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conscious entrepreneurs function in the space, too.

Liz Christensen, the Sacramento-based brand educator for the cannabis tea company Kikoko, told SN&R that the company's two female founders have sought to offer products that meet people's wellness needs. Focusing at first on women's health, the entrepreneurs found that mood, libido, sleep, pain and anxiety were among the top five concerns.

Inspired to create products for a friend who was battling cancer, they sought legitimate alternatives to things such as pain meds or sleeping pills. With blends of THC, CBD and CBN (a cannabinoid often used in sleep formulas) in varying combinations alongside herbal ingredients, their teas, honeys and mints are meant to help women with issues they might otherwise address with pharmaceuticals.

Christensen told SN&R that as people learn more about the nuanced experiences offered by cannabis, their wellness-oriented usage rises. And because cannabis is increasingly normalized in mainstream culture and consumers are learning how to partake for specific effects, they're realizing even more benefits.

According to Christensen, there are two barriers to using cannabis for wellness: the persistence of stigma and lack of education about how to use the right product in the right doses. Christensen had to learn this for herself.

"I used to be the kind of person where if I smoked, I wasn't going to do anything," she told SN&R.

But increasing familiarity with the plant helped her reimagine what cannabis can enhance—which, for her, includes yoga, Pilates, meditation, sound healing and long walks with her dog. "I've learned," she said, "that it can be so much more."

Cannabis-enhanced bodywork

Beyond specific products that may be formulated or merely marketed for wellness, increasing numbers of people are waking up to the intrinsic self-care benefits of the plant. For instance, Sacramento-based cannabis yoga teacher Katy Karns found her way to yoga through cannabis. Seven years ago, she tried yoga for relief from the aches and pains of her job as a bodyworker.

At first, yoga felt uncomfortable and unrewarding. "I really hated it," she told

SN&R. "I was like 'this sucks—it's hard.'" Karns didn't go back for two weeks.

But having already bought a 30-day pass, Karns decided to smoke a bowl beforehand and give it another try. She didn't find yoga much easier, but she did enjoy it a lot more. Perceiving the minute-to-minute changes in her body that yoga brought—the gradual lengthening of muscles, the release of chronic tension, the ease of breath—motivated her to continue.

"That little change in mindset," she said, "made a huge difference for me."

Now, Karns, who trained with Ganja Yoga founder Dee Dussault, teaches two enhanced yoga classes a week at Hot Pot Studios, including a slow flow and gentle option, and also offers enhanced massage. She said cannabis helps free people from insecurities about their bodies and abilities.

Karns recently welcomed a 72-year-old man who was unfamiliar with yoga, but comfortable with cannabis. He took the class in his own way—doing the postures and movements that were possible for his body in that moment.

"Cannabis gives you permission to 'do you,'" Karns said. "And that's what makes it great for self-care."

To Karns, there's little distinction between therapeutic and fun uses of the plant. St. Thomas agrees, enjoyment and relaxation have their own health benefits, and

who's to say that healing can't also be pleasurable?

"We have a real hang-up about pleasure in this country," St. Thomas said. "As soon as THC starts working on your endocannabinoid receptors and ignites the euphoria, then suddenly, 'Oh this isn't a medicine. It's a drug.' ... I think enjoying the pleasure that comes with it is part of wellness."

Cannabis, wellness and community

While consuming cannabis alone to meditate or do yoga or take a walk can be a profound experience, cannabis has a long communal history as well.

Whether you call it wellness, well-being or self-care, cannabis is for many people who truly love the plant, about healing and wholeness.

"We have the opportunity to heal our body—and our mind, obviously—and our community and our planet," Swatosh said. "And I don't think 'recreational' or 'medicinal' covers any of that. I don't think it's a third category called 'wellness,' either ... It's more of a web, where if you pull on one string, the whole thing plays." □

"Cannabis has been intertwined in our evolution for thousands of years."

Danniel Swatosh
co-founder, Humble Bloom

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