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Winter 2023-2024

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a satisfying  
contemplation*

**hvv1**



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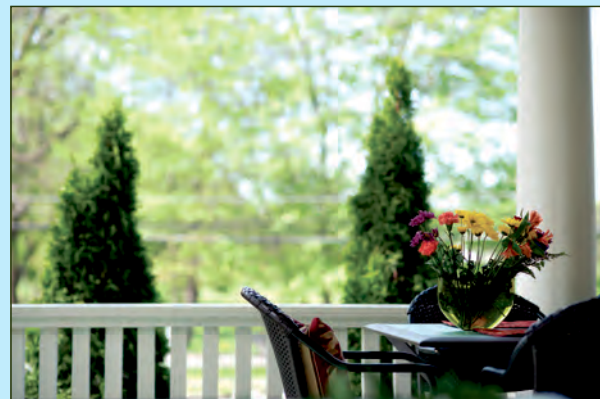
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# Fennel vision

## *A complete guide to local herbs*

by Sparrow

**I**RAN INTO MY new friend David in front of Yum Yum on Rock City Road. While we were talking, he looked down at a bush next to us. “What is this?” David asked.

He sniffed the seeds, and ate one. “Fennel!” he announced. “It’s so alive! Even with all that toxic auto exhaust spewed on it!”

David wore a broad fennel smile.

We tend to think of herbs as sitting in jars, dried out, in natural food stores, and forget that they grow right out of the ground, for free. Probably they are more effective while still alive. It’s nice to think that the earth, which sends forth the food that keeps us alive, also wishes to cure our ailments.

Fennel is useful for indigestion, flatulence, anemia, colic, diarrhea, constipation, respiratory problems, and menstrual disorders – according to some website called “organicfacts.net.”

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Which leads me to a point I was going to make later: all the spices you use in cooking are also herbs. Any of them may be steeped in hot water. For example, the tea I’m drinking today bears the hyperbolic name “Cinnamon Magic.”

But don’t assume that these websites – and books – are always right.

Do you remember that bumper sticker, Question Authority? I suggest you apply that maxim to herbalism.

See for yourself how each plant affects you.

I love the Victorian language in herbalist literature: words like “rubefacient,” meaning “producing redness in the skin when rubbed on,” and “anthelmintic,” which means “expelling parasitic worms.”

Here’s a case study. Three weeks ago I had congestion in my chest, so I searched for Tiger Balm in my medicine cabinet. I couldn’t find it. Do you know Tiger Balm?

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It's a Singaporean liniment containing camphor and menthol, which comes in a small jar with a graceful leaping tiger on the label.

When I was young, adolescent hippies would dab it on their Third Eye, and imagine that they were developing mystic powers. The actual medicinal use of Tiger Balm is to help expel chest phlegm and diminish joint pain.

But I couldn't find the tigerish ointment, so I desperately seized on a tiny bottle of pine essential oil, poured out a small amount, and rubbed it on my chest. I immediately felt relief, and I smelled like a forest. Not just any forest, but my favorite type of wooded grove.

Because I have bunions, it comforts my feet to walk on pine needles. Plus a pine woods strikes me – pardon me if I say this – as sacred.

One note of caution. If you're using essential oils, don't put your fingers in your eyes. Oils can be irritants. In fact, it's a good idea to wash your hands immediately after applying these pungent concentrates.

Eventually I found the Tiger Balm, and began alternating it with the pine oil. My conclusions: camphor *compels* the phlegm to come out, pine *convinces* it. In other words, pine is gentler, less invasive.

But I knew nothing about pine oil before this experiment. It was a stab in the darkness.

Do you know how people say: "No one needs poetry, but if someone dies or gets married, suddenly a poem is essential"? The same is true of herbs. No one needs



Fennel is useful for indigestion, flatulence, anemia, colic, diarrhea, constipation, respiratory problems, and menstrual disorders

herbalism, until they're coughing and sneezing. Then a cup of hot chamomile tea – or essence of pine – is a godsend.

Herbs are cheap, have essentially no side effects, and are pleasant to imbibe.

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Winter 2023-2024

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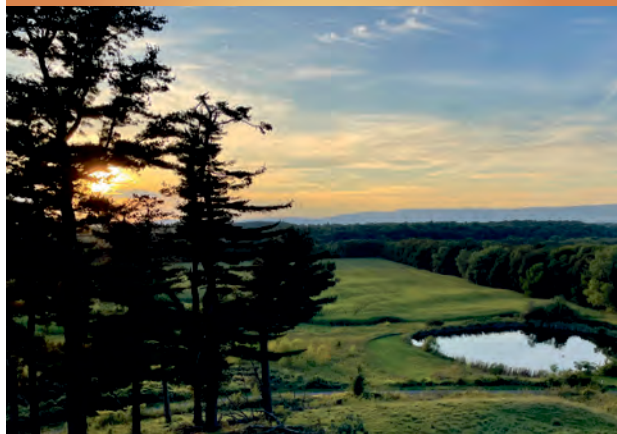
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What is more soothing than a cup of licorice mint tea? Watching steam rise from a teacup is a satisfying contemplation – a bit like smoking a cigarette.

Once you start drinking herbs, you notice their subtle colors: yellow, deep red, pale green. Turmeric, calendula and chamomile may be used to dye hair.

There are numerous ways to brew tea, but my preference is those little bamboo tea strainers that fit inside a teacup. There are metal tea strainers and “tea cozies,”

but I don't like metal touching my herbs.

Because of the shape of my teakettle, I am constantly pouring tea with my left hand, though I am right-handed. Another benefit of herbs: pouring tea is improving my dexterity.

Personally, I let my tea cool down, even in the winter. I don't see why blistering

liquid should enter my mouth. But if you don't drink your tea immediately, you get lots of suspicious looks. There's a ubiquitous tea macho in our culture which requires everyone to drink scalding water (flavored with herbs) fearlessly.

“A bathtub is basically a big cup of tea that you sit in.”

I'm sure you know that many pharmaceutical drugs are essentially synthesized herbs – aspirin being the most vivid example. Salicylic acid, the basis of aspirin, was isolated from the bark of a white willow tree in 1763 by reverend Edmund Stone of Chipping-Norton, England.

By the way, are you wondering about that licorice mint? It took me a long time to work up the courage to try a teabag with those words on it, but it tasted great!

And you can put essential oils in your bath. A bathtub is basically a big cup of tea that you sit in. Tonight I'm putting

in lavender, plus Epsom salts.

You can add herbs to your salad dressing! (I'm assuming you make your own dressing, as my wife and I do. Here's our recipe:

1/2 cup unfiltered extra virgin olive oil  
1/4 cup apple cider vinegar  
1/4 cup soy sauce


These are just approximate amounts. Add some St. John's wort, and you have a medicine! Or sprinkle fresh peppermint on your salad, and benefit from its antiviral, antioxidant, and anti-inflammatory properties, according to botanical-online.com”.

Plants are living beings, as we are. They grow, eat, reproduce. Perhaps they even love. Perhaps they love *us*.


But I'm not a snob. I will drink packaged teas – such as Yogi Tea's Lemon Ginger, which everyone seems to enjoy, especially with honey.

But I must warn you that Yogi Tea comes with incredibly stupid sayings written on the little tags attached to the teabags, such as “Your inner self is your inner guide.”

Either ignore these sentences, or laugh at them.




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# The recipe to a healthy winter

*Staying active, eating well, and supporting our immune systems*



ERIN QUINN

Get outside even in the cold. Glory Hill and Oakwood Drive at Mohonk Preserve.

by Cloey Callahan

**T**HE WEATHER IS getting colder, which means the number of people getting sick is increasingly greater.

When we head into the fall and winter months, people sometimes stop their routines of being outside and succumb to colds and flus. It's important to consider adding things to your routine

to ensure that you stay healthy year-round. It takes an extra push in winter, when the temperature drops and the sun goes down early. But it's well worth that extra push if you are supporting your immune system.

We spoke to experts in the region to learn what locals can do to stay healthy this winter. The recipe is staying active, eating well, and taking the right supplements. Here's what you might consider

incorporating into your routine as we head into the winter.

## **1. Find new indoor activities that help you stay active**

It's understandable not to want to leave your house and head into the freezing cold. But that doesn't mean there aren't ways to stay on top of your fitness routine at home.

Our favorite? Yoga.



Kristy O'Connell, a Hudson Valley yoga instructor who teaches virtual classes from her Instagram, says that yoga is a great way to stay active from the comfort of your own home. Even if you've never

tried yoga before, it's easy to make it work in accordance with your lifestyle. Pick and choose the difficulty of the workout yourself. Yoga can be used as a way to meditate, to relax and stretch, or as a core

workout that will have you burning by the end. Whichever route you pick has benefits that will lead you to a stronger body for the winter season.

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time of the day for any amount of time,” said O’Connell. “It can be done for two minutes to an hour. In the winter, you can practice yoga at home in the comfort of your own space, in the warmth, in your comfy clothes. It doesn’t require any equipment, and you’re using the power of your own body weight.”

She suggests beginners follow yoga sequences on YouTube videos or even Spotify playlists.

If you are able to bear the cold at least temporarily, head to a local gym, and if you’re looking for additional assistance find a personal trainer. When O’Connell isn’t teaching a yoga class, she finds herself at Gold’s Gym in Dutchess County, where she takes advantage of their group exercise classes. This checks off two boxes: continuing her workout routine and finding community and friends. It’s a perfect combination to fight off the winter blues.

“When seasonal depression is at a high, working out can ground you,” explained O’Connell. “With yoga, you can practice

the mindfulness part of it, and the power and appreciation of stillness.”



Immuneschein is made up of three core ingredients lemon, ginger and local wildflower honey.

## 2. Boost your immune system

There are many ways to boost your immune system. One of our favorites is by drinking a locally made elixir from ImmuneSchein. This November, the company celebrates its ten-year anniversary. It has a Tea Haus on Route 212 near the boundary line between Saugerties and Woodstock.

Their elixir is made up of three core ingredients: lemon, ginger and local wildflower honey.

It’s a tale as old as time that those three things can help cure a common cold, and we’re happy to get it right from someone who puts it all together here in our back yard.


ImmuneSchein adds a variety of flavors as a fourth ingredient, including elderberry, garlic, black currant and many more. It’s perfect as a quick shot when you’re feeling under the weather, and can also be added to tea.

“There’s always a pickup in the fall and winter because people want to be proactive and make sure they stay

healthy during the cold and flu season,” said Corinna Geib, founder of ImmuneSchein. “Turmeric and elderberry are especially popular then.”

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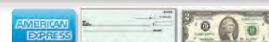
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DION OGUST

### Neil Smoller, owner of Woodstock Apothecary.

core temperature of your body. It makes you feel warm, which is why Geib says it's the perfect thing in the winter. Though it isn't considered a supplement, it is known that ginger is a natural antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and digestive aid. And elderberry, high in vitamins, helps the lungs, which is particularly useful for colds and headaches.

Their Tea Haus carries 92-plus loose-leaf teas for people who might shy away from an elixir but are looking for something to aid their immune system this winter.

Dr. Neal Smoller, a licensed pharmacist and owner of Woodstock's Village Apothecary, says there's no need to reach for

Dayquil when you consider a cold-care plan to support for your immune system.

A strong foundation of wellness can prevent you from getting sick in the first place. If you do end up getting sick, though, he suggests zinc lozenges in the first 24 hours and herbal remedies like echinacea and elderberry within the first 72 hours. He says that vitamin D, an important nutrient that most of us will be low in, will help with respiratory and immune health if we start taking it as a supplement.

### 3. Go outside regardless of the weather

"There's nothing better than just healthy

lifestyle choices," said Smoller. "It's boring to hear, but sleep and good nutrition and regular exercise make your immune system stronger."

While there are ways to stay active at home, there's nothing quite like the Scandinavian approach to winter: bundle up appropriately and head outside for fresh air and sun.

"Get outside, be active, and enjoy the brisk air," said Smoller. "You will be less likely to get an illness this season if you think about it in a comprehensive holistic manner."

There are plenty of ways to do that throughout the Hudson Valley. For example, some hiking groups like the Body Liberation Hiking Club continue to operate at full capacity.

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like Mohonk Preserve and Storm King State Park offer trails for snowshoeing. Towards the Catskills are snowboarding and skiing ranges, including Belleayre Mountain, Catamount Mountain Resort, and Hunter Mountain. They create locales to look forward to in the colder months.

Either way, the importance is to bundle up and not get too cold, because that's what might make the experience less than enjoyable. Grab multiple layers and focus on your feet and head. Get socks and hats that you know will keep you warm. Kenco Outfitters in Kingston is a one-stop shop to get started with expanding your winter wear.

"If you exercise and eat well, you will be a little more protected against winter colds," said Smoller.

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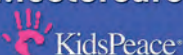
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# Paddle up

*Pickleball is taking Hudson Valley by storm, here's how and where to play*

by Zac Shaw

**P**ICKLEBALL, AN EXCITING blend of tennis, badminton, and ping-pong, is making a racket in the Hudson Valley. Each year in recent memory has seen a new court open locally, often repurposed from abandoned tennis courts in public parks. Leagues are forming, casual games are happening around the clock, instructors and court rentals are proliferating. But those who haven't had the pleasure of playing are asking: "What exactly is pickleball, and why is it suddenly so popular?"

The game sprouted in 1965, a brain-child of three dads – Joel Pritchard, Bill Bell, and Barney McCallum – who were looking for a backyard pastime for their children on Bainbridge Island, near Seattle. What started as a means to alleviate summer boredom evolved by the 1970s into a sport with formalized rules. From its Pacific Northwest origins, pickleball has in recent years volleyed its way to becoming one of the fastest-growing sports around.

The game has boomed in popularity in large part because it's so accessible and easy to pick up. While true athletes battle it out at the competitive level, the game can be approached by non-athletes and played more casually like the friendly back-and-forth of its badminton and ping-pong counterparts. It's one of those rare games that can be played by kids, senior citizens, and everyone in between. The equipment is straightforward as well. All you need to play are a couple of paddles and a pickleball (and perhaps a portable net and/or lines).

Played on a court similar to badminton's but with a net height slightly taller than tennis, players use their solid paddles to volley a perforated "pickleball" (reminiscent of a wiffle ball) back and forth. The game can be played as singles or doubles.



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**Pickleball is one of those rare games that can be played by kids, senior citizens, and everyone in between.**

Here's where it gets interesting. There's a no-volley zone close to the net, cheekily referred to as "the kitchen." Players must refrain from smashing volleys when standing in this zone, adding a layer of strategy.

The objective? Just like tennis or badminton, you aim to score points by making the ball land in your opponent's court without them returning it.

There are also specific serving rules. The serve must be hit underhand and diagonally.



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nally across the court. Additionally, each side must let the ball bounce once before volleys are allowed, making the opening exchanges of each point a delightful dance of patience and positioning. |

The game is typically scored using a rally point system, where only the serving side can score points, and games are usually played to eleven, 15 or 21 points, with a team needing to win by at least two points.

Players have the choice of engaging in singles or doubles matches. Singles allows for a more individualized game where each player's skill set is directly pitted against the other, demanding agility and quick decision-making. Doubles is the more popular format, with the excitement of teamwork and coordination as partners navigate the court together.

While many players participate in casual games, often at community parks, there's a robust competitive scene as well. Local tournaments can lead to regional competitions, and for the elite national championships beckon. These competitive matches demand adherence to official rules, refined strategies, and a high level of skill.

Where can you play pickleball locally? We compiled a list of the most popular and easy-access courts in and around Ulster County:

**YMCA of Kingston & Ulster County** (507 Broadway, Kingston) - Four indoor wood courts with permanent lines and portable nets are included with YMCA membership. Non-members can get a \$15 day pass to use the whole Y facility.

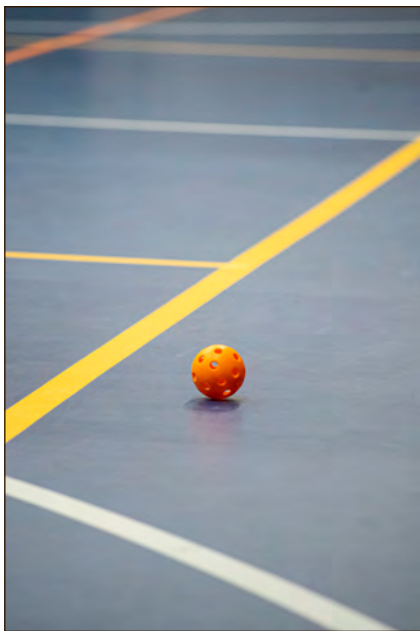
**Loughran Park** (50 Charlotte Street, Kingston) - Three outdoor play areas here have been repurposed from abandoned tennis courts. Free and open dawn to dusk, permanent net and lines.

**Break Point Tennis** (470 Old Neighborhood Road, Kingston) - For serious pickleheads, Break Point offers amazing indoor play areas, pickleball lessons, hourly court rentals and even organized



PHOTOS BY DION OGUST

**Players have the choice of engaging in singles or doubles matches.**



**Pickleball, an exciting blend of tennis, badminton, and ping-pong.**

that's great for practicing, and tennis courts can be commandeered in a pinch.

**Berean Park** (49 Reservoir Road, Highland) - You'll find two outdoor tennis courts with overlaid lines here.

**Thompson Mazzarella Park** (42 Traver Lane, Rhinebeck) - Features two free outdoor hard tennis courts with pickleball lines overlaid (net will be taller than a typical pickleball net). There are restrooms here, and you can even reserve the courts.

**Total Tennis** (1811 Old Kings Highway, Saugerties) - Pickleball camp? For real. If you're serious about the sport, Total Tennis offers a paid stay-over experience

match play.

**Loughran Park** (18 Charlotte Street, Kingston) - A popular, free place for pickleball with five outdoor hard courts.

**Grant Avery Park** (3362 State Route 28, Shokan) - One free hard court, but you'll need to create your own lines and bring your own net. At least there are restrooms and water. Technically, these courts are for residents only.

**George W. Ross Memorial Park** (202-220 Bowne Street, Ulster Park) - Small half-court with wall

to perfect your pickleball game and get into competitive shape. Naturally, the courts are immaculate.

**Cantine Field** (Pavilion Street, Saugerties) - Here you'll find four free outdoor courts with permanent lines, but you'll need to bring your own net.

**Rip Van Winkle Park** (Lake Road, Tannersville) - You can't beat the views at these two free outdoor courts. It's another adapted tennis court with overlaid lines.

**Hasbrouck Park** (15 Mohonk Avenue, New Paltz) - While they're in slightly rough shape, the two free, permanent outdoor courts are popular with the locals. These courts were installed just as pickleball was taking off.

**Dinsmore Park** (49 Old Post Road, Staatsburg) - At the rear of the Staatsburg firehouse are three nice outdoor courts, purpose-built for pickleball. Free to play.

**Veteran's Park** (50 Scenic Road, Accord) - One free outdoor court with permanent lines, but you'll need to bring your own net.

**Accord Bank House** (294 Queens Highway, Accord) - The slogan of this establishment is "peace, pool and pickleball." Four hard courts: two indoors, two outdoors. Features permanent lines and portable nets. A one-time fee is required, and courts can be reserved.

**Spratt Park** (113 Wilbur Boulevard, Poughkeepsie) - Simple outdoor pickleball court with permanent lines.

**Pulaski Park** (162 Washington Street, Poughkeepsie) - Two dedicated outdoor pickleball courts. Cool off at the pool in warmer months.

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# What is a pacer?

*“You can do this. You’re stronger than you know.”*

by Erin Quinn

**W**HAT IS A pacer? Like with all things in ultrarunning, the definition of ‘pacer’ has been pushed to a new extreme. It’s no longer some 1980s track coach with a whistle, yelling at you from a car window to pick it up, pointing ferociously at their stop watch. It’s not a more modern version of the marathon pacer holding a sign up for a three-hour or three-and-a-half-hour finish.

It’s something else.

“Follow me,” that pacer’s face encourages with calm confidence, “and I will get you to the finish line on time.”

Pacers are fellow runners who have volunteered their time to pace people aiming for a ballpark goal time in the 26.2-mile marathon distance. In ultradistances (technically, any race or run greater than the 26.2-mile marathon), pacers have responsibilities greater than helping their runner get to the finish line on time. Depending on length, terrain and environmental conditions, pacers may have to help the runner navigate, to remind them to eat, drink, or take a trail nap. They’ll likely have to encourage at times, and at times when safety is in question to dissuade. They’ll have to read the runner’s temperature and make adjustments.

They do all of this while running themselves. Pacing involves part art, a little bit of science, and a whole lot of heart.



Jesse and Shiloh as pacers assist erin in getting to the finish line at the Moab race where only 29 women succeeded in finishing

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Many ultras in this country allow pacers to join 100K (66.6-mile) races halfway through a 100K (66.6 miles) races or anything longer. Typically, pacers are not used for shorter ultra distances, although each race has its own unique set of rules. For the 100s, pacers are allowed to join their runners at a specified aid station or crew station. This pacer can stay with them for ten or 50 miles or anywhere in between.

Elite ultrarunners may have several pacers lined up to trade off for specific

sections. They may need someone fast and upbeat for the finish, or someone who knows the course well enough to navigate the trickier twists and turns of herd paths and rock scrambles. A fresh pacer may bring energy to an exhausted competitor, or have the specific expertise that a section of the route requires. It all depends on the runner, the race, and the accessibility the runner has to pacers eager to join the experience.

### Thrilled and terrified

I'm not all that organized or planned. I'm not an elite trail runner or ultrarunner. I'm a late bloomer to discovering these ridiculously long and grueling

racers. But I could not be more in love with the challenges they pose, the beauty and intimacy of the environments that

these courses take me to.

I'm completely captivated by the community of people ultras attract. I'm

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attracted by, their rawness and vulnerability. I appreciate not just their love of nature but also their willingness to help their fellow competitors. Their fellowship is more tribal than it is individual, more team-oriented than winner-takes-all. They sport more modern primitive tattoos, piercings and hand-sewn and repaired garments than facelifts, Botox and flashy, expensive gear.

When I find something I'm passionate about — an author, a songwriter, a sport, a story -- I dive in head first, hold my breath, and swim to the depths, I want to uncover every morsel of information, any clues, any artifacts I can.

Within a year and a half, I went from running in a 50K to a 50-miler to a 100-miler to a mountainous 100-miler, to the Moab 240-mile run. I've been a runner my entire life, but prior to this ultra-era I had never gone further than a road marathon, which at the time, seemed like the outer edge of what was possible.

When I jumped into the lottery for Moab, which only can take 220 people, I didn't think I stood a chance. When my name was actually pulled out of the hat, I was both thrilled and absolutely terrified.

What in god's name had I done?

### My support sisters

I told no one. I went to work, quietly training, researching, reading every race report, listening to every podcast, following past competitors on social media, learning to read maps and elevation charts, watching crude YouTube videos made by runners doing the Moab 240. They ran themselves into altered states, dropped out, lost their sight or fell.

Awestruck though I was. I knew what I would need right away. I would need a pacer.

I knew who it was. It was a woman whom I had run cross-country with at New Paltz High School. Someone who was more comfortable in nature than in this loud, overbuilt, concretized modern world. She was a thru-hiker and a masseuse, a mother, a runner, a naturalist and an adventurer. She was probably more capable of running the 240 than I was.

Guess what? She said yes!

Not only that, but she asked her sister, another woman I had run with in the Shawangunk Mountains as a youngster, someone whose father I had been close to and run with.

The overlapping of miles and trails and



**When you are running an ultra race, your pacers help you to navigate the important details on the road to the finish line.**

lives and memories started creating a map bigger than the Moab 240. For me, it was a bit like taking an orienteering course tracing my life backward.

### Embracing the adventure

Shiloh Pileggi and Jesse Coree Sarubi, both born and bred in New Paltz, have had a long history of big mountain climbing adventures in Wyoming and Colorado with their family as children and with their children as adults.

Altitude does not faze them. Dirt does not faze them. Sleeping outside on the edge of a cliff does not faze them. Neither does trekking through the dark in the desert, in mountain streams, or on bald summits. They've had their share of traversing technical rock rims, of encountering deranged hunters, and of facing hoof-stomping elk.

They've been to the edges of human existence and back. They have a deep confidence in their own bodies and souls,

and know how to keep moving through nature's infinite obstacle course.

Both selflessly and enthusiastically embraced this adventure with me. They divided between them which sections each would pace, when they would trade off, what equipment and gear was necessary. Their focus was on how best to get me through miles 115 to 240.

I was a New Paltz lowlander with minimal to no experience at altitude except the Bear 100-mile race at 10,000 feet in the Wasatch mountain range in northern Utah two weeks before Moab. Shiloh coached me on how to shuffle gently to keep my heart rate down, how to exhale deeply to allow the oxygen to snap back in. Jesse chatted effervescently as we did 30-second pickup runs through the desert, followed by a minute easy running and then a minute hard.

After a story and another burst of running came an endless symphony of laughter and another story about finding rocks shaped

like hearts. A New Paltz father was right there with us in our hearts, watching over our pilgrimage, ensuring our safe arrival.

Shiloh would march me up the mountains to heights and elevation I'd never encountered before, regaling me with her and Jesse's childhood escapade sneaking out from an adult party and finding a cave in the Shawangunk Mountains to sleep in with their younger siblings. They had awakened to a massive search party.

Shiloh encouraged me to touch my face after I caressed the silky white bark of an aspen tree. It was a natural sunblock, she said.

As it darkened, Shiloh would tell me to wait on a rock near the edge of a ravine while she ran back to pull other women who had gotten lost back on course. She could tell by the direction of their headlamps that they were off-course. "Women helping women," she would say, as though we hadn't been climbing for 24 hours without a break in the middle of the La Sal mountains, in freezing temperatures with few to no course markings.

It wasn't a you-wash-the-dishes-and-I'll-dry-them type of teamwork. This one had more gravitas. This is what Shiloh does. This is who she is. A warrior, a heroine, a mythical creature.

At one point, the fatigue and energy output left me with almost no reserves. I started to cry. Not a whimper or a sniffling cry. An entire-body, cleaved-in-half, bone-marrow-shredding type of cry.

I felt so grateful for my children. My two boys were there crewing for me, but I missed my daughter, who is studying abroad in Greece. "It's not bad. It's not a bad cry, Shiloh," I tried to explain. I didn't want to worry her. I was just overcome.

"I know," she said, grabbing my shoulders squarely and pulling me into her. "It's hard to let our babies go out into the world. But you're a wonderful mother, and she'll be back soon."

### **Caressing the soul**

That's not in the pacer's manual.

Nor is a description of what takes place on mile 232 when anyone left on the course (almost half of the 211 people who started the race had dropped out by this point) was sleep-deprived, dog-tired, confused, hungry, hallucinating and just all-around unhinged. This is where Jesse stepped in, guiding not only myself but two other racers down the treacherous Porcupine Rim bike path, down-climbing

on slick rock perched on the edge of a mesa overlooking the Colorado River. It was two o'clock in the morning, and the stars which had been glistening were now tucked behind sandstone wall.

Jesse careened down the path like a sheepherder, tucking us into formation, backing one of the men away from the cliff's edge, bringing up the rear for when someone lagged behind -- as always a ray of sunshine in an otherwise dark night of the soul.

Our blisters had blisters. Our legs were buckling beneath us. Our stomachs had gone south a hundred miles earlier, and our body temperature could no longer regulate itself.

But Jesse was in charge of our spirits. Jesse could not cure any of those things, but she could walk beside us, have us believe that if we trusted her each step we were taking was bringing us closer to the finish line, the promised land inside

our souls, on the outskirts of Moab.

"Cliff to your right, hug the left, staircase down the middle, sand wash over here.... Would anyone like a cashew? An Advil? Erin, are you drinking? I can hear the river. We're getting closer."

Jesse was like a run-whisperer, lulling us forward, allowing me to pause for a minute dirt-nap, my head supported by the root of a juniper tree.

What is a pacer? in my experience, a pacer is someone who walks or runs beside you, sometimes in silence, other times in wonder, constantly caressing that outer edge of your soul, saying without words, You can do this. You're stronger than you know.

Thank you, Shiloh and Jesse, for being the most incredible pacers, the strongest women, and the most protective and fierce guides out there on the 135 miles of trails that led us through at least a hundred different lifetimes.



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