

FOUR APPROACHES TO DESIRE

# Spirituality & Health

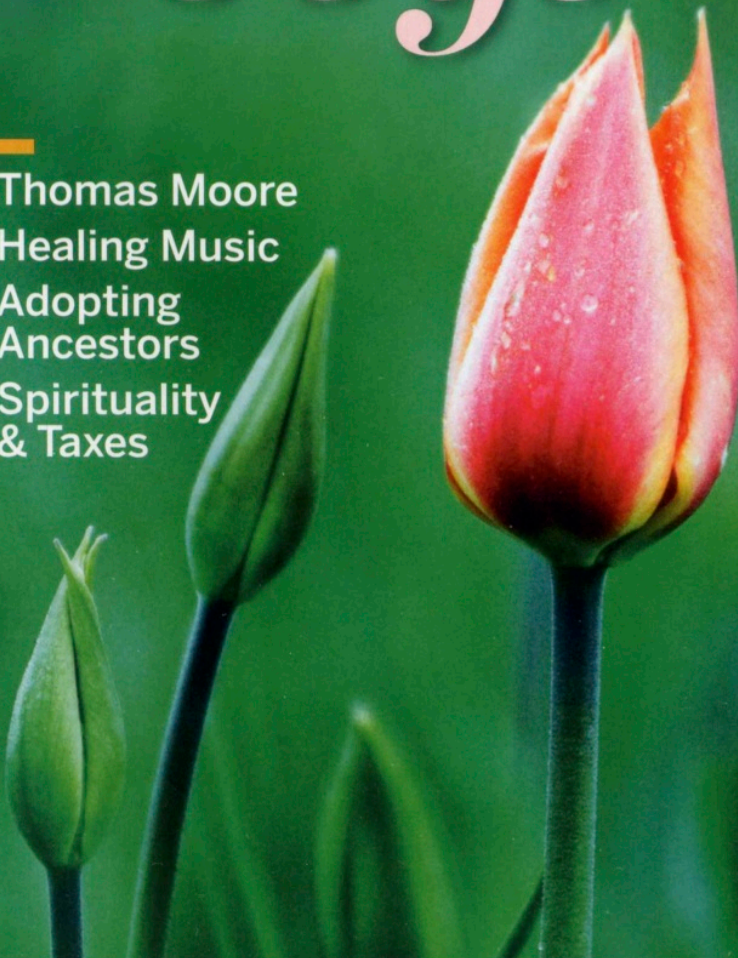
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## The Joys of



Thomas Moore  
Healing Music  
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### CONTRIBUTORS



**Cynthia Daddona** literally had the rug pulled out from under her when her husband became ill and could no longer work. The journalist, comedian, and author of *Diary of A Modern Day Goddess* lost her home and found herself living for two years in a van, a participant in a "safe parking" program at a local church. She didn't lose her sense of humor, and the experience proved transformative. She is currently working on a sequel to her book and a one-woman show about her experiences. Read her "Life Lessons from the Parking Lot" on page 76. [Moderndaygoddess.com](http://Moderndaygoddess.com)

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# Life Lessons from the Parking Lot

One-third of the new homeless are living in their vehicles with laptops, tablets, and cellphones. My husband and I were two of them.

WE WERE LIVING in a 1,600-square-foot rental, in the beautiful town of Santa Barbara, California, when my husband's hands began to shake from what eventually turned out to be mercury toxicity. A dentist for 25 years, he became unable to work, and our savings dwindled from medical bills, treatments, insurance premiums, food, and housing. While I earned some money as a freelance writer and performer, it was not enough to keep our home, and we ended up moving into a converted Chevy cargo van that we parked overnight at a local church.

The night before we left our house, I stood in the kitchen making minestrone soup, wondering when I would be able to cook in my own kitchen again. It was then I fully "let go and let God" and felt my perspective



changing. I decided to see it as a living experiment through the eyes of a journalist, a married person in love, and a veteran of the personal growth movement. I already had a practice of prayer, meditation, and affirmations, and I set the intention that my husband and I would overcome this challenge through love, persistence, faith, courage, and inspired action. We would not be victims. We would be participants in the city's Safe Parking Program, which provides parking permits in different lots for those going through life challenges.

Each day we would exit the church lot at the required time of 7:00 a.m. and return no earlier than 8:00 p.m. It was difficult in the beginning, but we got into a routine. First we would connect with nature by meditating at a park. Then we bought a small amount of food to eat during the day at a local, healthy grocery store and got ice for our cooler. Then we showered at the YMCA (they offer a sliding scale membership), and headed either to the library or to our storage unit, where I had a card table to work on. We saw other vehicle dwellers in the library, storage units, and grocery-store lines. To look at any of us you would never know we were sleeping in our vehicles.

Once situated for the day, I answered emails, wrote, filled out applications, or handled the medical paperwork. When I wasn't in a nearby

town at the doctor's office with my husband for his intravenous chelation treatments, I earned a little money signing my book *Diary of A Modern Day Goddess* or offering life wisdom sessions at a local spiritual bookstore. Each day I called a national affirmative prayer line (Silent Unity), which prayed for us over the phone.

While it may have been possible to live temporarily with others, we chose not to because privacy and quietude were critical after my husband's medical treatments. When funds permitted, we did try spending a few nights in a motel, but we soon discovered our own bed in the van was a better place to rest.

Some nights on the way to our church parking lot, we would drive along a tree-lined street and see the golden glow of lights on people inside their warm houses. We yearned to be back inside a warm house of our own someday and continued to pray

While in the van, our gratitude increased for an appreciation of the simple things like a roof over our head, clothes on our back, food in our lunch bags, a local rose garden park walk, warm soup, a warm bed, sunshine on our face, warm showers, holding hands, watching free DVDs from the library on my laptop (for our weekly date night), hearing encouraging words from a friend, a smile from a stranger, an uplifting book, and listening to uplifting music on my iPod before going to bed. All of these were big things and cost next to nothing. For for more information, go to [ModernDayGoddessWisdom.com](http://ModernDayGoddessWisdom.com).

and affirm, "God is guiding us to our healing home and community," and He did!

After two years, we transitioned into a small eco neighborhood in the affordable state of Arizona. As we cleaned out our storage unit, we gave items to a thrift store that gives vouchers to low-income people. When we left the church lot, we bought gift certificate food cards for the other vehicle dwellers. While in the van we volunteered at an organic soup kitchen. Now I cook food once a month with my neighbors for a local women's shelter. We also lend our insights to a local organization working on shelter issues.

The point is, we never thought it would happen to us, but it did. And it is happening to others in these uncertain times. Here are a few things you can do to help yourself, a friend, or an acquaintance going through something similar. —CYNTHIA DADDONA

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

### If You Have a **Minute**...

Request prayer for a friend, and then tell them that you did. You can do this by putting your request in the prayer box at your local church, making a request online, or by calling a National Prayer line.

### If You Have an **Hour**...

Pick extra fruit or vegetables from your garden that don't need to be cooked and give them to a friend who could use the extra wholesome snacks. Of course, home-cooked meals and encouraging words are golden!

### If You Have **Ten Dollars**...

Donate to the YMCA's Open Doors Program (an income-based membership rate), or a Safe Parking Program, or your local library. All three of these provide safe places for people to go and to uplift their spirits.

### If You Have **Unused Driveway Space**

Offer to let your friend park for a certain amount of time or act as a housesitter. You will have a trusted friend watching your property, and they will get to experience a shower, a kitchen, and a warm house. It's a win-win.