

Holistic Life Foundation

20+ YEARS OF MINDFULNESS, CONNECTION, COMMUNITY, HEALTH AND COMMITMENT



SOCIAL
INJUSTICE

SOCIAL
ENTREPRENEURSHIP

YOGA
MEDITATION
MINDFULNESS

MENTAL
HEALTH

HLF was established through social entrepreneurship addressing the need for mental health services in underserved communities in Baltimore. Our socio-emotional behavioral curriculum is threaded with experiences that encourage youth and young adults to develop their inner lives through yoga, mindfulness, conflict resolution, teamwork, restorative practices, self-care, and to appreciate the value of learning, community, and stewardship of the environment.

The Holistic Life Foundation's drive is to provide underprivileged youth with an opportunity at achieving optimal success and to create a path for a healthy sustainable life. We achieve this by providing trauma-informed care, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) techniques, yoga, and facilitate self-care exercises in regulating emotions. Additionally, our programs promote how to be in the moment and find a sense of peace which helps reduce impulsive and indignant behaviors. This is critical as it leads students in a positive direction rather than down a deeply destructive path that would normally land them in a negative situation. We provide the tools necessary to reduce chronic and toxic levels of stress, anxiety, anger, impulsive behavior, Adverse Childhood Experiences or ACEs, depression, emotion dysregulation, posttraumatic stress, inability to focus, memory and learning issues.

Since its inception in 2001, HLF has facilitated yoga, mindfulness, and environmental-based programs for youth in schools, recreation centers, group homes, the Baltimore Juvenile Detention Center, adult programs in many different settings, including drug treatment centers, mental illness facilities, colleges, senior centers, schools, and wellness centers across the nation.

HLF FOUNDERS

ALI SMITH



Ali Smith was born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland. He is a graduate of the Friends School of Baltimore and the University of Maryland, College Park, where he received a BS in Environmental Science and Policy with a Biodiversity specialization. Ali started practicing contemplative techniques as a child, learning meditation from his father and attending the Kriya Yoga-based Divine Life Church of Absolute Oneness run by Swami Shankarananda. He deepened his practice as a young adult, learning yoga, meditation, mindfulness, and breathwork from his teacher and godfather, Will Joyner.

With almost 20 years of experience, Ali has taught yoga, mindfulness, and meditation internationally to a broad demographic spectrum that includes schools, retreat centers, wellness centers, mental crisis facilities, detention centers, drug treatment centers, the corporate setting, as well as private one-on-one sessions.

In 2001, he co-founded the Holistic Life Foundation, where he served as Executive Director, guiding the organization to employ over 50 people and serve communities worldwide. He is a published author, has written several curricula, and is a pioneer in the fields of yoga and mindfulness in education, as well as trauma-informed yoga and mindfulness, developing best practices that are used around the world. Ali has taught in seven countries on three continents.

His work has been featured on CBS News, CNN, NBC Nightly News, PBS, Oprah Magazine, and Forbes. Ali is also a co-host of the Look Again Podcast and Co-Owner of the Involution Group.

ATMAN SMITH



Atman Smith is one of the co-founders of the Holistic Life Foundation. Since 2001, he has been teaching yoga and mindfulness to a diverse population, including underserved and high-risk youth in Baltimore City Public Schools, drug treatment centers, wellness centers, and colleges. A native of Baltimore, Atman attended the University of Maryland, College Park, where he was a letter award winner for the university's men's basketball team. He graduated with a B.A. in Criminology and Criminal Justice.

Atman's work with the Holistic Life Foundation has been featured on NBC Nightly News' "Making a Difference," CNN, and CBS, as well as in O, The Oprah Magazine, The Washington Post, Upworthy, Mindful Magazine, Yoga Journal, Shambala Sun, and many other publications.

ANDRES GONZALÉZ



Andres Gonzalez is one of the co-founders of the Holistic Life Foundation. For twenty years, he has taught yoga to diverse populations throughout the world, including Baltimore City Public School students, drug treatment centers, mental crisis facilities, homeless shelters, wellness centers, colleges, private schools, and other various venues throughout the nation. He has partnered with the John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Health and Penn State's Prevention Research Center on a Stress and Relaxation Study and is a published author in the Journal of Children's Services.

Andres' work with the Holistic Life Foundation has been featured on NBC Nightly News' "Making a Difference," CNN, and CBS, as well as in O, The Oprah Magazine, The Washington Post, Upworthy, Mindful Magazine, Yoga Journal, Shambala Sun, and many other publications. He is a certified health coach through the Institute of Integrative Nutrition, maintains a B.S. in Marketing from the University of Maryland, College Park, and an MBA from the University of Maryland, University College.



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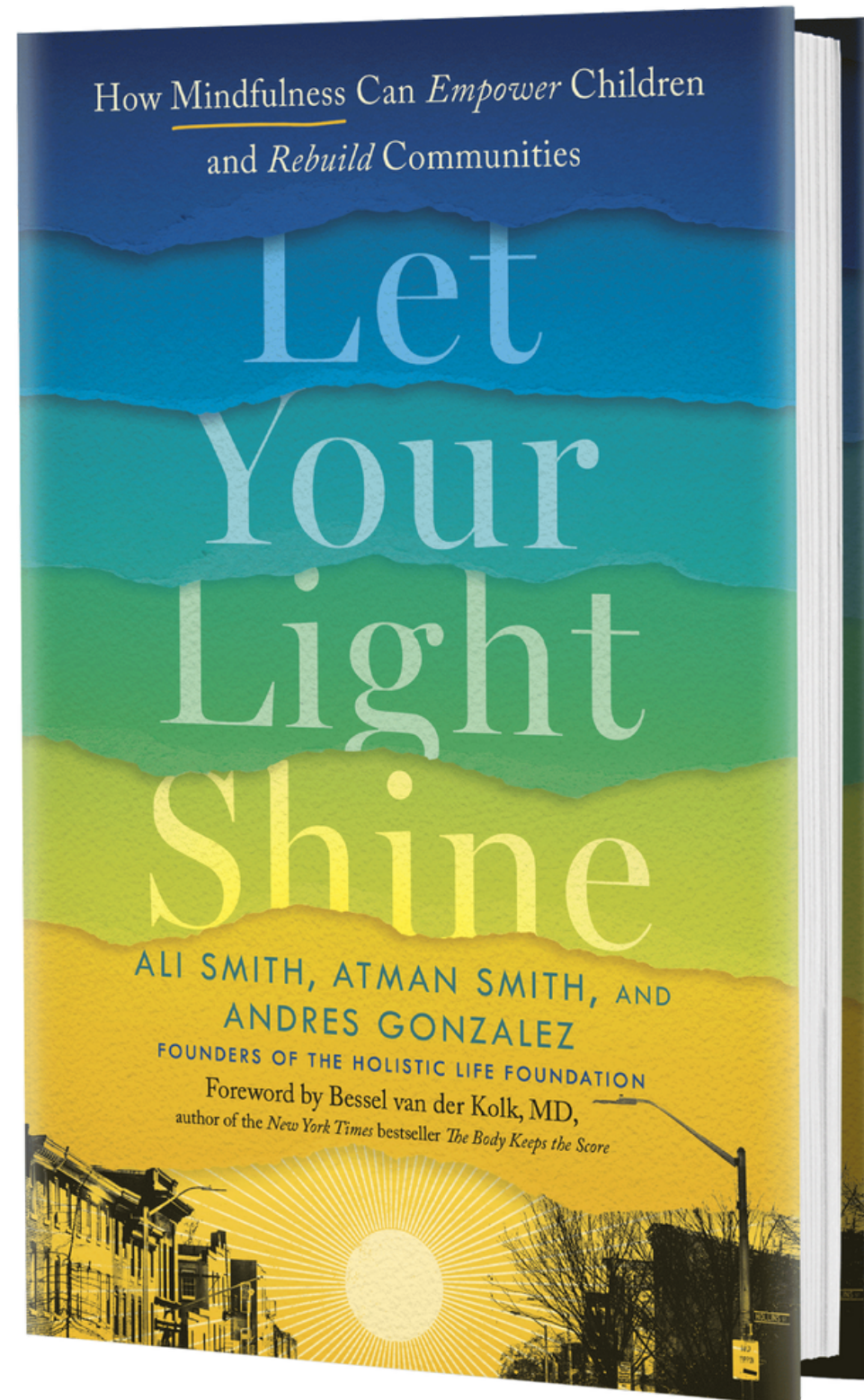
**OUR VISION IS TO CONTINUE CREATING
A GENERATION OF HEALTHY,
SUPPORTED, MINDFUL STUDENTS
WITH THE KNOWLEDGE, ACCESS, AND
SUPPORT TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN LIFE.**

THE HOLISTIC LIFE FOUNDATION

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PUBLICATIONS



Let Your Light Shine

Penguin Random House, 2022

This story of three men's work, assisting traumatized kids in one of America's most underserved cities, demonstrates how mindfulness tools can help children and communities not only survive but also thrive.

In this inspiring book, the founders of The Holistic Life Foundation, Ali Smith, Atman Smith, and Andres Gonzalez, describe how they have spent the past twenty years teaching yoga, meditation, and breathwork to thousands of at-risk kids in Baltimore schools. Their aim is to help them develop deep reserves of patience, empathy, resolve, and, when necessary, the righteous anger that drives profound systemic transformation. Their work has received wide national attention, and the schools that have participated in their programs have seen suspension rates plummet and graduation rates soar.

As young children, Ali and Atman discovered the power of mindfulness practices. These practices sustained them through the challenges of growing up in a neighborhood in Baltimore that was struggling with poverty and violence. Now, they serve the same community through The Holistic Life Foundation's mission, which is to empower kids to discover the same tranquility and radiance within themselves and to let it shine out to help change the world.

In this book, Ali, Atman, and Andres share hands-on mindfulness and meditation tools readers can teach kids to empower them to do this same work in their own communities. Let Your Light Shine is essential reading for parents, educators, activists, and anyone looking to make a difference in the lives of young people.



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**ONE IN SIX YOUTH AGED 6-17
EXPERIENCE A MENTAL HEALTH
DISORDER EACH YEAR**

THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE ON MENTAL HEALTH

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The impact on mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic has put an even greater emotional, financial, and physical burden on families, especially in areas densely populated with poverty, unemployment, and lack of healthcare. These are the areas where the pandemic has had the most detrimental impact, exacerbating existing inequities in health outcomes, general life expectancy, income inequality, and more.

Addressing the mental health of our youth and implementing changes in school policies is just the beginning of a long-term effort to shift power to BIPOC communities and tackle the root of the problem.

HLF has been recognized locally, nationally, and internationally for its unique approach to promoting youth well-being.

Our students come from disadvantaged neighborhoods with high levels of violence, unemployment, and poverty. Baltimore's crime rate is above the national average and the city has one of the highest murder rates in the United States, with 51 homicides per 100,000 residents, ranking fourth nationally. This stark reality is what Baltimore residents face every day.

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**50 PERCENT OF MENTAL ILLNESS
BEGINS BY AGE 14. OVER HALF, 53.1
PERCENT, OF ALL MENTAL ILLNESS
CASES ARE BLACK, AFRICAN
AMERICAN, OR MULTIRACIAL**

MENTAL HEALTH BY THE NUMBERS.” NAMI

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HLF PROGRAMS

**MINDFUL
MOMENT**

**HOLISTIC
ME**

**YOGA &
MINDFULNESS
CLASSES**

**TRAIN THE
TRAINER PROGRAM**

'HLF HAS SERVED MORE THAN
100,000+ YOUTH THROUGH
TRAUMA-INFORMED YOGA &
MINDFULNESS.'

**BRINGING ACADEMICS
AND THE MIND (BAM)**

**HOLISTIC
ROOTS**

**WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT**

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