

# numa

caring for the spirit in island health

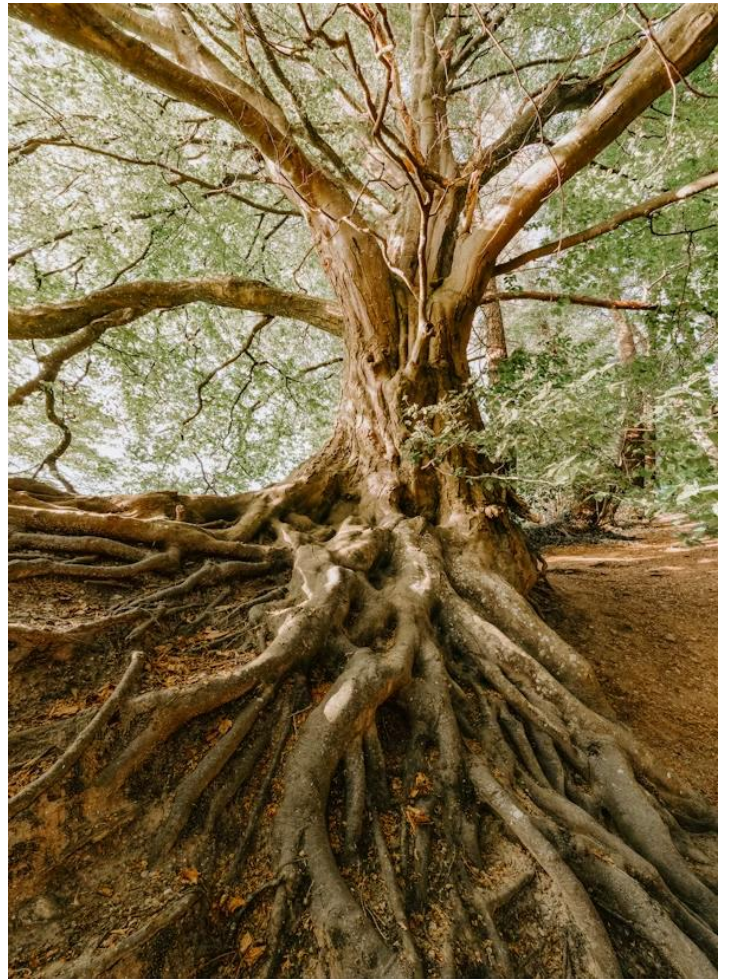
## anchored

Behind my home is a stand of old growth fir, cedar and spruce trees that have stretched into the sky for at least a couple hundred years. Despite their seeming permanence I get anxious whenever a strong wind comes through. *Will this be the storm to bring them down? Will these winds crack off limbs sending them crashing to the ground (or onto my house!)?* I get nervous until I look down and see their enormous roots plunging into the forest floor. With such anchoring these trees can endure the winds that have battered them over the centuries.

It's this notion of anchoring that I invite us to consider when winds of change come our way. One thing about change is that it often comes with a lot of uncertainty. The people we care for and their loved ones know all about this. Changes in medical conditions are fraught with uncertainty. *Will this be the illness to bring our loved one down? Will this diagnosis break them and cause their spirit to crash?*

For health care leaders and professionals there is so much change and uncertainty as well. The winds of change in politics, government, leadership and finances affect us in our roles and can bring uncertainty and anxiety. The only constant is change, as the old saying goes, but thriving during change and amid uncertainty is possible and being well anchored can help.

So, what does it mean to be anchored and how do we do it? While many spiritual traditions around the world have ways and means to ground folks you do not need to be an adherent of any tradition to practice grounding techniques. I was recently reminded that anchoring can simply be accomplished by intentionally increasing our connection to people, places and practices that root us and give us strength.



**PEOPLE:** Who anchors you? Who are the people that see you and know you? The ones that you can easily be with, who hold you, listen to you and accept you? For some this might be a family member, dear friend or mentor. For others it could be a colleague or a friend from long ago. Such people anchor us because they know us deeply and can see past the winds of change swirling about us. Deliberately increasing our connections with precisely these folks can help anchor us amid any storm.

**PLACES:** What are your special places to go? What are the places that calm your heart and lift your spirit? These sacred spaces can also anchor us in the storms of life. Whether it is a beach, a mountain top, a museum, a massage table or a sacred building or site – places can anchor us. Celtic spirituality often speaks of ‘thin places’ which are sacred spots where the heaviness of life ebbs away and we are invited into a different, healing space. Where might you need to go to more frequently to be grounded in this way?

**PRACTICES:** And lastly, various practices can help anchor us amid the shifts and changes of life. To be clear anchoring practices are those activities that work to calm and center us. Exercise, gardening and sports are all great (so keep doing them!) but they can sometimes activate us even more! (*As an avid gardener I must admit that my fixation on watering schedules, weed removal and relocating predatory bugs does not generally bring me into a settled space!*). Anchoring practices are those which center us enabling us to be grounded amid change. Some anchoring practices include meditation, singing, storytelling (and listening) and journaling.

There’s an old story of a monk who was asked how many hours a day he spent in meditation. The monk responded saying that generally he would spend 2 hours a day meditating. He then added that if he was going through an especially difficult time, he would increase that to 4 hours. The idea here is that the more our lives are tossed about the more time we need to spend anchoring ourselves. If we routinely connect with a particular faithful friend once a month – perhaps we, in these times, need to shift that to two or more times. If we go to our favourite place twice a year, then more frequent visits may be required. And if we engage in soul filling practices only once and a while – we might benefit from making that grounding work part of our everyday life.

We don’t know exactly who first coined the phrase “May you live in interesting times.” but by all accounts, we are living in them. Some say that the quote is a wish for a life full of unique and wonderful experiences. Others say it is a sort of curse where “interesting” refers to a wish for tumult and challenge. Whatever the case may be, if I could amend that old quote my wish for you would be: May you live *anchored* in interesting times. (DC)



## Hello!

Island Health’s Spiritual Health Program is excited to welcome two new casual SHPs who will help ensure continuity of care when site SHPs are away.



**Gulsen Cok, Casual SHP – VGH, RJH, SPH**

Receiving initial training in Spiritual Health care in Turkey Gulsen continued her studies in Canada through Fraser Health’s Clinical Psychospiritual Education (CPE) program. Welcome Gulsen!



**Lynne MacFadgen, Casual SHP – NRGH, CDH, WCGH**

After many years working in health care and post-secondary administration Lynne enrolled in Fraser Health’s CPE program to fulfill a long-held passion to support people’s spiritual wellbeing. Welcome Lynne!

## Goodbye!

After five years as a Spiritual Health Practitioner serving patients, families and staff at VGH and RJH **Michael Politano-Bowles** will be moving on to a new adventure. The Spiritual Health team will greatly miss Michael’s wisdom, humour and compassion and wish him all the best in the new opportunities that lay before him! Michael’s last day at RJH will be May 8<sup>th</sup>. 🍷

NUMA (Greek for “spirit/breath”) is produced by Island Health’s Spiritual Health program to draw awareness to issues of spirituality in health care. The editor of numa is Darren Colyn, Manager, Spiritual Health. To read past issues of NUMA go to the [Spiritual Health public webpage](#).