

Donna Karan's hair, Brian Oliver; makeup, Berta Camal. All others: Hair, Tim Rogers; makeup, Chrisanne Davis. Prop stylist: Shawn Patrick Anderson. Fashion editor: Paul Cavaco.

"Encouraging your own intuition can make you feel more in control of your life," says Rometo, an intuitive healer.

"Food is so important," says Pettijohn, a juice and raw-food expert. "Go fresh, clean, and organic—and avoid processed items."

"We are all spiritual, whether or not we develop that—just as we're all physical, whether or not we're athletes," says Miles, a Reiki master.

"People ask, 'How do you do it all?'" says the designer. "I don't. That's what I'm searching for with this. I'm on an endless journey."

THE UNSTOPPABLE
PATH
PATIENT
HEALING
URBAN ZEN INITIATIVE

PHOTOGRAPHED BY PATRICK DEMARCHELIER

LOVE MEDICINE

"Essential-oil use dates back to the Bible," says Pontvianne, an aromatherapist. "We're just beginning to bring back that wisdom."

"If you don't cover the lifestyle basics—proper rest, exercise, and diet—it's hard to be healthy," says Merrell, an integrative physician.

"In the West, you take a drug to suppress a symptom," says Lipman, an integrative physician. "In the East, the symptom points to an imbalance."

Rodney Yee

"Yoga is the best thing we can do for stress release and complete health," says Yee, a yoga instructor. "It helps clear the body of pain."

"I've done nothing but yoga since having a major injury, and it has saved me in every way—physically, yes, but also emotionally," says Saidman Yee, a yoga instructor.

A slimmer body. Radiant skin and eyes. These holistic experts helped Donna Karan transform.

By Alexandra Jacobs

Designer Donna Karan is a riddle wrapped in a mystery shrouded in a cashmere shawl. She founded her company in 1985 for career women. Then, a decade or so ago, she took a detour down a Zen-like path. Had she gone soft?

Karan, 60, is an enigma no more: In fact, she has long balanced her type A characteristics with New Age wisdom. "It hasn't changed my life—it is my life," she says. After the death of her husband and business partner, Stephan Weiss, in 2001, she sought out the best healers to enrich her knowledge of Eastern thought. But a funny thing happened on her way to enlightenment—her body tightened, and her skin and smile brightened.

Like many overscheduled super-achievers, Karan can be fuzzy about the details. The vitamin supplements she takes: "I can't remember! They come in a bag!" Why she is so devoted to juice fasts: "Juicing is natural to me." But she has always been one to share her discoveries with friends. Now she is formalizing them by integrating Eastern healing into traditional medical care with the Urban Zen Foundation at Beth Israel Medical Center in New York City. The foundation is also training doctors, nurses, and therapists nationwide. "How do you deal with chaos, and how do you find calm?" Karan muses. "What we hope to create is a center where the calm is in the chaos—and where the patient is taken care of, not just the disease." Here, Karan and her dream team share their philosophies on finding our own version of Nirvana.



Ruth Pontvianne
Aromatherapist

Like many designers, Karan has introduced a very lucrative lineup of perfumes over the years. According to essential-oil expert Ruth Pontvianne, she also loves Thieves, a blend of lemon, cinnamon, clove, eucalyptus, and rosemary oils. "She's a hot, spicy kind of girl," says Pontvianne of Karan. "It's delicious—and very sexy." **When did you become interested in aromatherapy as healing?** "I grew up in Brazil, and I studied with shamans in the Amazon, where you eat roots to thin the blood to cure various ills." **What are your essential essentials?** "I like lavender, which is mainly used for calming, but you can put a few drops of lavender oil on top of a cut, and it will feel better. Peppermint or ginger for nausea. Frankincense for me is very spiritual—it has a certain holiness." **How do you apply the oils?** "I put them on the bottom of my feet, on my wrists, or on the inner rims of my ears." **You're a proponent of actually ingesting certain oils. Tell us about that.** "You *must* know what you're doing—read about it and talk to a good aromatherapist. I keep most of what I do very secret, but I will say that I do use a tiny bit of peppermint in water for nausea, and a drop of lemon oil in lemonade just to give it some zing. Pleasure is important, too."



Frank Lipman
Integrative Physician

Lipman, author of *Spent: End Exhaustion and Feel Great Again* (Simon & Schuster), thinks that we're all frazzled by modern times and fried by our constant electronic connection. "In the old days, you got stressed out when the lion attacked," he says. "Now it's chronic." So how does the founder of the Eleven Eleven Wellness Center in New York City suggest we unplug? We download five of his best stress-busting tips. **Don't wait to exhale.** "Sit down for five minutes, focus on your breathing, and get out of your head," Lipman says. **Follow the sun.** "Our ancestors used to live according to the rhythms of day and night. Dur-

ing the day, we should get some natural light, and at night, it should be pitch-dark and cool. Those cycles are still imprinted on our genes, but we're living out of sync with our body rhythms." **Roll with it.** "I'm a big fan of tennis balls as masseurs," he says. "Step on one and slowly move your foot over it. Lie down with your back on one and use it to rub your shoulders and lumbar area. If you do this a few times a week, you won't need to go to a massage therapist." **Ditch the doughnuts.** "Stop eating sugar—or at least cut down on it. We all consume too much. Choose protein-rich foods instead. And eat up in the morning—we should all have a bigger breakfast and lunch and a smaller dinner." **Feel the rhythm.** Lipman is fond of reggae—partly because the songs typically have about a 60-beats-per-minute tempo, which mimics a relaxed heart rate. "Even listening to music with a good beat for 15 minutes can change your state of mind," he says. (Incidentally, he's also Karan's personal DJ. "Donna's got terrible taste," he jokes. "I connect her to good music.")



Peggy Rometo
Intuitive Healer

"The only real valuable thing is intuition," said Albert Einstein—and Rometo agrees. Introduced to Karan by Demi Moore, Rometo describes herself as a psychic medium who helps her clients make life decisions. She believes everyone has a sixth sense; they just need to know how to recognize it. **Basic instinct.** "Your intuition is connected to your spirit," she says. "It's all of our senses. You see it, you feel it, you smell it, you know it—and the knowing is your gut instinct. Your gut is usually right." **The curious case.** Encourage your inquisitiveness. "As long as people are a bit curious, they'll start hearing, feeling, and knowing themselves better." **The edge of reason.** "I had a student who wanted to buy a beautiful house, but something was just bugging her about it," Rometo says. "As she was about to sign the contract, she found out that there were drug traffickers next door. Logic and reason have their place, but she could have saved herself a lot of time by listening to her intuition."



Woodson Merrell
Integrative Physician

An increasing number of doctors blend traditional Western medicine with Eastern practices. Merrell, chairman of the department of integrative medicine at Beth Israel Medical Center, has a reputation as a moderate voice of reason in the field. **You practice acupuncture in addition to traditional medicine. Does it work?** There shouldn't be much skepticism at this point. Based on the scientific literature, the National Institutes of Health and the Food and Drug Administration have both said that acupuncture works. There are also a few billion Asians who have been doing it for a couple thousand years—the track record is unassailable. **And what about homeopathy?** Homeopathy is still very controversial among scientists and physicians. It revolves around various animal, plant, and mineral substances at highly diluted doses, and it's best for mostly self-limited conditions, such as allergies and colds. Homeopathy isn't meant for treating serious, life-threatening diseases. **How can a woman find out whether her doctor is open to alternative medicine?** If you're having a specific health issue, ask if there are any remedies that are not pharmaceutical. If you get a smirk or a shrug, wrong doctor.



Jill Pettijohn
Raw-Food Expert

When most of us hear the word "cleanse," we think of the Master Cleanse—that brutal ten-day regimen of maple syrup, cayenne pepper, and lemon juice. Juice and raw-food expert Pettijohn's programs are more epicurean than draconian, incorporating fresh juices, vegetables, nut milks, soups, and a daily green-vegetable energy drink. "Think of it as a healthy person's coffee," Pettijohn says. **Cleanses have a lot of detractors. What do you say to the naysayers?** "Most everyone I know who has done a cleanse has benefited. Of course, there are all kinds of controversial things written, but you have to ask yourself: Do these people treat themselves well?" **What are the benefits of cleansing?** "I believe it rests your digestive system, and

that allows the body time to heal and rejuvenate. I suggest people cleanse four times a year.” **Is weight loss a valid goal?** “Weight loss does tend to come naturally through this program, but it’s better to set an intention of making some sort of positive life change—and if you happen to lose weight, well, good.” **Your role in Urban Zen is to improve hospital food. Why is it so bad, anyway?** “I have no idea, but it desperately needs to be addressed. Food should be an integral part of treating a patient. I saved a hospital menu recently because it was almost a joke. And I went to see someone who had a brain operation around Christmas, and they gave her a packaged TV dinner. I mean, how sad is that?” **What changes should you expect when you start eating healthfully?** “Nutrition affects how you feel physically and emotionally. You give people a big pasta lunch, and they want to go to sleep. But you give them juice and a salad, and they can be focused.”



Pamela Miles
Reiki Master

Reiki arrived in this country from Japan in the 1930s via one Hayayo Takata. But in the ensuing 70-odd years, the touch therapy still hasn’t been fully understood. Miles, a top practitioner, hopes to change that. “Patients need a personal connection,” Miles says. **So what exactly happens in a Reiki session?** “I place my hands lightly and mindfully on the person’s fully clothed body and offer a connection to their system. Reiki taps into a memory of wellness—no matter how physically or mentally stressed we are, there is an inviolable core of wellness within us.” **Do you have to believe in spiritual healing to benefit?** “No. I tell people that it’s not religious, but it can open up a spiritual connection. And we are all spiritual beings, whether or not we choose to develop that aspect of ourselves—just as we’re all physical beings, whether or not we choose to develop ourselves as athletes.” **Is there anything that even the most cynical nonbeliever can get out of it?** “I often speak about Reiki as a resting cure. One hundred years ago, illness was often addressed by sending people to a sanitarium, where there was clear water

and air. People would rest, and their bodies would find their way back to health. Today, not too many people are able to rest like that.” **Is there any evidence that Reiki works?** “The scientific research is just beginning. Some small studies have shown that Reiki can reduce anxiety, pain, and fatigue, and improve blood pressure, heart rate, immune strength, and quality of life. I teach in medical schools and at conferences, and I find that physicians are very interested once they realize Reiki involves no risk and can improve their patients’ well-being. They pull me aside and ask, ‘Do you think this would help my husband?’”



Rodney Yee
Yoga Instructor

When both seventy-something grandmothers and three-year-old preschoolers are taking yoga classes, you know it has gone mainstream. But Yee, a nearly 30-year veteran of the practice, cautions that we shouldn’t lose sight of yoga’s philosophical tenets. **What’s the biggest misconception about yoga?** “In the ’60s, it was stereotyped as cultish. But ever since the ’80s, people have been thinking of it as merely exercise and stretching—something that can churn out supple bodies. Its popularity stems from a feeling of ‘Wow, I’ll have what she’s having.’ But it’s so much more than that.” **So what is it about?** “It’s partly philosophy, too—it leads your body, mind, and heart to a place that’s open. The reaction to yoga should be ‘Wow, you look like you’re radiating.’” **What do you think of the studies showing that yoga is effective for insomnia and anxiety?** “I’m happy that yoga’s getting the credit it deserves—and in double-blind studies.” **Was there a moment when yoga clicked with you?** “In 1980, I was dancing with the Oakland Ballet, and I took a yoga class with a dancer friend because we were both very stiff. We came out of that class and just stared at each other because we had never imagined it was possible to feel that good. That memory is still crystal clear because I feel that way after every single yoga practice.” **How do you feel about being called a “stud-muffin guru” by Time magazine? That description has stuck with you.** “It

was cute and darling at first, but after a while, it became gross. I hope that’s not on my gravestone.”



Colleen Saidman Yee
Yoga Instructor

Saidman Yee’s class is hardly power yoga: Instead of thumping pop music, the poses are accompanied by inspirational anecdotes, often culled from her own extraordinary experiences. Below, a few of the life lessons Saidman Yee, who is married to Rodney Yee, bestows on Karan and other devotees of Yoga Shanti, her studio in Sag Harbor, New York. **Give thanks.** Twenty years ago, Saidman Yee was on a canoe trip with her five brothers in the Algonquin Park in Ontario, Canada, when she was struck by lightning. “Everything went white—it was very painful,” she says. “I smelled my hair burning. It was like a movie. I was sure I was dead, but I remember thinking, At least it happened when I was in nature. At least I was with my family. And at least I experienced true love.” Saidman Yee eventually recovered—but, she says, that feeling of gratitude never left her. **Be persistent.** As a child, Saidman Yee started writing letters to Mother Teresa asking about the meaning of life. “I didn’t get a letter back until I was 28, when I got one that said, ‘You’re now ready to serve the poorest of the poor,’” she says. “That was on a Friday, and by Monday, I was on a flight to India to live with her missionaries.” **See the good in the bad.** “I was always a jock—a runner, a boxer, and a basketball player,” Saidman Yee says. “But in 1994, I was taking a step class and put my back out. I had to have surgery, I couldn’t walk for three months, and it became clear that my athletic days were over.” Saidman Yee was frustrated, but that injury was what led her to yoga. “I’ve done nothing but yoga ever since,” she says, “and it has saved me in every way—physically, yes, but also emotionally.” **Just breathe.** Karan met Saidman Yee after the death of her husband. “When you’re grieving, I teach this one practice: ‘Inhale, exhale, pause,’” Saidman Yee says. “You suspend, and in that suspension there is no pain. And when you’re grieving, those pauses add up, and they spell relief.” ♦

ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY KATE SULLIVAN