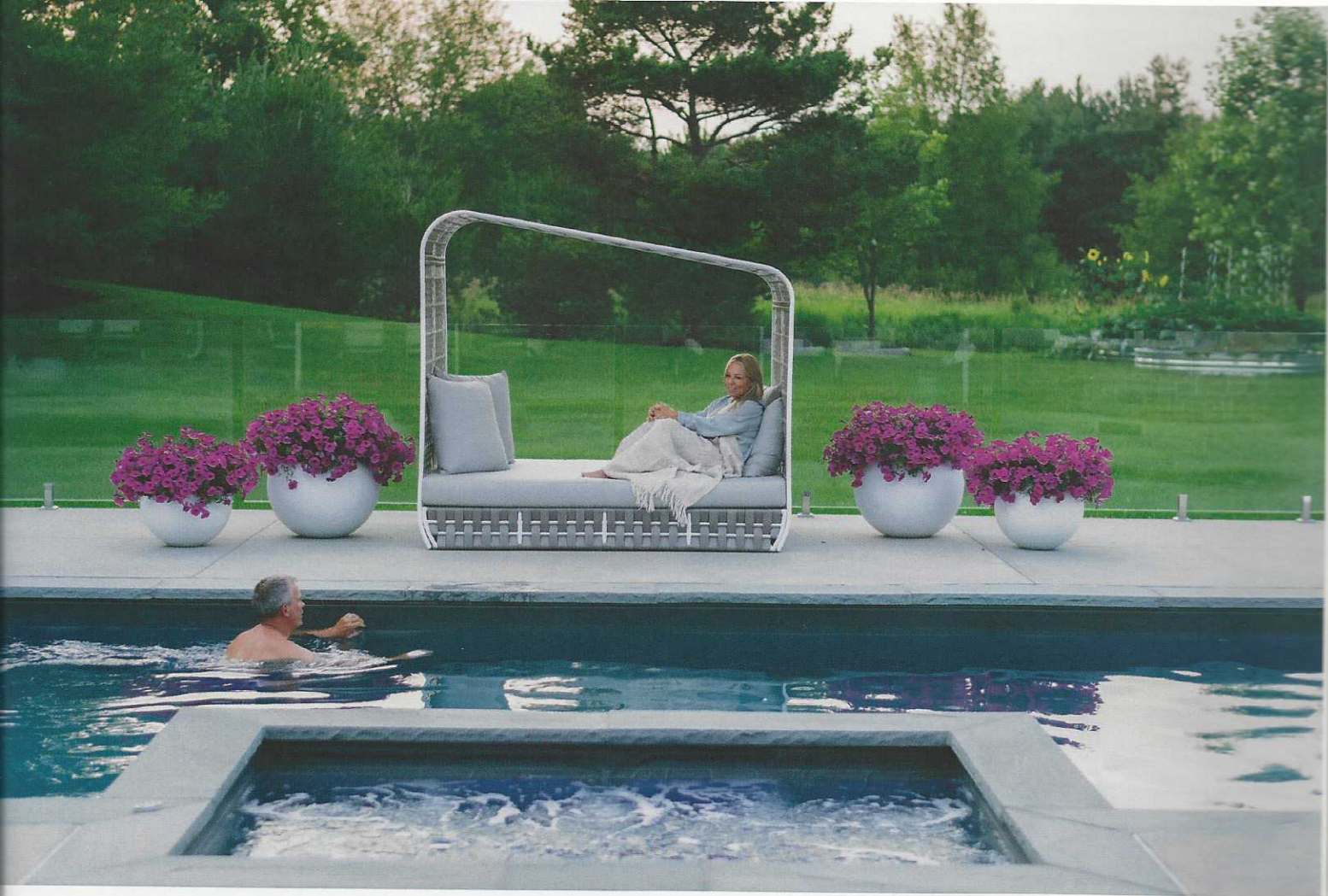
The healing room was originally created for them, but they wanted to share these amazing healing experiences with others. The demand for these offerings quickly grew.

"I have a list of 15 people who say as soon as Lynda, the Reiki master, is available, I'm here. She comes in every two weeks; our massage therapist also comes every two weeks, and then the other practitioners as needed. It's quite beautiful because our friends have so much trust in what they've witnessed with us," says Miranda. "Wonderful healing has taken place in this room. What used to be a little forgotten corner of the home is now our favourite space to be.

"When we've had an evening of healing, we'll all circle around the table and share a meal and then we'll share our experience. There are a lot of tears and then a lot of support for one another."

Their intuitive astrologer also offers sessions with a





Lucia Light, said to provide clarity and an uplifting experience. A 45-minute session with this light is equivalent to 60 hours of meditation.

They both were in awe of their experience with the Lucia Light. John says, "It was the deepest meditative state I think I've ever experienced."

In addition to these healing modalities, Miranda leads small group meditation with their bees.

Healing Projects



Describing how the idea for one of the projects Miranda is currently working on with four friends, she says, "People are interested in veganism. There's not a day or a week that goes by when I don't get texts or phone calls. That was the inspiration for this online educational platform. We were talking about how we get asked the same questions over and over, and wouldn't it be great if there was one place you could go for credible information?"

This platform will feature cooking demos, restaurant

reviews, gardening and composting tips, advice on cruelty-free and sustainable beauty, repurposing within the home—such as using the pockets from old jeans as coasters, and how to stock your pantry. Naturopath Jessica Dupont will discuss such topics as brain function, hormones, and raising plant-based children. The team also includes Jessica's husband Jeremie, an in-demand photographer, master gardener and athlete; dynamic videographer and vegan chef Pedja; and chef and recipe developer Haruna.

"Between the five of us, we have so much knowledge to share on how to curate a plant-based pantry, how to cook, how to simplify. We're going to do it in a relaxed, casual way—imperfect vegan living. No one can be a perfect vegan. We want to demonstrate that by the way we present the information," clarifies Miranda.

The second project Miranda is focused on is a collaboration with Olympian Dotsie Bausch. They are co-authoring a book that will feature well-known people sharing about their vegan journeys. In 2017, the concept for this project was downloaded to Miranda



when she asked herself how she could be more involved in helping animals.

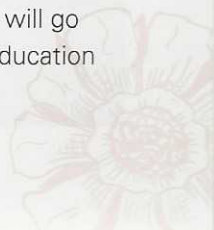
"I thought, I need to do something for the animals. I need to share this plant-based living with the world. How do I do that? I sat down at my computer and in three hours I had a 56-page creative concept for a book that was absolutely brilliant. I knew the title. I knew the what, the why, the vision, the mission. I knew all of the people who had to be involved and I had these gorgeous spreads put together. I sat with this book and one morning I thought to reach out to Damien Mander, the anti-poaching activist and founder of the International Anti-Poaching Foundation. He has to be a part of this book."

Miranda began connecting with people she knew needed to be involved—high-profile people she often didn't feel prepared to approach. One by one, each person she reached out to was happy to be part of this project. Then a friend mentioned she needed to speak with Dotsie Bausch about it. "On a whim, I booked a ticket, flew to L.A., stayed with my friend and she set up a dinner with Dotsie."

Like-minded people are not uncommon within the vegan community, but the connection between Dotsie and Miranda surpasses the ordinary bond. Before hearing about the project, Dotsie asked Miranda to share about her awakening to a vegan lifestyle. "I went into my story of awakening and she started crying at the table. When I finished, she literally had to catch her breath. She said, 'My God, I had the same experience as you. I thought I was off my rocker. I didn't know what happened—there was this gap that I experienced. Just like you, I was in the animal suffering. But I chalked it up to maybe I had ridden too much that day. I was exhausted, I was dehydrated, whatever.'"

From that point on, Miranda and Dotsie shared a solid bond and nothing could keep Dotsie from signing on to be part of this project. "We've spent the last two years accumulating the yeses. We call them our contributing partners because they're sharing their stories with us, and in exchange we are sharing information about them.

"During this process, I was given clear guidance on two things. One was that I had to do this in full humility, meaning I am serving the animals. This has nothing to do with me. If my name is not a part of it, it does not matter. The second thing was I'm not able to profit from this in any way. All of the money that this book makes will go back to animal sanctuaries, rehabilitation, and education on plant-based eating."



Healing Wall

In 2017, Miranda received what anyone would perceive as bad news: a cancer diagnosis. The stress of her work as an interior designer had affected her health because it was no longer in alignment with her values.

Miranda did not go the conventional route to heal her



body. Instead, she reached out to alternative healers. She had been listening to Rich Roll's podcast for plant-based eating, and Julie Piatt—who's a spiritual healer and teacher and Roll's wife—appeared on his show. "She was not doing private consultations at that time, I just reached out to her on a whim and she said yes.

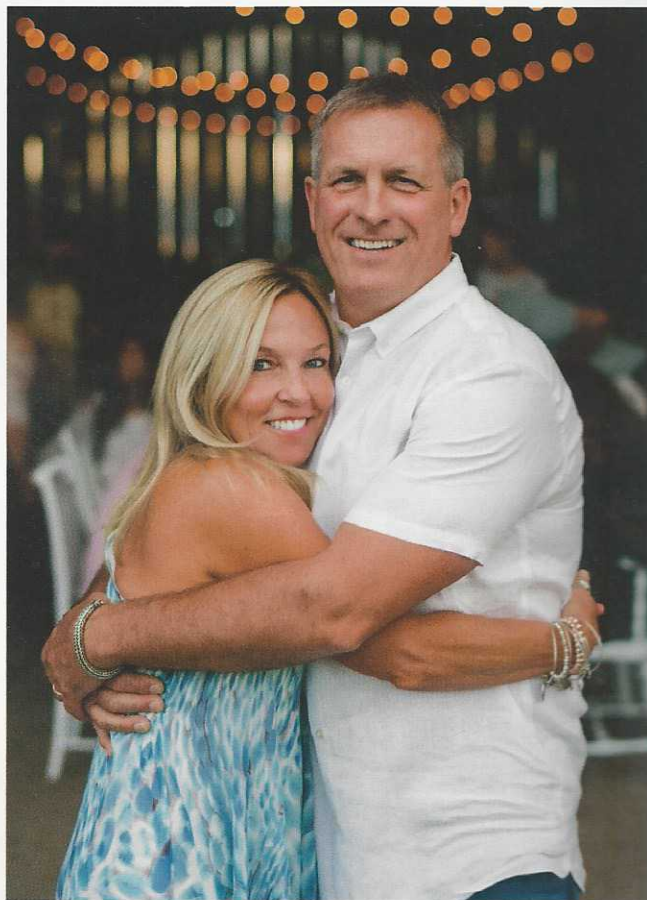
"I was in so much pain that Julie did remote healing to take away the pain. And then she also sent me down to the Ayurvedic centre in New Mexico. Completely trusting her, I got on a plane and submitted myself to this unbelievable seven-day cleansing program. I went down with the blood work of an 83-year-old woman, and I came back with that of an 18-year-old woman. It was a complete transformation. I went there for one full week and basically came back completely healed."

Miranda has dedicated a wall in her dining room that she calls her healing wall. In addition to the images of Rich Roll and Julie Piatt, davidji appears because he was instrumental in her meditation practice, and ultimately her awakening. "He taught me and reminded me that I need to go within to find the answers."

The final quadrant of her healing wall is filled with an image of Rachel Brathen, a.k.a. Yoga Girl, whom she sought for movement of energy. "For my 50th birthday, John and the girls bought me a ticket to her healing

retreat down in Aruba. She has a yoga studio down there. It was a week of deep trauma healing, where you yell and scream and kick pillows and do fire ceremonies. That experience also assisted me to heal."

"I think the underlying theme of everything is balance—whether it's our environment, our food, our physical health, or our spiritual health. We're working toward having everything in balance; when you do that, nature works the way it's intended. That's the same with our bodies. Ayurvedic medicine says there's no such thing as disease; instead, you have toxic residue because your body is out of balance. Get yourself back in balance and your natural immune system will correct that toxic residue. We're doing that with everything," concludes John. ●



For our readers wishing to learn more about Miranda and John's inspiring story or others mentioned in this story:

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