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» **Going The Extra Mile(s)** Jennifer Slaim's bat mitzvah T-shirt ends up in Kenya. **See page 9.**

» **Theodore Bikel At 90** Still-busy actor-singer reminds us of a worthy resolution for 2014: "Live fully." **See page 29.**



PeerCorps mentors Noah Brooks and Emily Zonder with mentees Violet Twomey and Dahlia Wilson-Welsh

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## Feeling Safe Again

Mindful meditation can ease stress and promote healing.

Ronelle Grier | Contributing Writer

Imagine taking several minutes to eat a single raisin, feeling its texture, noting how it changes, tasting the unique sweetness that is slowly released. While this may feel uncomfortable to those used to nonstop activity and hasty on-the-go meals, it is part of a program called Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), which uses the art of slowing down to help participants combat tension and anxiety.

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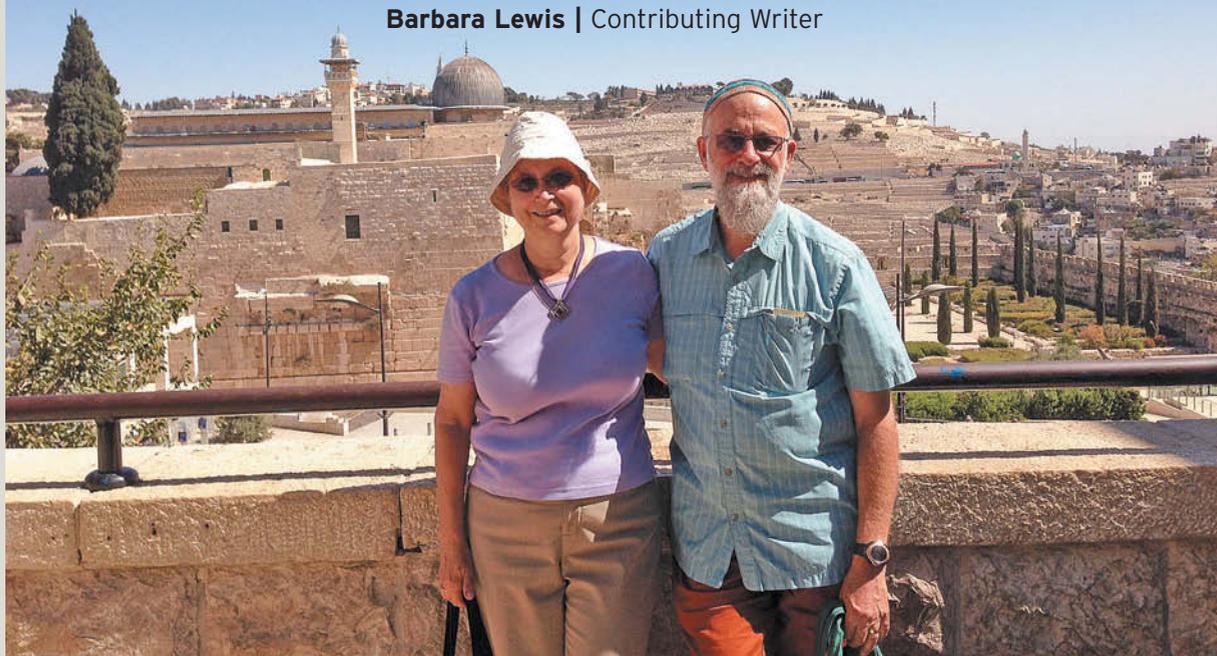


Dr. Ruth Lerman teaches stress reduction.

## Frugal Travelers

Local couple finds affordable way to enjoy Jerusalem and Israel.

Barbara Lewis | Contributing Writer



"It's time for us to go to Israel again," my husband, Joe, said.

We'd been many times, especially when our children were studying or living in Israel. But our last visit was seven years ago.

Now that we're both retired, we have to watch our expenses. Even bargain airfare from Detroit to Israel is usually more than \$1,000. In the interest of frugality, and because we'd already visited the tourist hotspots around the country, we decided to look for an apartment rental in Jerusalem and spend most of our time there.

**Barbara and Joe Lewis of Southfield found a way to visit Israel on the cheap.**

Joe searched "Jerusalem vacation rental" on the Web and found the King George Suites.

Booking a room sight unseen is always a risk, especially when you plan to stay several weeks, because if it doesn't work out, you're stuck. Online photos of the King George Suites were nice enough. And previous guests seemed happy; the worst comments on Trip Advisor were that the rooms were on the third floor (sans elevator) and that the street was noisy.

The room rate is \$71 for double occupancy (a little less from mid-February to mid-March), a bargain when even low-end hotels in Jerusalem cost more than \$125 a day. There's a four-day minimum and a surcharge for Jewish holidays, but if you book a longer visit, as we did, the daily rate could be less.

The King George Suites is a former apartment in the heart of downtown Jerusalem. The owners, Eliana Tantz and her husband, Arieh, immigrants from the United States,

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# Feeling Safe Again

Mindful meditation can ease stress and promote healing.

Ronelle Grier | Contributing Writer

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It took a breast cancer diagnosis in 1994 and a recurrence five years later to make Dr. Ruth Lerman realize the importance of mindfulness as a method of physical and emotional healing. When she learned her disease had returned, despite the most up-to-date and comprehensive medical care, her sense of security began to slip away.

“The first time, I acted like a doctor,” said Lerman, an internist who specializes in breast health at the William Beaumont Breast Care Center in Royal Oak and serves as medical director of the Beaumont Silver Linings Cancer Survivors program. “The second time, I felt more like most of my patients — scared. I felt the need to look beyond the doctors’ offices for a way to feel safe again.”

## Learning To Cope

Lerman, who had already completed yoga teacher training, began studying MBSR with its founder, Jon Kabat-Zinn, professor of medicine emeritus and founding director of the Stress Reduction Clinic and the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care and Society at the University of Massachusetts Medical School.

Then Lerman began conducting classes and workshops for a variety of participants, including cancer patients and medical students.

“I found profound healing benefits for myself, and I wanted to share it,” she said, adding that MBSR is widely respected within the traditional medical community as a successful means of coping with a variety of conditions in addition to stress.

MBSR is a secular behavioral medicine program based on the psychological concept of mindfulness, defined by Kabat-Zinn as “moment-to-moment, non-judgmental awareness.” Its effectiveness has been confirmed by numerous studies published in various scientific and medical journals.

“There is extensive [medical and scientific] research documenting the benefits of MBSR for individuals suffering with anxiety, depression, psoriasis, cancer, professional burnout, fibromyalgia, rheumatoid arthritis, chronic pain and eating disorders, to name a few,” Lerman states on her website.



Dr. Ruth Lerman leads a yoga session.

## Shalem Program

A few years ago, Lerman began offering the course, called “Shalem Stress Reduction,” to the general public at Adat Shalom Synagogue in Farmington Hills. Each session includes eight weeknight classes, plus an all-day retreat held the Sunday before the last class. A free informational session is held before each session begins.

The course is co-taught by Rabbi Aaron Bergman of Adat Shalom, who emphasizes that, while it is not a specifically Jewish program, it complements Jewish beliefs and values.

“MBSR is about the integration of body,

mind and soul, and Judaism has teachings about body awareness and gratitude,” Bergman said. “It also provides a way to help people who are suffering.”

While Bergman was introduced by Lerman to MBSR only a few years ago, he has been meditating on an almost-daily basis since age 9, a practice he learned from his parents.

“For me, it’s a way of feeling my emotions in a healthy way, without repressing or judging them,” Bergman said. “It’s a way to look them [emotions] in the eye and make friends.”

There are weekly individual “homework” assignments, which include practicing the

techniques learned in class as well as new concepts, such as the “mindful meal.” This involves eating alone, slowly and deliberately, without television, music, cell phones or other distractions. Lerman believes the individual exercises are enhanced by the group setting.

“The power of being with other people who are also working on difficult things, along with the blend of wisdom and compassion, makes the group a safe and accepting place,” she said.

Some of the exercises focus on relationships and how to change negative patterns of communication and behavior. Participants are encouraged to take time when responding to challenging people and situations instead of reacting automatically and angrily.

“I believe I am able to respond to people with a more open heart because I feel more comfortable with myself and in my own skin,” said Laurel Fink of West Bloomfield, a participant in one of Lerman’s MBSR courses.

While Lerman and Bergman agree that MBSR can help a wide variety of people, they emphasize it is not a “quick fix” nor a way to avoid stress by tuning out the world.

“Meditation is not just about relaxing; sometimes it’s also about dealing with all the things that irritate you ... it can be the opposite of escaping,” Bergman said.

Lerman added that, while those going through life-changing events, such as serious illness or divorce, are often more primed to make lasting changes, almost anyone can benefit from mindful meditation.

“I think the most valuable thing I have learned from MBSR is that by facing down and giving full attention and honor to the ‘negative’ feelings I have or difficult challenges I face, I am able to regulate my responses without feeling overwhelmed,” Fink said.

Participants agree one of the most valuable lessons was learning to focus on the present moment, without judgment, instead of mentally fast-forwarding to the next challenge or imagined crisis.

“We catastrophize and believe we are suffering all sorts of things that haven’t happened or may not ever happen,” Lerman said. “MBSR gives us the chance to reel our minds back in.” □

## Future Stress Reduction Classes

A series will be held from 6:30-9 p.m. Wednesday evenings, Jan. 22-March 19 (no class on Feb. 19) at Franklin Athletic Club, 29350 Northwestern Highway, Southfield. An all-day retreat (open to current and former MBSR students) will be held 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday, March 9. Cost: \$350.

Those interested in participating are asked to attend one of the following introductory/registration sessions: 6:30-9:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 8, or Wednesday, Jan. 15.

## Cancer Survivors Program

Silver Linings is a mindfulness-based stress reduction program for female cancer survivors, including those currently undergoing treatment. Led by Dr. Ruth Lerman, this free course addresses common concerns

such as fear of recurrence, body image and sexuality, and “chemo brain,” a condition affecting memory and/or thinking that sometimes occurs as a result of chemotherapy.

The program, held at Royal Oak Beaumont Hospital, includes eight Tuesday evening sessions and one all-day retreat the weekend between the sixth and seventh classes.

All participants receive CDs of the meditation and yoga practices taught in class to support home practice, a crucial component of the program’s success.

Interested candidates must attend an informational registration session before starting the program. Free. For information, contact [pjablonski@beaumont.edu](mailto:pjablonski@beaumont.edu) or call (248) 551-4645. □

For more information, contact [shalemstressreduction@gmail.com](mailto:shalemstressreduction@gmail.com) or go to [www.shalemstressreduction.com](http://www.shalemstressreduction.com).