



CONTEMPLATIVE SCIENCES CENTER
UNIVERSITY of VIRGINIA



Master Hiromi Johnson Offers Steady Wisdom to Quell Stress

By *Malaika Rehman* | Student Staff, Communications

For most college students and others, days can feel overwhelming with pressing deadlines, social pressures, and the relentless pace and disruptions of a changing world. Here at UVA, the Contemplative Sciences Center offers opportunities to find peace and restoration through the centuries-old practices of T'ai Chi and Qi Gong. Each week, Master Hiromi Johnson teaches these classes during Friday Rest Fest, offering students and all adults alike a chance to slow down and rediscover a sense of groundedness that can otherwise feel out of reach.

Johnson, who is also the founder and director of the Charlottesville T'ai Chi Center, notes that while T'ai Chi began as a martial art, it's also the perfect activity to decompress,

especially for students.

“I think it helps a lot for them, because they are stressed out, especially before exams,” Johnson said. “I’ve heard some students come and say: ‘Hiromi, I feel so relaxed now, and I can focus.’”

Read the full story to learn more about Master Hiromi Johnson and how T'ai Chi helped her recover from knee injuries as a young girl in Japan.

Malaika Rehman is a third-year student at the Batten School, double majoring in Politics.



From the Salon: Grit and Grace

Finding a path toward mindful ambition

Reflections by *Michael Overstreet*

How can we reconcile our ideals of ambition and determination with those of self-compassion and mindfulness? How can we teach ourselves to balance “inner work,” managing our emotions and nervous systems, with the “outer work” of navigating professional spheres?

These questions were the bedrock of the Contemplative Sciences Center’s final Research **Salon** of 2025. In December, **Lili Powell** led the Salon to introduce us to her active book project. Lili is an associate professor in UVA’s School of Nursing and Darden School of Business and the director of UVA’s Compassionate Care Initiative. By connecting wisdom traditions with evidence-based research, Lili’s book project pursues research in “achieving a balance between holding space for both grit and grace in our lives.”

Read the full piece.

Michael Overstreet is a PhD Plus intern and Contemplative Sciences Center Graduate Research Assistant.



The Contemplative Commons to Open on Weekends

We are excited to announce that the Contemplative Commons will be open on weekends beginning the week of March 16: Saturdays from 10:00am to 6:00pm; and Sundays from 12:00pm to 6:00pm.

Since opening our doors to the public on the first day of classes on August 26, 2024, we've increased programming and extended the building's hours to earlier in the morning and later in the evening. We will continue to offer more programming as we expand to weekends.

Stay tuned!

Hours effective March 16, 2026

Monday-Thursday: 7:00am-8:00pm

Friday: 7:00am-6:00pm

Saturday: 10:00am-6:00pm

Sunday: 12:00pm-6:00pm

[Photo by Matthew Millman]



SALON: NATURE

Thursday, March 19, 2026

5:00-6:30pm

Contemplative Commons, The Alchemy

Free, open to the public. [Learn more and register](#)

This Salon treats 'nature' as both a lived reference point for contemplative practice and a charged, historically overdetermined term. Holding this tension, Adam Lobel will moderate a discussion to help us explore practices of contemplative naturalness in the early Tibetan Dzogchen and Chinese Chan traditions—noncoercive awareness and effortless cultivation alongside the modern need to meet climate grief, guilt, anxiety, and responsibility.

Adam studies Buddhist-inspired meditation and philosophy; contemplative education; and psycho-social political change. His ongoing appreciation for those practices join together in what he calls the Four Fields: MossRock, Wildfire, Lit Ocean, and Space.

[Learn more about this Salon.](#)

Save the date for *Attention Ecology*, the April 30 Salon with Tish Jennings.



Learn and Play Mahjong!

March 24-27, 2026

All-level sessions offered throughout the day

Contemplative Commons

Free, open to the public

[Register your interest and learn more!](#)

Whether you'd like to learn American Mahjong or you already love the game and want to sharpen your skills, join us for a variety of curated sessions March 24-March 27, 2026. Led by a certified teacher. All levels are encouraged to participate. Sessions offered:

NOVICE - NMJL 101

Beginner American Mahjong

Learn the basics including National Mah Jongg League (NMJL) rules, also known as American Mahjong. No experience required.

INTERMEDIATE - NMJL 102: *Advanced Skills and Concept Building*

Some playing experience and basic game vocabulary required.

MAHJ MASTERS - NMJL 103 - *Strategic Play Bootcamp*

Playing etiquette, faster pace of play, and conquering the pivot highlighted.

NMJL 104 - *Supervised Open Play*

4-player, 3-player, and 2-player format instruction available.

Timing details will be determined based on the information we gather from the [registration-interest form](#).



The Science of Life: An Ayurveda Weekend | April 24-26, 2026

Join best-selling author [Kate O'Donnell](#) at the Contemplative Commons to experience the ancient Indian healing system of Ayurveda. Attend any of the workshop sections over the course of the weekend.

REGISTER

Introduction to Ayurveda *Friday, April 24, 4:00-6:00pm*

This interactive masterclass will cover the basic principles of Ayurveda and how seasonal changes and individualized daily routines can help us maintain health and longevity. Learn basic tools for wellbeing including circadian rhythms for sleep, meal spacing for digestion and metabolism, and more.

Ayurveda and the Mind *Saturday, April 25, 10:00am-12:00pm*

This workshop dives into ancient wisdom and modern practices to shift mental states, improve mood, and provide tools to stay steady, clear, and connected.

Food as Medicine for Digestion, Immunity, and Energy *Sunday, April 26, 12:00pm-2:00pm*

Ayurveda classifies specific food and spices as medicine for daily nourishment and for common complaints such as cold symptoms, indigestion, constipation, inflammation, lethargy, and low immunity. Learn how to make and use brain and reproductive tonics, teas, digestives, and more.

Open to all. The weekend will take place at the Contemplative Commons, Alchemy. Each

workshop can stand alone; **register** for a single day or multiple days.

Cost

Community: Full weekend \$108 or \$40/session;

UVA-affiliated: Full weekend \$54 or \$30/session;

UVA Students: Full weekend \$33 or \$20/session

Scholarship opportunities available. To inquire, please email us: csc@virginia.edu.



Community Partnerships:

Summer Programs for UVA Students and Local Youth

The Contemplative Sciences Center will continue its partnership with local organizations outside of UVA to offer young people values-based skills including ethical leadership, community-building, and restorative practices.

CARELab™ Mayor's Challenge for Community Change

June 22-27, 2026

CARELab™ is a community-based six-day Leadership/AI accelerator. Geared toward college students as well as motivated juniors and seniors in high school, the program equips emerging leaders with the skills, mindset, and ethical foundation to make a difference in their communities.

[Learn more about CARELab™.](#)

Elements of Peace: Youth Summer Program

August 3-7, 2026

This program offers youth, from 11-15 years old, an opportunity to unplug and hit the “reset” button with a screen-free week of rest, reflection, and connection before the new school year.

This program is rooted in eco-awareness and contemplative, creative, and expressive arts. [Learn more about Elements of Peace.](#)



In The News

Redefining Happiness; *Architectural Record* Feature; Nature-based Research Design

- UVA Today featured the student Happiness Retreat which engaged students in the deeper work of cultivating a lasting sense of happiness, even while affected by the world around them. Facilitated by the Contemplative Sciences Center and Student Health and Wellness. Read the story: [UVA retreat helps students redefine happiness.](#)
- *Architectural Record* featured the Contemplative Commons in the January special Health and Wellness-themed issue. Read the story: [A building and site for contemplative practice takes shape at the University of Virginia.](#) [Photography: Matthew Millman]
- Julianna Mollica, a PhD Graduate Research Assistant with the Contemplative Sciences Center (CSC), studies how architecture and neuroscience intersect to influence mental health. She won the Sarah McArthur Nix Travel Fellowship to conduct an experimental study in France, using mobile neuroimaging to study how nature-inspired design influences stress regulation. Learn about her work: [From South Dakota to France, UVA students put their studies into practice.](#)

PAID RESEARCH STUDY OPPORTUNITIES

The Contemplative Sciences Center (CSC) is seeking candidates to participate in the studies below:

Meditation & Environments Study

CSC's research team seeks adults aged 18-24 with little to no meditation experience to participate in a study exploring the link between meditation and environment. This is a paid opportunity.

[Learn more and apply.](#)

Sleep, Dreams, and Virtual Reality Study

CSC's research team is seeking participants for a research study exploring experiences in Virtual Reality, sleep health, and dreaming. Individuals should have no established contemplative or meditative practice; with some ability to recall dreams. This is a paid opportunity.

[Learn more and apply.](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 10-31: Spring Renewal Meditation Series

March 17: Student Art Showcase / March 18-25: Gallery Exhibition

March 19: Salon - Nature

March 24-27: American Mahjong Sessions

April 17: Compassionate Care Research Symposium

April 17-18: Camping & Contemplation Under the Cosmos for Students. *This event is full.*

April 24-26: Ayurveda Weekend Workshop

April 25: Concert - Mysticism, Poetry, & Performance

April 29: Citizen Leaders Fellows Final Presentation

April 30: Salon - Attention Ecology

June 22-27: CARELab™

August 3-7: Elements of Peace

ONGOING PROGRAMMING

Mondays - Fridays: Mindfulness & Meditation

Mondays - Fridays: Ashtanga Yoga

Mondays - Thursdays: Active Series

Fridays - Chai & Chats

Fridays - REST FEST:
Sound Bath, Qi Gong, Adaptive Yoga, T'ai Chi

[VIEW ALL EVENTS](#)

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