

# THE PAPER TIGER SYNDROME

How to Liberate Yourself  
from the Illusion of Fear

Companion  
Workbook



Rebecca A. Ward

*Illustrations by Lea Androic*

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from the Illusion of Fear

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*Companion Workbook*

Rebecca A. Ward, LMFT, SEP, PCC

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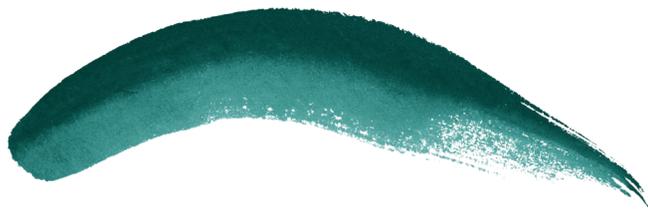
## DEFINITION

# paper tiger

[pa·per | \ 'pā-pər · ti·ger | \ 'tī-gər] **noun**

---

: something—or someone—that appears to be a threat,  
but in reality, is powerless.



“

*There is no greater illusion than fear.*

- Lao Tzu





“

*The medicine is already within the pain and suffering. You just have to look deeply and quietly. Then you realize it has been there the whole time.*

- Wisdom from the Native American oral tradition



## PREFACE

---

Sometimes the fear, stress, and uncertainty of life—your paper tigers—can feel overwhelming. They are not. To overcome them, you need only acquire the right tools. Having said that, I must acknowledge that this road is far from easy. Many people who begin this kind of healing journey do so because they've experienced trauma. In fact, I first began my journey after a series of intense traumas that culminated in a diagnosis that nearly ended my life early.

It's very common for people who face loss, hardship, and suffering to ask, "*Is this all there is? Is this what my life was meant to be? Will I ever feel myself again? Will I ever be at peace?*" Obviously, no single book can magically repair all your traumas. But the rituals and exercises revealed here will support the healing process in ways that would be inaccessible through traditional methods.

However, I must also offer a word of caution. If you're someone who's endured complex trauma and you're just beginning your healing journey, you may need additional support. In that case, this book may not be the appropriate starting place, unless you also have the assistance of a licensed therapist who is trained in a trauma modality. For those who've already begun a healing journey, working independently should enhance the progress you've already made.

If you're not sure which path is right for you, I suggest taking the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) survey, included here. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines adverse childhood experiences as, "potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (0-17 years) ...ACEs are linked to chronic health problems, mental illness, and substance misuse in adulthood. ACEs can also negatively impact education and job opportunities..."

The stressors of cumulative adversity have far-reaching effects that we're only just beginning to fully understand. According to the ACEs study, there are ten types of childhood trauma. Five are personal — physical abuse, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, physical neglect, and emotional neglect. The others relate to how a child experiences her interactions with different family members: a parent who is an alcoholic, a mother who is a victim of domestic violence, a family member in jail, a family member diagnosed with a mental illness, and the disappearance of a parent through divorce, death, or abandonment.

## PREFACE

To take the survey, read the following questions. For each question where you answer “yes,” give yourself one point. If you score three or higher, you may be at risk of experiencing long-term consequences from early abuse and/or neglect. Scores of three or higher have been linked to chronic disease in adulthood, social and emotional difficulties, depression, interpersonal violence and even suicide.

But getting a high ACE score is, by no means, a sentence to a life of misery. There’s always *plenty* of hope. With the right support, people with very high ACE scores can lead healthy, happy lives and even be a source of inspiration. I believe that the ability to thrive despite past traumas is an indication of your incredible resilience. That is certainly true for me—I was an ACE kid.

The following survey is meant to be a point of reference, rather than a diagnosis. But I hope it will be a helpful place to start for anyone who has questions or concerns in this area.

## ACE SURVEY ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

---

*Q: While you were growing up, during your first 18 years of life:*

**1. Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often...**

Swear at you, insult you, put you down or humiliate you?

or

Act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?

Yes     No    If yes, enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often...**

Push, grab, slap, or throw something at you?

or

Ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?

Yes     No    If yes, enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you ever...**

Touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way?

or

Attempt or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you?

Yes     No    If yes, enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Did you often or very often feel that ...**

No one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special?

or

Your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?

Yes     No    If yes, enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Did you often or very often feel that ...**

You didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you?

or

Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?

Yes     No    If yes, enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Were your parents ever separated or divorced?**

Yes     No    If yes, enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_

PREFACE

**7. Was your mother or stepmother:**

Often or very often pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at her?

or

Sometimes, often, or very often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard?

or

Ever repeatedly hit over at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?

Yes     No    If yes, enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_

**8. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic, or who used street drugs?**

Yes     No    If yes, enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_

**9. Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide?**

Yes     No    If yes, enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Did a household member go to prison?**

Yes     No    If yes, enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_

As you tally your score, remember that there are many additional factors, which determine how resilient an individual will be in the face of trauma, abuse, or neglect. If you choose to work with a trauma therapist in conjunction with reading this book, it can only improve your personal outcome. There are many skilled trauma practitioners available through several directories, including:

**Somatic Experiencing® International (SEI)**

[www.traumahealing.org](http://www.traumahealing.org)

**Sensorimotor Psychotherapy**

[www.sensorimotorpsychotherapy.org](http://www.sensorimotorpsychotherapy.org)

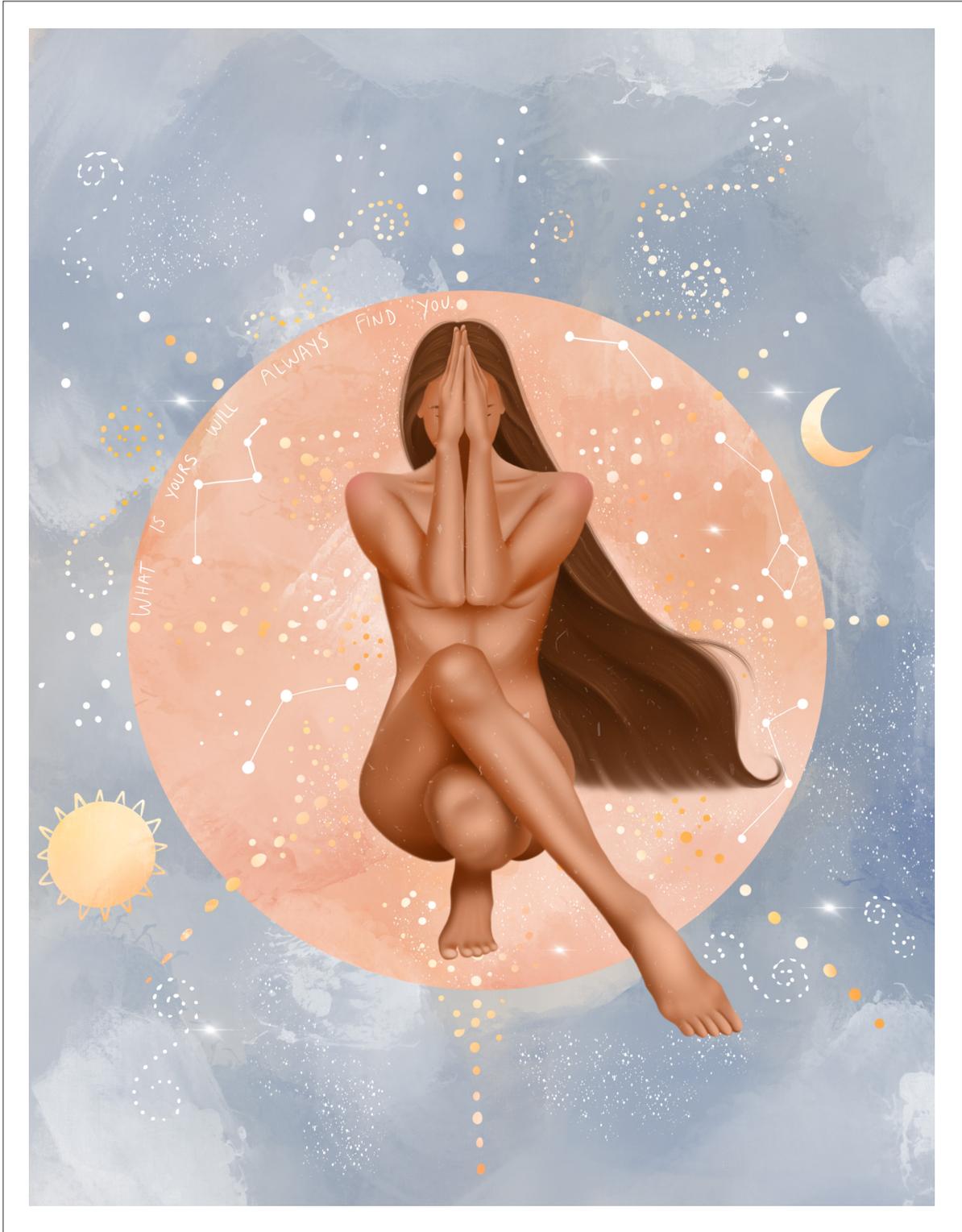
**Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)**

[www.emdr.com](http://www.emdr.com)

You might also check your local healthcare facilities for trauma support groups.



SET YOUR INTENTION





## SET YOUR INTENTION

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Before we begin this journey together, take a moment to write down what you hope to walk away with when you complete this book.

*My intention with this book is to walk away with*

(more peace, contentment, etc. and/or less stress, anxiety, etc.)

At the end of this journey, return here to see what's different.



## TIGERS

The paper tigers roar at noon;  
The sun is hot, the sun is high.  
They roar in chorus, not in tune,  
Their plaintive, savage hunting cry.

O, when you hear them, stop your ears  
And clench your lids and bite your  
tongue.  
The harmless paper tiger bears  
Strong fascination for the young.

His forest is the busy street;  
His dens the forum and the mart;  
He drinks no blood, he tastes no meat:  
He riddles and corrupts the heart.

But when the dusk begins to creep  
From tree to tree, from door to door,  
The jungle tiger wakes from sleep  
And utters his authentic roar.



TIGERS

ROAR

AT NOON

PAPER TIGERS



It bursts the night and shakes the stars  
Till one breaks blazing from the sky;  
Then listen! If to meet it soars  
Your heart's reverberating cry,

My child, then put aside your fear:  
Unbar the door and walk outside!  
The real tiger waits you there;  
His golden eyes shall be your guide.

And, should he spare you in his wrath,  
The world and all the worlds are yours;  
And should he leap the jungle path  
And clasp you with his bloody jaws,

Then say, as his divine embrace  
Destroys the mortal parts of you:  
I too am of that royal race  
Who do what we are born to do.

— A. D. Hope



“

*In response to threat and injury, animals, including humans, execute biologically based, non-conscious action patterns that prepare them to meet the threat and defend themselves.*

- Peter A. Levine



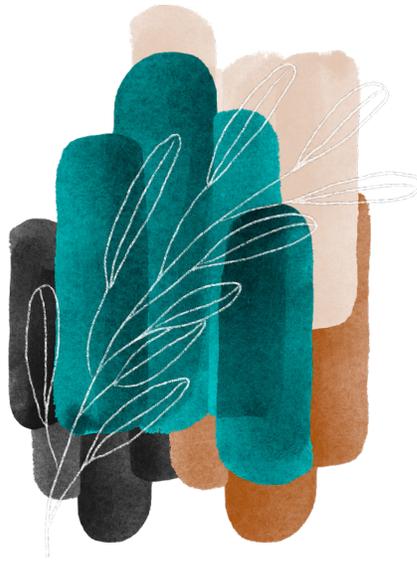
THERE ARE DEPTHS OF YOURSELF  
THAT ARE YET TO BE DISCOVERED.





# INTRODUCTION

The next two chapters provide a brief summary of  
Part One from the book.



## INTRODUCTION

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Fear hides in darkness, in the unknown, in the corners of the mind where the light of conscious awareness doesn't easily reach. It stalks with the patience and skill of a tiger in the wild. A real tiger has bold stripes that make it instantly recognizable to anyone who sees it. But the stripes also create perfect camouflage, allowing it to disappear into the sun-dappled tall grass where it can silently hunt. A tiger closing in on its prey can kill in an instant, which is why they've served as a symbol of incredible power and majesty—and fear—throughout human history.

Our ancestors lived in fear of being hunted by apex predators like the tiger. Their minds and bodies adapted to become aware of even the slightest change in environment, because a slow reaction could literally mean death. In the modern world, however, people don't generally face the same type of life-or-death situations on a daily basis. Yet, our bodies are still hardwired to react instantly to any perceived threat to our well-being.

Today, rather than having to fight off a saber-toothed tiger, you might find yourself triggered by a contentious meeting at work, a poor performance review or a fight with your spouse. These situations can inspire intense feelings of stress and anxiety. Your muscles become constricted. Breathing may become rapid and shallow, and your nerves can feel jittery. Your heart rate may increase or slow way down. The words you want to say are at the tip of your tongue, but you can't quite get them out. At this point,

## INTRODUCTION

you're just trying to stay the course, just trying to hold on.

Experiencing these symptoms (and a host of others) mean that you're having an acute stress response to a difficult situation. Acute stress responses are part of your body's natural physiological reaction to danger. However, these responses are only supposed to activate in the presence of real, physical threats to your safety. Everything else is a misfire, or what I refer to as a paper tiger.

A "paper tiger" is a term that refers to something (or someone) that appears to be powerful and menacing, but in reality, is weak and ineffectual. Paper tigers can't withstand any challenge to the illusion of their dominance. Most of the things that people fear are paper tigers. The illusion of danger breeds fear, which activates our primal survival strategies.

The only time you want your brain and body to activate a survival response—fight, flight or freeze—is when you're in real, physical danger. But when the nervous system misfires against a perceived threat, it creates unnecessary reactivity; we feel fear in areas of our lives where what we need is more access to our creativity, innovative thoughts, connection, and presence.

Recognizing that something or someone is a paper tiger brings you back to presence—a safe, regulated brain and body. This is where you have access to your higher-order thinking brain—the creativity, fearlessness, joy, and unconditional love that makes life worth living. This is where you find your connection to your authentic self, which I call your Original Blueprint®. Overcoming fear and stepping into your Original Blueprint® requires that you go inward, you're your brain and body are back in harmony again.

This *Companion Workbook* has the tools to help you do that. It is meant to compliment my book *The Paper Tiger Syndrome*, which is a guidebook on the journey into somatic healing and self-repair. The book demonstrates that the most direct way to overcome fear and trauma is to regulate your body's nervous system. It explains, in detail, how to regain control over your quality of life by consciously regulating your nervous system so you can freely live again. Based on the principles of several therapeutic modalities, *The Paper Tiger Syndrome* provides specific exercises and tools to help you walk the bridge from fear to safety to unconditional love.

But this process is action oriented; it's not about just reading words. That's why it's so important to use this *Companion Workbook* in conjunction with *The Paper Tiger Syndrome* book. The *Companion Workbook* will help you creatively process your healing in ways that the book, on its own, cannot do. These are practical, hands-on tools that will allow you to shift into your authentic self and away from the paper tigers that

## INTRODUCTION

hijack your mind and body. You'll learn how to integrate all that you are today—everything you've learned and experienced that has made you wiser and stronger—with the fearlessness and freedom of your Original Blueprint®.

Skip around. Explore. Liberate yourself from thinking that a book must be read cover-to-cover. Imagine yourself as an artist who is re-designing the life you want. Along the way, you are healing yourself and growing. This process puts you in the driver's seat. You are not held hostage by your past. You don't have to feel like what's happened to you up until this point will determine your future. You have more control, and you can change what no longer serves you.

Here's where you get to draw outside the lines of your life, reshape it so that it works for YOU. Creating something innovative and new is exciting work, which will enable you to see the potential for expansion.

Let's get started.





“

*“If you are distressed by anything external, the pain is not due to the thing itself, but to your estimate of it; and this you have the power to revoke at any moment.”*

- Marcus Aurelius







## THE PAPER TIGER SYNDROME

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Can you remember a time when you felt completely fearless, blissful, and alive? Do you recall when you had faith that every moment of your life was sacred, even the ones that caused the greatest suffering, when you knew, without a doubt, that the world was safe and that you were loved unconditionally? That sense of peace, that divine connection, is your natural state of being. It's the truth of who you are and your birthright. Yet, very few of us experience this kind of harmony as part of our everyday life.

Instead, the average human being exists in a state of flux, caught between an innate desire for love and connection, and the fear of the unknown. Fear—masked as stress, fatigue, anxiety, and overwhelm—seems to lurk around every corner. It stalks, like a wild tiger prowling the grasslands, looking for vulnerabilities and weaknesses to exploit. More often than people realize, fear influences key decisions that can have a far-reaching impact on their lives, their families, their communities, and the world.

In the absence of immediate physical danger, however, those survival responses are unwarranted. They're neurological "misfires" that wreak havoc on our mental, emotional, and physical well-being, all in an effort to keep us "safe."

When a person suffers from paper tiger syndrome, his or her nervous system and primitive brain are regularly misfiring. Critical decisions get made from the part of the brain that's saying, *What you're doing isn't safe! Take the safe bet. Or, Don't say anything. Keep this quiet. Don't rock the boat.* You can end up designing a whole life that

## THE PAPER TIGER SYNDROME

isn't yours just for the sake of trying to stay safe from things that aren't real. People make choices about who to vote for, who to marry, where to live or what to do for a living from a place of unconscious fear and the consequences can be significant.

To get a sense of how much of your life may be shaped by unacknowledged fear, **ask yourself these questions:**

Y N

- Do you ever get defensive when someone questions you at work or home?
- Do you have a pattern of abruptly ending relationships?
- Are you able to easily say you're sorry?
- Can you ask for what you need without hesitation?
- Do you ever get resentful of what you've done for others?
- Do you hesitate at all to have difficult conversations?
- Do you have a hard time saying "no"?
- Do you often ruminate or stress out about losing your job?
- Have you ever stayed in an unhappy relationship for too long?
- Do you worry about what would happen to you and your family if a recession hit?
- Is it troubling for you to see signs of aging in your body?
- Do you often find yourself attempting to please others?
- Have you ever ruminated about contracting a serious illness?
- Do you often avoid social settings because you find yourself anxious around people?
- Do you hesitate to take risks or make changes in your life?
- Do you avoid thinking about end-of-life issues (e.g., wills, trusts, bequeathing your belongings, and so on)?

## THE PAPER TIGER SYNDROME

Your heart rate may have gone up a little just reading this list of questions. It's a real-time example of your body experiencing a misfire—a paper tiger! And, if you are surprised by some of your answers to these questions, you're not alone. Most people feel unsafe in the world to some degree. That's what happens when you have a nervous system that tirelessly seeks out threats. It's primary function, fine-tuned over hundreds of thousands of years of human evolution, is to keep you alive. So, it doesn't matter if you're at a friend's house, sitting in traffic or hanging out down at the local bar—your threat antennas sense for danger first, before they settle. What that can feel like is a general uneasiness.

You may feel withdrawn in social settings that don't seem familiar, end a relationship to avoid rejection or stay in a job you don't like. You may be afraid to speak up at work or home. If you do speak up, you might be overly polite, attempting to please others with a forced smile or avoid having tough conversations. Sometimes, you choose the opposite through confrontation, bullying or intimidation. No matter what the survival response is, the imbalance signifies a body and mind that are deeply afraid of getting hurt.

But being connected with your authentic nature, on the other hand, frees you from the grip of your paper tigers, which create these illusions of fear. That renewed connection allows you to move through life with fluidity and creativity. A spacious heart, an open mind and a safe, well-regulated body become the rule, rather than an elusive exception. As your inner critic fades into the background, self-judgment is replaced with courage, contentment, and an expansive outlook on life. Even the physical pains that have ailed you may begin to disappear.

You have the power to release your paper tigers—to end the tension between possibility and pain that plays out in the minds of every person alive on this planet. You can experience life in a profoundly new and exciting way, transcending the emotional roller coaster that keeps people yearning and searching for ways to become attuned to themselves again.

Consciously reprogramming the nervous system is the most direct route to a coherent mind and a body that's present most of the time. When you rediscover that inner harmony, it doesn't matter if you're taking out the trash, scrubbing the toilet, arguing with your spouse, or having stressful conversations with the boss. Every moment takes on a deeper resonance. Even death and dying. Rather than being repelled by "negative" experiences, we find new ways to navigate through them with greater neutrality and curiosity. But those options only become available to us when our nervous system isn't misfiring.

Once you begin the process of learning to regulate your nervous system, you'll notice an immediate change in your well-being. Suddenly, you'll feel safe and spacious, resilient and with more capacity to dissolve stress, and to give and receive love. It may sound too good to be true, but time and again, I've seen people's lives completely change when they learn to do this work.



Your Original Blueprint<sup>®</sup>, is the purest form of the human expression of your soul. Tapping into its power is the key to living fiercely, without shame or regret.

In this *Companion Workbook*, you'll discover how to unlock the secret code that allows the brain and body to start functioning in harmony. With enough practice, you'll be able to release the illusion of fear that has shaped your perceptions thus far. You'll have the tools that you need to step boldly into your Original Blueprint<sup>®</sup>—the purest form of the human expression of your soul.

### The Other Side of The Paper Tiger Syndrome

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Your Original Blueprint<sup>®</sup> is the part of you that knows abundance is your natural state. It's the inner voice, which says, I am full. I am satiated. I am content. I am peaceful. I don't need anything or anyone else to feel complete. There's a richness inside of me that's not about what I have. It's about an embodiment of who I am. I'm not trapped by deficit thinking. I don't look at what isn't. I look at what is. I choose to be grateful for what I have, rather than dwelling on what I think I'm missing. I am in full acceptance and appreciation of whatever comes my way, and I will meet these moments with deep gratitude.

Embodying this state of being requires more than a change in mindset. It's about developing a body that feels fully alive and present. If you're really in your body, you're less likely to allow yourself to become depleted or sick. You're more likely to welcome things that support your physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Self-awareness enables you to personify the sacred plan that you created for your soul before you incarnated on this planet.

Through the eyes of your Original Blueprint<sup>®</sup>, you have the capacity to see that you are part of the same living, breathing organism as everyone else. You're able to experience real freedom because fear no longer drives everything you think and do. Most people would love to live this way. The problem is that few of us know how to get there. That primal tension between fear and love keeps people searching outside of

themselves for answers. It tends to shock people when they discover that the path to a fulfilling life has been with them all along.

**It is literally right inside of you.**

The most direct way to overcome fear is to regulate your *nervous system*, which then allows you to access the heightened mental, emotional, and spiritual state of your Original Blueprint®. **Your autonomic nervous system is the mechanism that you've been given to get there.**

*How is this possible? you may be wondering. What's the connection point?*

Simply put, the body—specifically the nervous system—is the means by which human beings process sensation. This includes both physical and emotional sensations. The nervous system recognizes safety, we experience physical health and well-being, along with emotional peace and connection. When recognizes threat, we experience physical dysregulation, pain, and *dis-ease* along with emotional upheaval or, in some cases, complete disconnection from our emotions. You can train your nervous system to hold onto its much-needed threat detection system but release it from the paper tigers that hold you back from fully experiencing a safe, loving, and connected world.

### **The Body is the Gateway to the Original Blueprint®**

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As you now know, the nervous system drives your automatic reactions toward fear. It's also the same mechanism that, when properly regulated, puts you back in touch with your Original Blueprint®. Imagine one path that diverges into two separate roads. The branch of the road that bends toward fear can only lead to further suffering. But the other branch, which bends toward mindfulness and self-regulation, leads you to the gateway of your Original Blueprint®. The idea of a physical path to spiritual liberation is wonderful because it demystifies the process, rather than presenting it as something elusive or nebulous. Of course, getting the brain engaged is part of it, but in this journey, you'll begin with the body.

Most people aren't conscious of the crucial role that the nervous system plays in our day-to-day functioning. I didn't become aware of it until I began studying the field of somatics (soma is the Greek word for "body"). Essentially, somatic therapy takes the view that the mind, emotions, and sensations within the body are all interconnected. When we rely heavily on our mind to the exclusion of our somatic intelligence we are locked out of the gateway. That split is then reinforced by the stressors of life, which cause us to feel unsafe in our bodies. But healing those fractures supports the embodiment of our authentic selves.

## THE PAPER TIGER SYNDROME

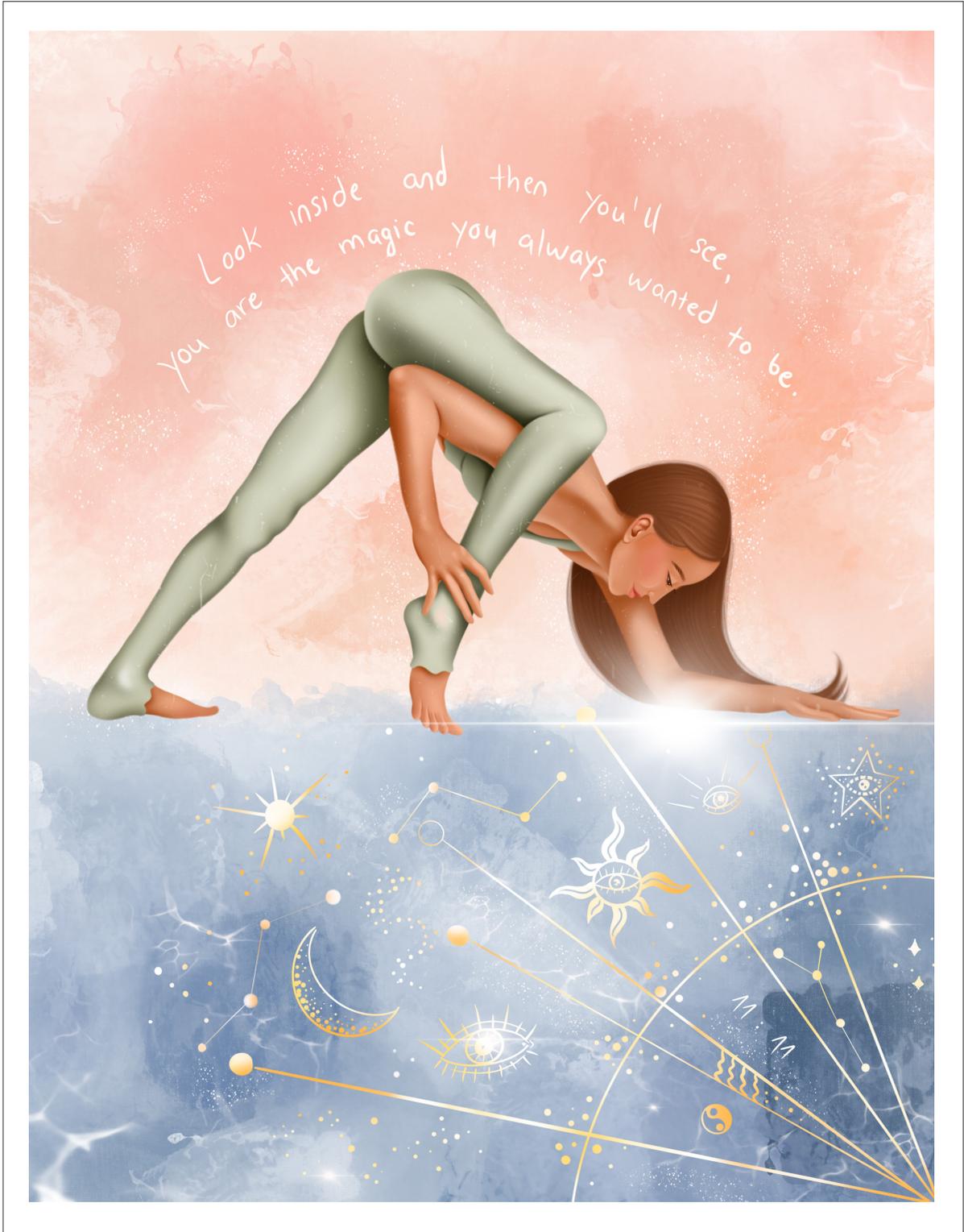
The autonomic nervous system is designed to sense any threats to our physical safety in an instant. Fortunately, the nervous system still works as efficiently as it did in primitive times when it sensed real danger lurking in the tall grasses. Today, if someone is coming at you with a gun or there's an avalanche or a devastating earthquake, your body will respond the same way it would have to an attacking saber-toothed tiger. And you want your body to do that. If your body lost the ability to react quickly to legitimate threats, you wouldn't last long in this world.

But most of the time, the modern world doesn't present the types of threats that we were hardwired to guard against from our primitive days. We don't have any saber-toothed tigers stalking us anymore. Today, we have well-equipped lives that offer most of us ample protection from the natural world. That's why repeated misfires in the nervous system create chronic, exaggerated, and prolonged stress responses in the body. Situations that have the capacity to create chronic stress happen daily. Even the technology we rely on, which supposedly exists to make our lives easier, can work against us by intensifying feelings of anxiety, depression, and loneliness more than ever before. For example, nearly two-thirds of all Americans are suffering from underlying health conditions often brought on by stress, poor diet, or lack of access to good healthcare. Elsewhere, these numbers are also on the rise. In war-torn parts of the world, the numbers surpass the rest of us.

All these issues legitimately affect an individual's quality of life. So, it makes sense that the body's reaction to the onslaught of perceived, and in some cases, real threats would have a detrimental effect on both our physical and mental well-being. But it's the repeated stress responses that locks people in a chronic state of stress, not the actual events.

Once you begin the process of regulating your nervous system, you'll notice an immediate change in your physical and emotional well-being. Suddenly, you'll feel safe and spacious, resilient and with more capacity to dissolve stress, and to give and receive love—all without feeling so threatened, anxious or overwhelmed. You'll have the means to become the embodiment of the person that you were intended to be when you first entered the world.

The exercises and rituals that follow are the means by which you integrate with your Original Blueprint® and tame your paper tigers. Dedication to this work will allow you to quiet the mind and free the body, so that you may experience the peace that already exists inside you. Then you'll be able to embrace all of life's lessons with ease and flourish, no matter what comes your way.



# EXERCISES AND RITUALS





*“Authenticity is a collection of choices that we have to make every day. It’s about the choice to show up and be real. The choice to be honest. The choice to let our true selves be seen.”*

- Brené Brown







## RECLAIMING BALANCE

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### Introduction: How to Practice

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In an ideal world, you'd learn from early childhood to embrace all that is wonderfully unique about yourself. You'd understand that you're so much more than a collection of your mistakes. You'd receive unconditional love—cherished and celebrated in your defeats as well as your successes. You would recognize that the world is filled with people who share the same desire to be seen and accepted, to love and be loved. You'd learn to regulate your mind and body, so that you could quickly return to your natural state of equilibrium when faced with difficult experiences, and revel in experiences that delight you. In short, you'd learn to tame your paper tigers so that you could flourish in the peace and safety of your Original Blueprint®. This would be the natural course of your evolution.

As it stands, however, very few of us got the training to make the mental and emotional journey into wholeness. But if you believe what I believe—that every experience we have in life happens by design—it becomes easier to recognize that there are no mistakes. Mistakes are ways that the soul grows. Embrace them as opportunities for deeper learning. Each time you overcome something, you're taming your fears and moving closer to your Original Blueprint®.

Here, you will learn more about embodying your Original Blueprint®: how to decode your fear anatomy; how to understand and repair the survival strategies you used in childhood; and how to rely on your support systems to increase your well-being and longevity.

## Exercises, Rituals, and Levels

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Throughout this *Companion Workbook*, you'll notice two words used repeatedly—*exercises* and *rituals*. **Exercises** are meant to be done **once** or **twice**. **Rituals**, on the other hand, are meant to be **repeated**. It's important to understand the difference, so that you can identify what requires repetition and what doesn't. You will also see that there are three distinct levels for each of the exercises or rituals, each noted with one to three icons: Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced.

Rituals are *repeatable practices* that help to change or rewire your brain's neural pathways and your body's neurophysiology. Rituals are essential for change—the more you repeat a ritual, the more it becomes your new way of being. For your muscle memory to integrate a ritual, you need to repeat it 300 times. If you repeat it 3,000 times, you embody the ritual. It becomes the new and natural way you live your life. That's when your fears, stressors and setbacks no longer impede your ability to thrive. You can then experience a surge in quality of life for yourself, your children, and grandchildren because you have fundamentally changed.

Here's a metaphor to help you envision what I'm talking about: Imagine a mountain with paths that wind up the mountainside, all the way to the peak. The pathways have been worn down over the course of many, many years. There are certain pathways that people travel regularly—habitually—until travelers no longer need maps and signs to point the way. Some parts of that path towards the mountain's peak are safe and healthy for you. But you'll also run into slippery areas that can cause injury, rendering the path unhealthy and unviable.

To change behaviors and beliefs, you need to create a new, healthier pathway up that mountain. At first, it will feel difficult and unfamiliar. You may have to clumsily hack your way through dense brush. You may need to repeat the hike up and down the new path finding and re-finding your footing many times before you create a well-worn trail that feels natural for you to take. Meanwhile, the old path becomes so overgrown with thick brush from disuse that you don't even recognize it anymore. Now the new pathway has become your way of being.

This metaphor explains what doctors and scientists call neuroplasticity—the brain's ability to integrate new beliefs and behaviors. Repeating the rituals you're going to learn will change your relationship with yourself, bringing you closer to your Original Blueprint® and liberating you from old, self-defeating habits. If you devote yourself to this work, you'll be living fearlessly, with great passion, openness, joy, and contentment.

## RECLAIMING BALANCE

There are no quick fixes on this journey. In the desire for instant gratification, people so often lose sight of the fact that anything worth having takes time and dedication to achieve. Your *devotion to a ritual creates a sacred pact* between you, your Original Blueprint®, and your Infinite Source. You must allow enough time for a ritual to become embodied. Trying to make drastic change in a short period of time won't work long term. It's more beneficial to devote yourself to **one** ritual that you think is the most important. Keep it simple, repeat it daily and you'll be successful. Whatever ritual you choose, be sure it engages the mind *and* body.

The exercises and rituals in this book are organized by skill level, so—depending on your level of personal experience in doing this kind of work—you may decide to jump around. In this workbook, you'll see these icons repeated, to represent what level of challenge the exercise or ritual is that you're taking on:

		1 icon = Beginning
		2 icons = Intermediate
		3 icons = Advanced

You can skip exercises that don't resonate with you. That's perfectly fine. If something doesn't feel helpful or isn't aligned with your views, skip it.

Also, please feel free to modify a practice if another variation of it works better for you. Use the parts that work. You'll know what's working because your body will tell you that what you're experiencing is *different* and pleasant or neutral. Feeling *something different* means you're on a new mountain path, garnering new information about what your body needs. "*What's Different*" is a question we'll be referring to many times and one you want to visit regularly throughout your journey. All answers are simply information for you to notice. We're simply looking for the awareness of *what's different*.

When you're doing an exercise or ritual, it's important to notice what's different in your body because the simple act of noticing the changes helps codify new neural pathways in your mind and new neurophysiology in your body. The act of noticing and then writing down your observations builds somatic awareness and intelligence. Increased somatic awareness strengthens the connection between your mind and body and is the key to embodiment. More awareness equals more regulation, more settling,

and more presence in your daily life. Better and more creative decisions will arise from here.

One word of advice—lean into the areas and practices that feel *slightly* uncomfortable. These are probably the techniques you most need to learn because they will stretch you. So, if the thought of doing an exercise makes you feel a bit uncomfortable or nervous, don't immediately dismiss it. Try it out and see if it's something that might help. Stop if it's too much, but quite often these are exactly the exercises that will help you open to yourself more.

How do you know if an exercise is too much?

When the body releases what no longer serves us, you may feel tingling, warmth or coolness. Sometimes shaking can occur. All of that is what we call *activation* and that's a good sign that you're on track! However, if the activation feels in any way overwhelming, **stop**. Go back to the exercises that didn't cause you to cross the overwhelm threshold. Everyone is different, *so take your time* moving through this work. Rushing the process or tolerating discomfort will slow your healing journey. More is not necessarily better. If the activation leaves your body by the next day and you find yourself feeling more in touch with your emotions and body awareness, those are indications that you're on track and can continue. Conversely, if in the following 48 hours, you are still experiencing discomfort, slow your journey down a bit. Take time for self care and return to an easier exercise or ritual at a later time.

Keep track of your experiences; specifically, take note of what's working best for you. At the end of the book, you'll reflect on what's most important for your long-term growth. Ask yourself: *What do I really care about? How do I plan to make it actionable?* If you can walk away with one ritual or commitment to carry forward, you'll be well on your way to being, as Gandhi once said, "the change you want to see in the world."

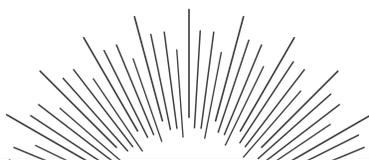
That ritual, commitment, intention, or purpose will be what you devote yourself to. I love the word devotion. It means having loyalty, faith, and an abiding love for something that's sacred. It means partnering under the guidance of something much bigger and more powerful than oneself. Your devotion to this work will pay off in extraordinary ways for you and others.

How will you know you're in communion with your Original Blueprint®? You'll be able to pressure-test traumatic memories, old fears, and wounds and find that they no longer have power over you. Your genuine nature will shine through—stronger than any fear you've felt in the past and you will feel more resilient. Embodying this truth will remind you that it's safe to be seen, to be known, and to be loved.

## RECLAIMING BALANCE

You'll no longer feel trapped or helpless in the face of life's challenges because balance, harmony and peace reside *within* you, always. Having full access to your mental and emotional reserves means that you won't dread the "negative" stuff in your life. Just keep your awareness on what feels different as you proceed, carefully noting the changes you're experiencing.

**NOTE:** If you have any physical limitations with any of the exercises or rituals (e.g., difficulty with nose breathing, sitting, or holding a certain posture), I celebrate you adjusting things to your comfort level. In fact, feeling comfortable in your body is very important; we don't want your body to feel forced into any of this work (there's enough of that in everyday life—sitting for hours, computer time, commuting in a car).



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*“The point is to be in a relationship with a higher power that can provide a container for your growth and healing. Embracing the infinite capacity of your Divine Source holds you in your suffering without judgment and provides the unconditional love you need to thrive.”*

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## RECLAIMING BALANCE



## REFLECTIONS

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### **WHAT'S CLEARER?**

Has reading this overview clarified your understanding of the difference between exercises and rituals, and why developing healthy rituals is crucial to changing old patterns? Has it shed any light on why past “self-improvement” efforts may not have succeeded? What do you feel encouraged to do differently now?

Write your thoughts here:

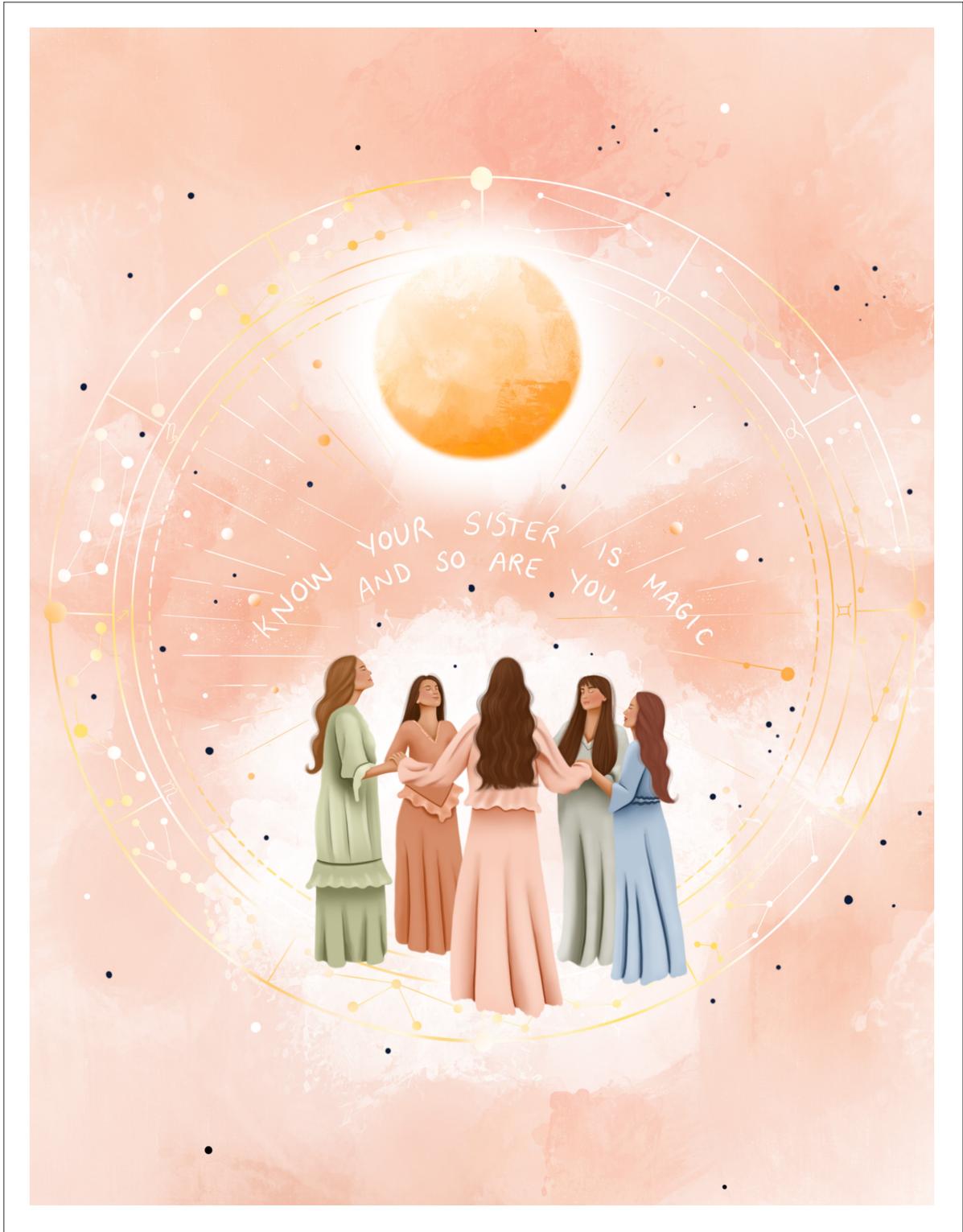


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*Who sees all beings in his own self, and his own self in all beings,  
loses all fear.*

- Isa Upanishad, Hindu Scripture







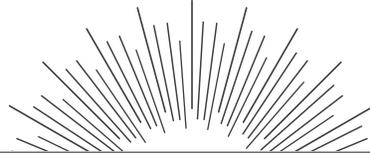
## LEANING ON YOUR VILLAGE MATTERS

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It's impossible for healing to happen in isolation. As we're able to now recognize, the desire for connection with others supports our personal growth ten-fold. We are souls who have come into bodies to give us the experience of *separateness*.

This loss of *oneness* for our souls only happens when the soul inhabits a body—it's our unique moment to know what it means to be human—to be separated. Separation is humankind's greatest assignment. It challenges us to overcome our fear of differences (us versus them) and be a full participant in our global village in positive ways. You cannot fully be in your Original Blueprint® without being a connected, compassionate, engaged human being who is actively—and beneficially—supporting our global village. In so doing, you are already purposeful.

There are four aspects that shape and condition human beings and create the internal ecosystem in which our core beliefs about the world form. These four aspects—*beliefs, community, lineage, and rituals*—establish the foundation of one's social-emotional worldview. In Part One of the book, we covered each of these aspects and explored why they're important parts of the journey back to your Original Blueprint®. Here in this chapter, you will explore how to use each aspect to move from where you are to where you want to be.

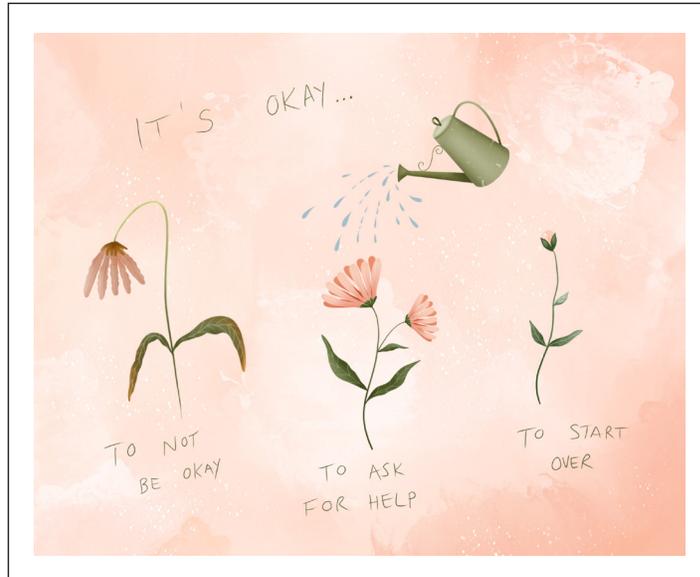


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*“The loss of oneness the soul experiences by inhabiting a body is unique to being human. It challenges you to learn how to overcome your perception of separateness while you’re here. You do that by overcoming your fear of differences (us versus them) and by being a full participant in our global village in beneficial ways.”*

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Exploring your perspectives will lay the groundwork for a deeper understanding of yourself, your desires, and your place in the world. Delving into these facets of your village also helps you understand how the *communal* intersects with the *individual*, and how the *personal* becomes a manifestation of the *universal*. Most importantly, making the effort to lay a durable foundation will allow the work that comes after this to be meaningful, rich, and transformative.



## Support Systems

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As you go through these exercises about your support systems here in *Take* as much time as you need to record the answers to each question, as well as all the questions and exercises that are to come. And don't settle for surface or automatic answers;

the more detailed your inventory, the more benefit you'll get from it. This is where we get to apply what you've learned so far, so don't short-change yourself!

## Personal Beliefs

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Whether or not you consider yourself to be a member of a religion, everyone has belief systems about how they imagine the world works. Your belief systems are one of the foundational pillars upon which you build your life. And since all aspects of life are interconnected, you can't separate your belief systems from the primary morals and values of the community into which you were born. This is true whether you've embraced the beliefs of your village or rebelled against them. Either way, it's necessary to explore in greater depth your beliefs and how they've shaped you.

Still, if you find any of the exercises unhelpful or not relevant to you, remember that it's all right to skip them. For example, the idea that one "should" have a religious or spiritual practice offends some people. If this describes you, then simply skip the questions that pertain to religion or spirituality. However, I do advise being open to an expanded idea of what spirituality means to you. Make it yours.

I often say that nature or the universe are examples of infinite capacity that exist all around us. If you don't believe in a God (or Gods), you may find it helpful to write about nature, the universe or some other representation of an Infinite Source that resonates with you. Ask yourself, *in what ways does this (or could this) relationship with something infinite support me?*

Why does it matter if you connect with something that you believe has infinite capacity? As I've stated before, human beings aren't naturally designed to be alone. We're here to help each other. We're pack animals that do better when we work together and support each other. Support is one of the most important aspects of community. Too much isolation damages the spirit. But having the courage to lean on the people who care about you is what community is all about. The same principle holds true for your relationship with your Infinite Source—stay in relationship with it and you'll find it will fortify you for a lifetime.

From the time I was very young, I felt a sense that there was something bigger than me out there. There was more to life than just what I could see on this earth. My family and village never dictated that I follow one strict, religious path. My spiritual range was eclectic. My mother raised me in the Jewish faith. But my father wasn't Jewish; he was a secular Christian, so this exposed me and my sister to Christianity, too.

As an adult, I've exposed myself to experiences with Islam, Buddhism and Sufism.

## LEANING ON YOUR VILLAGE MATTERS

I've attended just about every religious service out there. Later, I found comfort and belonging in support groups and 12-step programs for people whose family members were addicts. All these experiences have shaped my own unique set of beliefs.

As I grew older, I found that I also gained peace and connectedness from being in nature. My mother took my sister and me out into nature just about every weekend during our teen years. We would hike up in the mountains all the time and camp in the forests. We were blessed to be born into a family that respected and nurtured our desire for a deep connection to (what I call) the Divine—something that had an infinite capacity to hold me through life.

I felt supported by all of it. My household didn't assign labels, judgments, or assumptions about organized religion. I didn't grow up in a community that believed in proselytizing. In fact, because of the Jewish people's history of forced conversions, proselytizing is antithetical to the religion. I learned that beliefs are sacred, individual, and personal. (I am sharing my own views on beliefs with you because I want you to know that I am in no way attempting to sway your beliefs—they are a very personal choice.)

This ethos shaped who I am today. I have a daily gratitude practice. Each night, I engage in this practice of appreciation, which keeps me grounded and connected to my Infinite Source. Like any relationship, I've cultivated and nurtured the unique connection that I have now with my Divine Source, which has helped me get through everything big and small and to delight in every moment of my life, whether I've felt afraid or fully present.

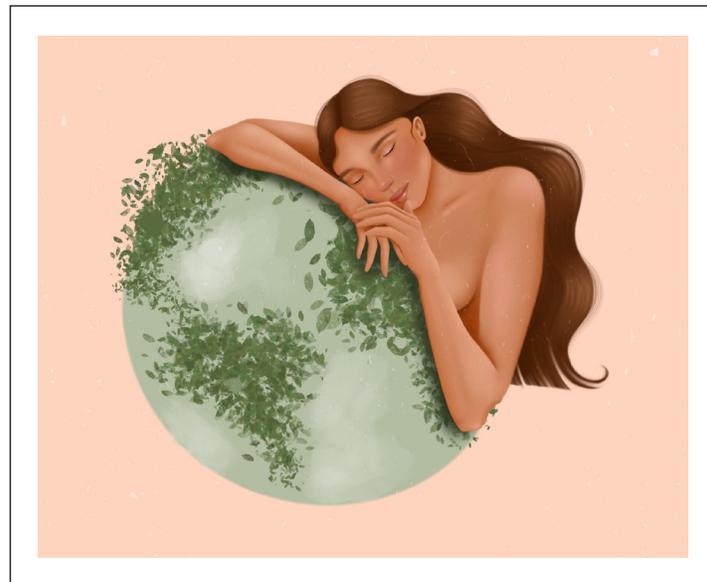
Over the years, I have deepened this relationship so much that the changing circumstances of life no longer hold much fear for me; I trust that whatever happens in the world, I'll be fine. Even when things are completely out of my control, the outcome isn't so important to me anymore. I am at peace. I am content inside and savor every moment like a warm cup of yummy tea. I am grateful for what I have for as long as I have it. Spirituality for me has been my saving grace.

Sometimes people wrestle with spirituality. They may be going through a dark night of the soul. Or maybe don't really have faith in a higher power. Sometimes people grow up in proselytizing communities where they're taught to believe that "it's our way or you're doomed." In those instances, the idea of believing in something larger than yourself can become scary or unpalatable rather than supportive. But, in this book, we're talking about how to overcome fear. And any religion that attempts to keep you in fear is not in service of a higher, infinite power. Fear is a cheap marketing tool to keep you in line. Fear is *not* the way any Infinite Source wants us to feel. We're here to discover love for all that is in us and around us.

## LEANING ON YOUR VILLAGE MATTERS

A spiritual practice steeped in *your* truth will impart an abiding faith, along with the understanding that an infinite capacity is holding you all the time. Your focus is simply to cultivate and deepen a relationship with that higher being, however you wish to define it. For our work, it doesn't matter what you call it. If you call it nature, great. If you call it science or the Universe, great. If it's God, great. This isn't the place to get caught up in the "rights" and "wrongs" of religiosity.

The important thing to remember is that we're not alone. We're never alone. Any thought to the contrary is an illusion. Look no further than the gravity holding you right now to know that you are being held by something much bigger than you. The more that you cultivate a relationship with something outside of yourself, something that's bigger, grander and has the capacity to hold you, the more you're going to feel a sense of safety and contentment. You'll feel more open and spacious. Your mind expands, while simultaneously being calm and settled. That's what we're talking about—living with the feeling that, *No matter what, I am loved. I am enough. I am fearless!*



### **Beginning Level Exercise: Belief Systems**

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In this exercise, I invite you to write about your relationship with something in your life that has infinite capacity—however you define that (nature, higher power, science, Universe, Infinite One, Creator, God, Divine, Jesus, Vishnu, Shiva, Source, Buddha, Allah, Adonai, Yahweh, etc.). All relationships desire to be tended to regularly. Your relationship with your Source is no different.

## LEANING ON YOUR VILLAGE MATTERS

### Ask yourself:

What ways does this/these relationship(s) support you?

How do you regularly stay connected to this relationship?

How do you lean on this relationship when things are challenging?

How do you show appreciation for this relationship when you are flourishing?

Is there anything you would like to do differently to cultivate more from this relationship?

## LEANING ON YOUR VILLAGE MATTERS



### **Beginning Level Exercise: Community**

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The quality of your connections is far more important than the quantity. You can have a million followers on social media and feel completely isolated. So, if you have a small community or a small group of people who you feel are truly supportive in your life, great! If you have at least one other person you feel intimately connected to, you face much less risk of experiencing the negative health effects of isolation. That one person could be your therapist. It may be your doctor. It can be a co-worker or a neighbor. It can also be a pet. It can be anybody who you feel is truly there for you, who you can call on when you need someone. Think about who this is for you.

Take an inventory—with as much specificity as possible—of who already supports you.

#### **Answer these questions for yourself:**

Who are your sources of inspiration? Reflect on any family members, surrogate family, friends, leaders (alive or not) and groups that you look to for inspiration and/or support.

## LEANING ON YOUR VILLAGE MATTERS

Why is this person (or persons) so important to you?

What is it like to feel fully seen, acknowledged, and accepted for who you are?

What is it like to be that person for someone else?

Again, if you can't think of anyone specific that you feel intimately connected to, ask yourself who you might like to invite into your inner circle. Do you feel comfortable (or at least willing) to initiate a deeper connection with that person?

Continue the list you've already begun to assemble by naming those people in your life who are present (or here in spirit) who support you completely.

**Answer these questions for yourself:**

Write a few sentences or a paragraph detailing what you appreciate about them.

Why are you most grateful for them?

## LEANING ON YOUR VILLAGE MATTERS

In what ways do you express your gratitude for their support?

Have you told them lately how important they are to you?

Remember, these people can be anyone in your life whose presence provides you with strength and comfort (family, ancestors, friends, coworkers, neighbors, pets, social groups, support groups, exercise groups). And if you can't think of someone you feel close and connected to, write about ways that you can work on establishing one or two new, supportive relationships in your life.



### Intermediate Level Exercise: Lineage

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When talking about lineage and community, it's important to look at this line of inquiry from multiple vantage points. It's not straightforward. First, think about friends, family, community members, ancestors, co-workers, and the like.

**Answer these questions for yourself:**

Write a list of people who are part of your family line, as far back as you can remember, particularly the people who've had a direct impact on your life.

Add to this list the people from your community who you interact with on a regular or semi-regular basis. Who are the people you know and love, but with whom you don't speak very often? There may be people on the list with whom you want to form a stronger connection. Put a mark next to those names. Write out some ideas for deepening those connections:

## LEANING ON YOUR VILLAGE MATTERS

For some people, making a list like this can be difficult. Issues such as estrangement or abandonment are more common in families than people realize. Or a person may be adopted and have little or no information about their biological family; in this case, list your chosen family. And, for others, communities of people have lost their cultural origins altogether.

For example, there are millions of people of color in the United States whose ancestors were enslaved; there are indigenous people across the globe who've lost their traditions after centuries of destruction and annihilation. They live with the reality that they may never know all the names of their direct ancestors.

The examples of marginalized people are endless. For many they still can feel intergenerational pain on a deeply personal level. These are conundrums that regularly arise when we talk about the importance of lineage. So, it's important to be sensitive to the fact some of us don't know basic information about our ancestral line.

If any of these or other examples apply to you or someone you love, I want to further clarify what I mean when I refer to the notion of lineage. In these instances, I have people begin this exercise by invoking their lineage as *people, those who are named and unnamed, known and unknown, who are part of your ancestral line. Even when you cannot specifically identify them, they are still part of you. They are in your DNA. They're in every cellular structure of your body. You are the result of the love of thousands of people who've walked this earth before you.*

Their power, wisdom, intelligence, strength, and beauty live inside you, whether you've experienced a personal connection to them or not. When you look in the mirror and you see your stunning face looking back at you, that's your lineage. You are, in fact, millions of years old! Lineage can be more about how you feel than what you know. This is the place to begin exploring all of that.

### **Answer these questions for yourself:**

What aspects of your lineage delight you and give you a sense of pride?

## LEANING ON YOUR VILLAGE MATTERS

What do you know about the people who came before you?

What things have left you wondering, perhaps for many years?

What do you already embody from your lineage?

Are you powerful? Are you kind? Are you confident? Are you beautiful? Here's a chance to explore how all of that history gets expressed every day, through you and around you.

**Answer these questions for yourself:**

What parts of your lineage are most alive in you and around you in your everyday life?

Who are the people in your community who you trust the most?

Who's the honest person in your life who gives you genuine feedback?

## LEANING ON YOUR VILLAGE MATTERS

Who do you trust to give you insight when you feel afraid or confused?

Who will listen to you talk about your revelations and stumbling blocks?

Who do you lean on, who supports you and has your back no matter what troubles you face? Is it one person or do you have more than one?

If you can't think of specific individuals in your life who serve these functions, list some people that you'd like to get closer to. With whom would you like to develop a deeper bond? How could you initiate that connection?

Let's now look at the things that may be frightening or scary about your lineage. I invite you to be radically honest with yourself about the parts of your lineage that maybe aren't so flattering. Every lineage has a history of atrocious actions and it's important to acknowledge and forgive ourselves—*and each other*—for it. Shame holds no place in our Original Blueprint®. We are working to create a holistic and realistic view of who we are—not a fantastical version of ourselves that denies the ugliness and hardship that sometimes happens in life.

## LEANING ON YOUR VILLAGE MATTERS

### Answer these questions for yourself:

What parts of my family's lineage have I tried to deny or overlook?

What aspects of my lineage are painful or evoke shame?

Are there things about my family (or specific people in the family) that I feel afraid to face?

Now that I've looked at it, how can I take action in the world to pay it forward in some way—and release the fear, shame, denial and pain or the bypassing that I often do in an attempt to rid myself of that pain? (If this is a big one for you, flag this one so you can continue to work on it in the later chapter, *Mobilizing Your Original Blueprint*<sup>®</sup>, when you explore your legacy).

Before you continue, check in with yourself and see if there are any feelings of overwhelm in your body. If you notice a tightness in your chest, shallower breathing, or some agitation, do this exercise before proceeding:

Stand up, bend your head and torso forward so that the upper half of your body is at a 90 degree angle. Let your arms and shoulders go fully limp. Now, shake the upper half of your body like a ragdoll, moving down toward your feet and back up to a standing posture. Repeat this 3-5 times. Then come back to a resting state. I call this the *Ragdoll* and it's how all animals shake off activation after a traumatic encounter. This ritual is one of my personal favorites to release stress or overwhelm. See if you can

notice anything different in your body, then continue.



### Intermediate Level Exercise: Existing Rituals

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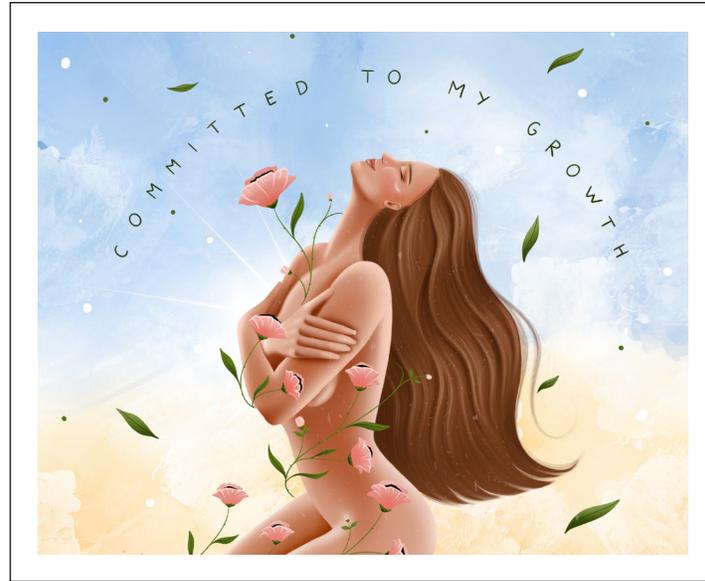
A ritual is anything that you can repeat, that engages all of you and feeds your soul. Rituals help keep you grounded in a commitment to something larger than yourself. Prayer, meditation, exercise, cooking, gardening, drawing, painting, knitting, playing an instrument—anything that helps fortify your mind and body you can use as a ritual for healing and self-regulation. Having previously covered the crucial nature of rituals, it's fair to say that your ability to sustain a healthy ritual will determine the level of success you have in this work. Once you start (or continue) this long love affair with something you fully devote yourself to, it's hard to imagine life without it.

Rituals are about cultivating more ways to *regularly* connect to something outside of yourself, too. Devotion to a ritual makes people more self-reflective and embodied. The more you're devoted to one ritual, the more you get good at it, the more that it becomes your new way. That's why we don't want to take on more than a couple of new rituals at one time. When your focus is split in too many directions, you can't get the full benefit of any one thing.

List the rituals you have in place that sustain you. How often do you repeat your rituals? What do the rituals mean to you (prayer, meditation, restorative yoga, hiking, walking, cooking, gardening, drawing, painting, knitting, playing an instrument, etc.). Remember that rituals are practices that you need to repeat to embody them.

If you've seen the documentary film, *Jiro Dreams of Sushi*, you know that the film tells an inspiring story of revered sushi chef Jiro Ono who strives for perfection in his work while his eldest son fiercely attempts to live up to his father's legacy. Japan's centuries-old tradition of ritual and the repetition of practice plays out in the backdrop of this film. To become really good at something, we must devote ourselves—like Jiro's love of sushi—to being in a long apprenticeship and love affair with it.

## LEANING ON YOUR VILLAGE MATTERS



### Commitment to Practice

Jean-Paul Sartre once wrote, “Commitment is an act, not a word.” When you commit to something, the act of fulfilling that commitment requires being true to yourself, even in the face of great adversity. It requires focused intention and a clear vision for what you want to achieve or experience. Commitment requires that you clearly define what is most important to you and then find the motivation to stay the course until you attain it (which may be brief or for a lifetime and then some!).

Looking back at the aspects of your village that we’ve examined in this chapter, ask yourself:

Is there someone or something you want to commit (or re-commit) yourself to?

Of course, you don’t have to if it doesn’t feel relevant at this moment. But this is a chance to reflect on whether you think there’s a way to go deeper into your healing work. Pay attention to your degree of ambition. If you’ve got enough right now, you don’t need to commit to something else. Continue with what you have. It’s important that you’re successful with whatever you’re doing, rather than getting disappointed

## LEANING ON YOUR VILLAGE MATTERS

because you've taken on too much. The key to success is to keep it simple. Make sure that whatever you choose for your commitment, it engages all of you—mind, spirit, and body.

### **Answer this question for yourself:**

Name one relationship and/or ritual you'd like to start this year and your commitment (or re-commitment) to deepen it.

### **Complete this sentence:**

I commit to [relationship or ritual] that I will [action and frequency] so that [outcome you're seeking].

*Here's an example:*

I commit to [my wife] that I will [organize date night] [every week] so that [we feel more connected to each other].

Exactly how do you intend to hold yourself accountable and who can support you with honoring your commitment?

You can find this Commitment to Practice Worksheet and other worksheets, links to video and audio demos, and other helpful materials at [IrisInstitute.com](http://IrisInstitute.com).

## LEANING ON YOUR VILLAGE MATTERS



### REFLECTIONS

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## WHAT'S CLEARER?

After reading this chapter, what's clearer to you that you want to be sure and remember? Write your thoughts down here or in your personal journal:

Write your thoughts here:



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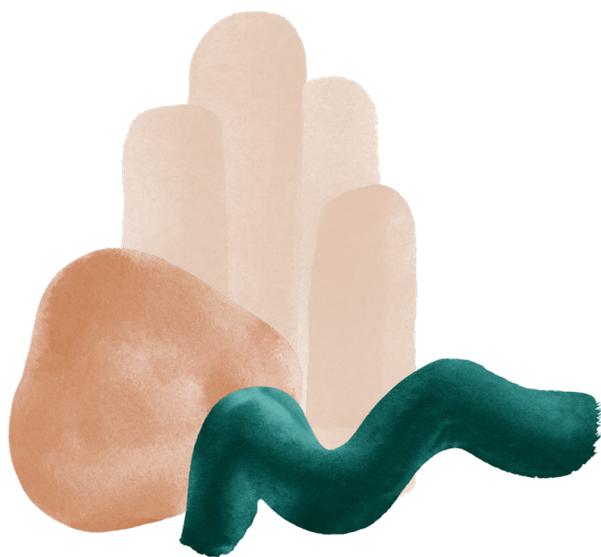
*Awareness is like the sun. When it shines on things, they are transformed.*

- Eckhart Tolle



I WILL GET THERE  
BUT RIGHT NOW I AM HERE  
AND HERE IS WONDERFUL





## WHEN MIND MEETS BODY AND FALLS IN LOVE

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My wish for you is that if nothing else arises from reading this book, you will gain a deeper sense of yourself just from this chapter alone. If that happens, then I believe you will have the essential support you need to be far more present in your life, less fear-driven and much more content in yourself than before you began this journey with me. *Body awareness—specifically the ritual of interoception—is the key to self-regulation.*

Where do you notice the sensation of hunger? What internal sensations tell you when you're tired and need sleep? Reflect on the last time you felt joyful or grateful. Where, exactly, did the sensation of these emotions reside in your body? What about anxiety, anger, or grief? Where do these reside in you?

Emotions are felt in the body. We can *think* about an emotion but that's quite different than *feeling the sensation* of the emotion. As we've discussed, somatic awareness is the ability to tune into our bodies at any given time and recognize what's going on inside ourselves. It's the recognition that our minds and bodies must live as one functioning unit, if we want to experience a healthy, well-rounded life. That symbiotic relationship is the most elemental building block of embodiment and the Original Blueprint®.

Human beings instinctively have this connection between mind and body, but we pay such little attention to it in our modern world that we largely have lost the pro-

found meaning of that connection, especially in the West. And because the sensation of our emotions resides in the body, having a well-developed sense of body awareness increases our emotional intelligence, too. Emotional intelligence is defined as “the ability to identify and name one’s own emotions; the ability to harness those emotions and apply them to tasks such as thinking and problem solving; and the ability to manage emotions, which includes both regulating one’s own emotions when necessary and helping others do the same.”

It’s time to begin simple rituals that will show you *how* to cultivate and maintain self-regulation and all the benefits that come with it. So, whether you get it right away or spend months developing these skills, it’s worth taking the time to understand and, it is my hope for you, to master the techniques outlined here. When you do, you’ll have the ability to live more fearlessly and with greater presence with what is...regardless of the circumstances.

## Mind-Body Match Up

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The rituals that you will learn in this chapter will teach you to identify and release activation (again, activation is when you experience those heightened physical sensations that keep you on high alert). These rituals will allow you more access to regulate your nervous system and manage your emotions. As you know, when people lack strong body awareness and a regulated nervous system, they can develop maladaptive coping mechanisms to deal with the painful ups and downs of life (e.g., self-medication to numb, escape, deny). But well-developed, body-oriented awareness permits us to notice stress, anxiety, and tension much faster and deal with the root causes, rather than internalizing the distressing symptoms.

The first step is to be able to ground yourself with the world around you. That means you have somatic awareness of the immediate contact the body has with the outside world. Another word for this is *proprioception*. Proprioception is knowing instinctively where a light switch is in a darkened room or type on a keyboard without looking at every key. Human beings also have vestibular senses—mechanisms in our inner ear—which control balance and head movement. You can use all your senses to become keen observers of the world around you and your place in it.

### Beginning Level Ritual: Proprioception Warmup

---

Please be sure that you’re seated in a comfortable position now (adjust if you

## WHEN MIND MEETS BODY AND FALLS IN LOVE

need to). If you can, close your eyes, and breathe naturally (if closing your eyes causes them to flutter, open them slightly and cast your gaze downward). See if you can notice contact between your body and the support (chair or floor) behind you and beneath you. Locate your feet and feel the contact with what's beneath them (socks, soles of the shoes, layers of material, all the way down to the earth's surface). Now see if you can notice the gravitational pull between your body and the earth. What's it like for you to notice any or all this support around you? Now, jot down your experience here or make a mental note of what it's like to notice your surroundings:

What's different for you now, if anything, than what you experienced before this practice? Do you find yourself calmer or more settled? Sometimes simply noticing gravity's pull to keep us supported can help us settle.

### **Beginning Level Ritual: Grounding**

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Grounding is a ritual that connects your spiritual and physical self to the earth. It will steady you and create energetic balance, which allows you to connect more authentically with the mind and body.

Try it. Begin by relaxing the places in your body that hold tension—check your shoulders and slowly roll them. Check your neck and slowly roll it. Check your jaw by stretching your mouth wide open, then relaxing the jaw back into itself with the top and bottom teeth slightly separated. With your mouth more relaxed, soften your tongue and rest it on the lower palette of your mouth. These adjustments will put you more in touch with your body for the grounding work (and all the other rituals and exercises you'll be learning).

## WHEN MIND MEETS BODY AND FALLS IN LOVE

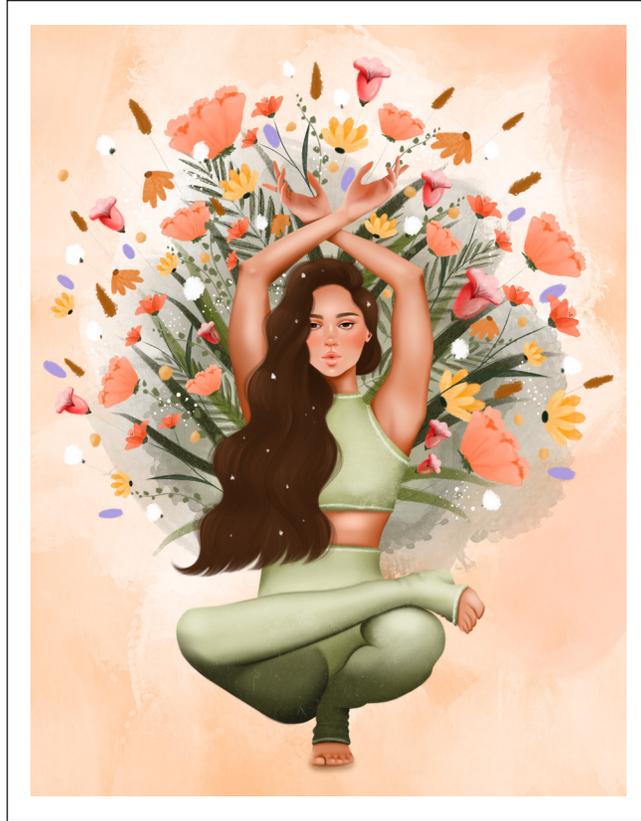
Bring your attention to your breathing and take a long, slow, deep inhalation through your nose. Hold it for three seconds, or a little longer if you can do so with ease. Then exhale a nice, long exhalation through your mouth. Repeat this *very slowly*. Nice, long, deep—but effortless—breath...in through the nose, out through the mouth. Repeat this practice five times. This ritual can be done throughout your day to remain present in your body. You can use this ritual as your transition practice—between meetings, before and after work, and so on.

Grounding is a basic—but essential—practice to help you deepen your body awareness and learn more about how to self-regulate. If you find that you don't notice any sensation below your neck when you do this ritual, I recommend staying with grounding by pausing here and practicing this exercise until you notice a sensation (heartbeat, temperatures in your chest, rise and fall of the chest during breathing, sit bones supporting you, feet making contact with the ground, etc.).

### **Answer these questions for yourself:**

Before this ritual, my body's experience was...

After this ritual, my body is more/less...



 **Beginning Level Ritual: Engaging the Five Senses**

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The next ritual serves as a bridge between the outside world (proprioception) and the internal world (interoception). Please note that we'll get into more deeply defining and working with interoception after this transition exercise but for now, know that interoception is awareness of your inner experience. Each ritual below engages one of your five senses. Slowly practice each one and notice the connection between the outer world of the sense you're in and how it connects you inside:

- Connect with *smell* by using aromatherapy, incense, fruit, fresh air, etc.
- Connect with *touch* by moving the palms of your hands down your legs, then back up again.
- Connect with *sound* through calming music, chimes, etc.
- Connect with *sight* by appreciating beauty in the world.
- Connect with *taste* by slowly eating something delicious.

Slowly repeat each of these rituals for three minutes until all your senses are available to you.



## REFLECTIONS

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### WHAT'S DIFFERENT?



#### Beginning/Intermediate Level Somatic Dimensions Noticing Inner Experience

*Refer to the examples below to describe your inner experience  
(aka, interoception) or add your own:*

Anxious	Grounded	Relaxed
Breathy	Heart Beating	Settled
Buzzy	Warmer	Slower
Calmer	Overwhelmed	Stressed
Cooler	Pulsing	Tingling

#### Answer These Questions For Yourself:

Before this ritual, my body's experience was...	After this ritual, my body is more/less...

## Understanding the Most Essential Ritual: Interoception

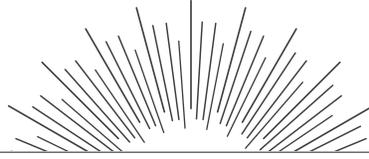
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The most *essential work* you'll learn in this book is embodying the concept of *interoception*. Interoception is the mind's ability to notice what's happening *inside* the body. This engages your brain's medial prefrontal cortex (known as the "third eye" in eastern philosophy)—the observing part of our brain. Over time, rituals that support interoception will dissipate stress and anxiety, so long as our attention is down in our body (and not in our thoughts). This takes repetition and practice.

In this chapter, you'll learn to first notice sensation in your body and then expand into other dimensions of awareness and imagination (e.g., images, colors, shapes, emotions, and varying weights/densities). As I (and others) like to define it: **interoception is the mind falling in love with the body**. Moreover, I believe that once you are highly proficient at it, *interoception offers you a deeper connection with your soul and the relationship you have with your Infinite Source*. When the two are in communion, their relationship is essential to feeling safe and living fearlessly. *If you go no further in this book than mastering interoception, you will have the essential ritual you need to be far more present in your life!*

Our modern world has separated mind and body for so long that it's difficult for most people to even imagine the experience of their union. Interoception work is uncommon. Our culture mostly rewards our intellect. Even in mindfulness, the emphasis is often on releasing or observing our thoughts to stay grounded in the present moment. *What we're talking about with interoception is a quieting of the constant impulses of the mind and being in the silence of your soul, which resides in your body.*

Being masterful with interoception means we also learn to engage with the world around us more powerfully. For example, compelling and embodied speakers learn to speak from their bellies as opposed to their minds.



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*“Interoception is the mind falling in love with the body... it offers you a deeper connection with your soul and the sacred relationship you have with your Infinite Source... This relationship is essential to feeling safe and living fiercely.... If you go no further in this book than mastering interoception, you will have the essential ritual you need to be fully present in your life.”*

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As we touched on in the book's Chapter Two, when the nervous system is dysregulated (feeling unsafe), it goes into either hyper- or hypo-activation. Like the gas and breaks on a car, hyperactivation is the raising of your sympathetic charge beyond your optimal range—anxiety and other stress-related conditions happen here. We're pressing too hard on the gas pedal. Conversely, hypoactivation is related more to low energy, shutdown, or depression. We've hit the brakes instead of easing into a slowdown. That's when the crash-and-burn happens. Your internal engine has “run out of steam.”

Everyone has a *Window of Resilience*, which is his unique, optimal range of capacity to navigate thoughts and emotions without overwhelm or shutdown. When you're in this window, you have enough resilience to dissolve or dilute the unpleasant aspects of life, such as stress and anxiety, which can bring you closer to the edges of your window of resilience. When you're in your resilience window, you're also deepening your ability to be with life's pleasant aspects—presence, joy, gratitude, intimacy, love and more. This is the sweet spot where there's a balance between sympathetic (your giddy-up-and-go) and parasympathetic (your rest and digest).

After mastering interoception, not only will you be able to recognize when you're nearing the edges of your window, you'll also have the tools you need to bring yourself back into resilience.

## WHEN MIND MEETS BODY AND FALLS IN LOVE

Here's what that looks like:

Under stress, the nervous system can falsely perceive threat and go into a survival reaction, which pushes you far outside your window of resilience. Of course, if it's a real threat, the nervous system will automatically—and wisely—take over to protect you. Here's what that looks like:

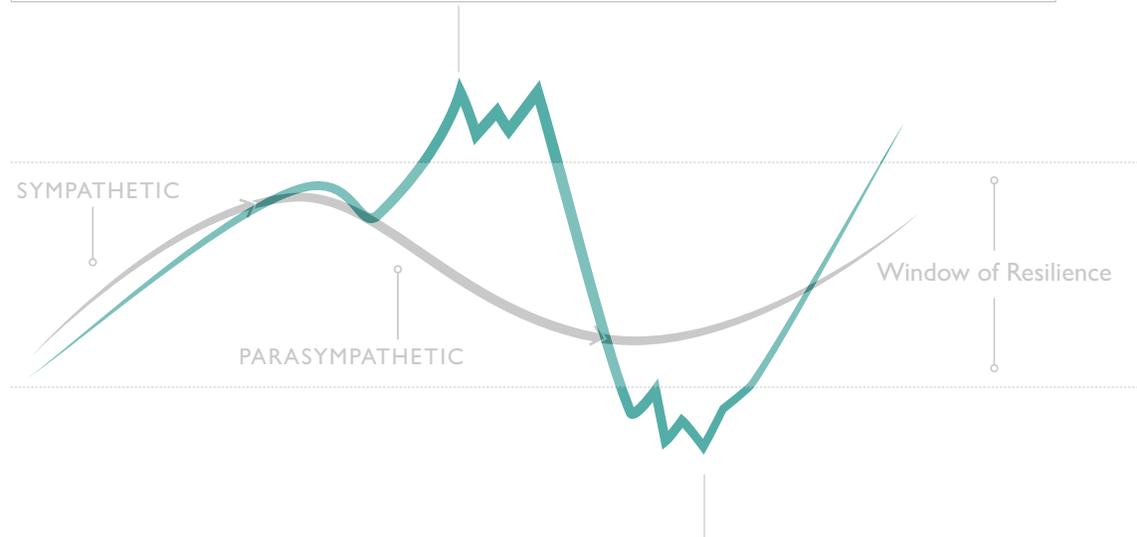


### WINDOW OF RESILIENCE

Feelings and reactions are viable; we can think and feel simultaneously; our reactions adapt to fit the situation.

**SIGNS OF CHRONIC HYPERACTIVATION**

Emotional overwhelm, panic, impulsivity, hypervigilance, defensiveness, feeling unsafe, reactive, angry, racing thoughts.



**SIGNS OF CHRONIC HYPOACTIVATION**

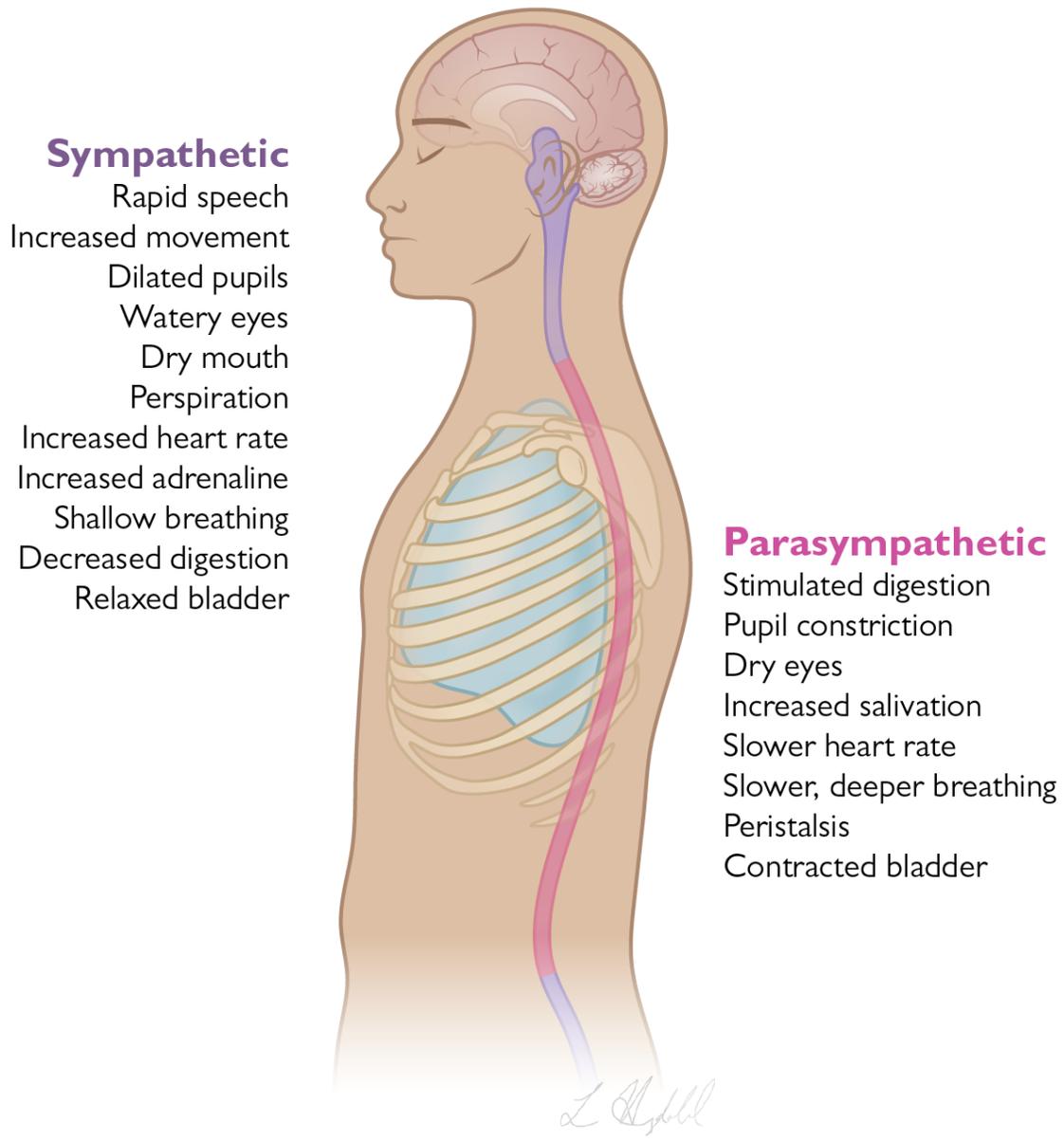
Numb, “dead,” passive, no feelings, no energy, can’t think, disconnected, shut down, “not there,” ashamed, can’t say “no”.

Look closely at your nervous system’s tendency. Do you default more often to hyperactivation or hypoactivation? Or do you go in between the two and then crash-and-burn? Do you work long hours during the week, then crash and sleep in late on the weekends?

We can learn to stay within our window of resilience, as best as we can. When actual or perceived danger is present the nervous system takes over in a split second, choosing our best survival strategy for us (fight, flight, or freeze). Of course, our bodies’ protection system is never going to respond with complete accuracy. There will still be times in the future when your nervous system spikes outside your window when it shouldn’t, when it responds to a perceived threat instead of real one. But by and large, we can mostly learn how to be in our window of resilience, notice when we’re edging out, and apply the tools in this chapter to get back inside the window.

## WHEN MIND MEETS BODY AND FALLS IN LOVE

You may be asking, *What can I pay attention to so that I recognize the edges of my window of resilience?* If you begin to experience any of the common responses outlined here in this illustration and you are just at the initial stage of feeling low levels of discomfort or unpleasantness, you want to use the essential tools outlined later in this chapter to move yourself back into the window of resilience.



Repetition of an interoception ritual will put you back inside your resilience window where you'll be in touch with your body again, primarily through sensation that mostly happens in your chest and belly. Over time, you'll stay more within your window and experience greater capacity and resilience to embrace anything that comes your way.

As you try these rituals, write about your experiences and see if you can make your answers as descriptive as possible. What do you notice before the ritual? More anxiety, tension, or stress? Afterwards, is your body more settled, calm, or spacious? Where, specifically, do you notice these differences in your body? As with all the rituals and exercises you'll be doing, GO VERY SLOWLY so that the changes you're seeking have time to integrate. Remember: This isn't a race to the finish line; you don't want to skip to the next ritual without receiving the benefits of the one you're in.



### **Intermediate Level Ritual: Interoception Warmup**

---

Focus on the first and most essential dimension of interoception—sensation (we will explore the other dimensions to deepen your somatic awareness soon).

Run in place for 60 seconds or if you can't run in place, do jumping jacks, sit in a chair and make a bicycling motion or raise your legs up-and-down or whatever adaption works for you to increase your heart rate. After 60 seconds, take your pulse on your wrist or neck or put your hand on your heart. Notice the increased heart/pulse rate from running in place—that is your nervous system in the giddy-up-and-go (sympathetic). Now notice how the heart rate/pulse begins to decrease over time—that is your nervous system moving into the rest and digest (parasympathetic).

Noticing these dimensions is the start of body awareness (interoception). Continue with this ritual for three minutes daily until you notice at least one of these dimensions. Sometimes we need more time with the essentials of interoception. If this applies to you, repeat this ritual until you feel masterful with it. If it isn't available to you, that's okay. Stay with this ritual until your awareness changes. Keep answering the following questions as your awareness builds:



REFLECTIONS

**WHAT'S DIFFERENT?**



**Beginning/Intermediate Level Somatic Dimensions  
Noticing Inner Experience**

*Refer to the examples below to describe your inner experience  
(aka, interoception) or add your own:*

Anxious	Grounded	Relaxed
Breathy	Heart Beating	Settled
Buzzy	Warmer	Slower
Calmer	Overwhelmed	Stressed
Cooler	Pulsing	Tingling

**Answer These Questions For Yourself:**

Before this ritual, my body's experience was...	After this ritual, my body is more/less...

The key to presence is sensation. Being “present” is a term that we have made more complicated than it actually is: *If you can notice a sensation of any dimension (like a feeling, color, shape, image, temperature, weight, movement) somewhere in your body, you’re present. It’s that simple. And interoception is the ritual that gets you to presence.*

For example, noticing the temperature of your breath entering your nose, mouth, or throat—that’s presence. Or feeling your heart rate—that’s presence. Or the rise and fall of your chest, lungs expanding and contracting with each inhale and exhale of your breath. That’s presence. Feeling peristalsis—the movement of food through the digestive track—is presence. And so on. Presence creates the conditions to inhabit a regulated nervous system, which is the most essential component to accessing your Original Blueprint®. Interoception is how you become embodied in your life, regulated in your body, and how you learn to live confidently and fearlessly.



### **Intermediate Level Ritual: Interoception Using Mindful Breathwork**

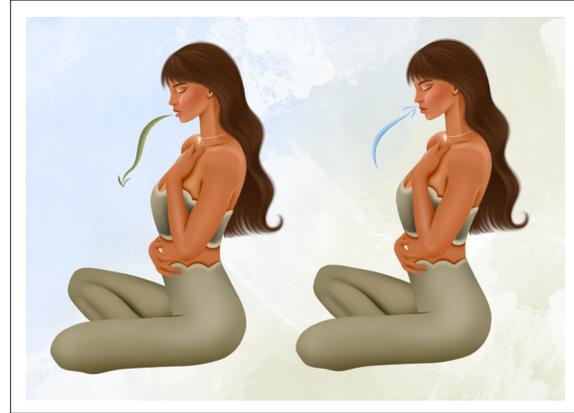
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One of the simplest and most essential forms of interoception comes to us through mindful breathing. The emotional and physical benefits of a breathwork ritual are widely known. The practice of mindful breathing gets credit for everything from stress relief, lowering anxiety and reducing blood pressure to enhancing spiritual experiences. Some say mindful breathwork is the key to slowing down cognitive decline and to keeping the brain and body healthy and the spirit young.

**NOTE:** If you have a physical limitation (e.g., difficulty with nose breathing) that requires you to adjust the following ritual, it’s okay to adjust to your comfort level.

Before you begin, read these instructions fully:

## WHEN MIND MEETS BODY AND FALLS IN LOVE



Step 1 Place one hand on your heart space—right in the center of your chest—and the other on your belly. This contact will help anchor your awareness in the body. As you breathe, begin to pay attention to what you notice inside, right underneath your hands.

Step 2 Now slowly take a long, effortless in-breath through your nose, followed by a long, slow out-breath through your mouth. Support the settling in your body by putting space between the top and bottom teeth and softening your tongue to rest on the lower palette of your mouth (doing the opposite increases anxiety and stress). Make this dance between the in-breath and out-breath effortless—just the right amount of inhaling so that you begin to slowly go deeper into your long out-breaths and notice more spaciousness inside.

Repeat this ritual for three minutes. Answer the "What's Different" questions on the following page.





REFLECTIONS

**WHAT'S DIFFERENT?**



**Beginning/Intermediate Level Somatic Dimensions  
Noticing Inner Experience**

*Refer to the examples below to describe your inner experience  
(aka, interoception) or add your own:*

Anxious	Grounded	Relaxed
Breathy	Heart Beating	Settled
Buzzy	Warmer	Slower
Calmer	Overwhelmed	Stressed
Cooler	Pulsing	Tingling

**Answer These Questions For Yourself:**

Before this ritual, my body's experience was...	After this ritual, my body is more/less...



## Advanced Level Ritual: Interoception—Beyond Sensation

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Sensation is the first of five dimensions of body awareness. You can build on the interoception ritual by incorporating awareness of the four other dimensions: image, actions/behavior, emotions/affect and meaning.

In the quest to liberate myself and my clients from fear and chronic stress, there are few therapeutic modalities I've found as powerful as Somatic Experiencing®, the pioneering work of Dr. Peter Levine. Dr. Levine identified five dimensions of awareness—sensation, image, behavior, affect and meaning, adapted, and simplified here from his original work noted in his book, *In an Unspoken Voice*:

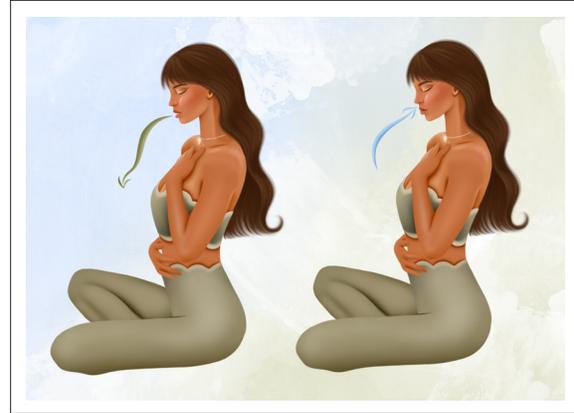
- 1. Sensation:** The essential awareness of internal sensations, including pulse, colors, varying weights and temperatures. For example:
  - *I notice the temperature of my breath coming into my nostrils or throat.*
  - *I notice a warm, gooey red blob in my heart space.*
  - *I notice the pull of gravity in my sit bones and thighs.*
  - *I notice my heart beating in my chest.*
  - *I can feel lunch moving through my belly (peristalsis)!*
- 2. Image:** Using what you already know from your senses (sight, sound, smell, touch, taste) see if you can access the image of something pleasant arising from within you. This is a tricky one to explain (easier to experience) but here are a few examples:
  - *(Sight) I can feel the lower half of my body settling when I imagine seeing my dog napping.*
  - *(Sound) I notice a settling inside my chest when I imagine the sound of a bird chirping.*
  - *(Smell) I feel more calm in my belly when I imagine the smell of a pine forest.*
  - *(Touch) I notice my back relaxing when I imagine being held by a warm blanket.*
  - *(Taste) I notice laughter arising from my belly when I imagine the sweet taste of my mother's blueberry pie.*
- 3. Behavior:** Any observable changes, including skin temperature, breath rate, pace of speech or actual movements like rocking, reaching, foot-tapping, yawning, and so on.

## WHEN MIND MEETS BODY AND FALLS IN LOVE

- *I notice the movement of my calves, swinging up and back, just like when I was a kid!*
  - *I notice my shoulders shrugging and shaking off the experience.*
  - *I notice that I'm yawning in this moment.*
4. **Affect:** Emotions and emotional experiences becoming more available, such as calm, settled, peaceful, restful, spacious, open and irritability, agitation, anger.
- *I am noticing contentment and gratitude in my heart space.*
  - *I feel open and spacious inside, right in my chest and belly.*
  - *I am noticing anger in my gut and it's energizing!*
5. **Meaning:** Verbal narrative of self, other or an event as well as any form of abstracted relationship.
- *I'm noticing this feeling of being safe means I can be more expressive, more alive, or more connected to others.*
  - *I'm noticing I'm much calmer after recognizing that I'm not responsible for other people's reactions.*
  - *I'm noticing that when I let go of trying to control my partner, I can relax and be vulnerable with her.*

Begin your ritual of interoception with a warmup. Then move into the interoception ritual using mindful breathwork. Over time, as you become more comfortable with the ritual, see if you can be more descriptive of your internal experience by noticing some of the other dimensions of body awareness beyond the sensation of your breath. For the sake of ease, I've repeated the mindfulness ritual here:

## WHEN MIND MEETS BODY AND FALLS IN LOVE



### Interoception Using Mindful Breathwork

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Place one hand on your heart space and the other on your belly. This contact will help anchor your awareness in the body. As you breathe, begin to pay attention to what you notice inside, right underneath your hands.

Now *slowly* begin taking a long, effortless in-breath through your nose, followed by a long, slow out-breath through your mouth. Support the settling in your body by putting space between the top and bottom teeth and softening your tongue to rest on the lower palette of your mouth (doing the opposite increases anxiety and stress). Make this dance between the in-breath and out-breath effortless—just the right amount of inhaling so that you begin to slowly go deeper into your long out-breaths and notice more spaciousness inside.

Stay with this ritual for at least three minutes.

In addition to sensation, what other dimensions of body awareness (image, behavior, affect, meaning) do you notice?...



REFLECTIONS

**WHAT'S DIFFERENT?**



**Advanced Level Somatic Dimensions  
Noticing Inner Experience**

*Refer to the examples here to describe your inner experience (aka, interoception),  
use the Glossaries of Somatic Dimensions and Emotions  
(see appendix), or add your own:*

Airy	Emotion(s)	Image(s)	Softening
Breath	Expansive	Lukewarm	Softer
Brisk	Fluid	Melting	Smooth
Buzzing	Glowing	Oblong	Snug
Calmer	Grounded	Pulsing	Spacious
Comfy	Heart Beating	Relaxed	Tepid
Cooler	Heavier	Round	Tingling
Color(s)	Held	Settled	Vibrating
Dense	Hotter	Slower	Warmer

## WHEN MIND MEETS BODY AND FALLS IN LOVE

### Answer These Questions For Yourself:

*See if you can notice where in the body you feel different...*

Before this ritual, my body's experience was...	After this ritual, my body is more/less...

All these dimensions are examples of what *possibly* can happen. It's important to accept whatever is showing up for *you*. If it's sensation, fantastic. You don't need to have more than that although, more than likely, you will begin to notice an emotional *response*. You may experience weeping, anger, or joy. You may feel calmer, more relaxed, spacious, safe, or settled. You may never be an image-oriented person or see colors, shapes or become deeply attuned to temperature or weight changes. You may never notice changes in your behaviors or experience meaning through interoception rituals. If that's the case, it's perfectly fine. Whatever is available to you is more than enough—your job is to work with whatever shows up without judging or censoring it.



## Balancing Vagal Tone

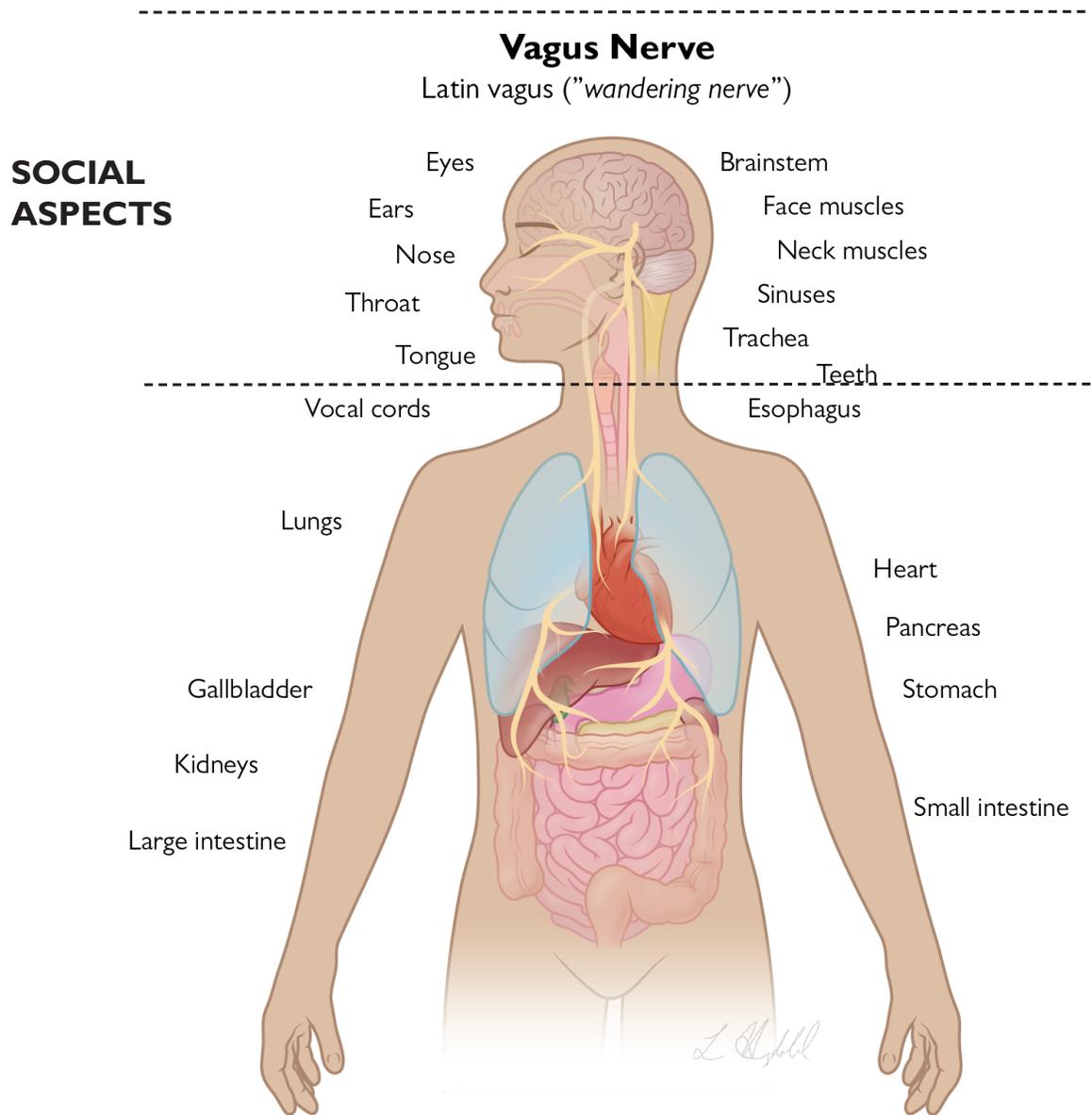
In the book we talked about the Soul Nerve in Part One (the vagus nerve) and its central importance as the communicating force between the nervous system and the brain. It's hard to overstate the importance of the vagus nerve—the largest bundle of nerves in the body. The regulation (or lack thereof) of the nervous system directly affects our decision-making process in large and small ways: from whom to marry, where to live, what career path to follow, how to vote or what to have for lunch.

Vagal tone is the activity of the vagus nerve. A high vagal tone is associated with lower blood pressure, improved blood-sugar regulation, improved digestion, better mood, reduced anxiety, and reduced risk of stroke and cardiovascular disease. A properly functioning vagus nerve also balances the nervous system, carries information from the brain to the gut (and the gut to the brain), lowers heart rate, and modulates fear, stress, and anxiety. It also regulates your breathing, creating a feeling of ease and relaxation when you breathe deeply. Perhaps the two greatest benefits of higher vagal tone is the ability to relax faster after stress and increase your immune system's ability to protect you from disease.

But when the vagus nerve senses a threat (real or perceived), it creates imbalance and dysregulates critical functions such as breathing, channeling the energy towards protecting you from danger. That's why people find themselves taking short, shallow breaths when they're in distress. When the nervous system is in a survival state, instruc-

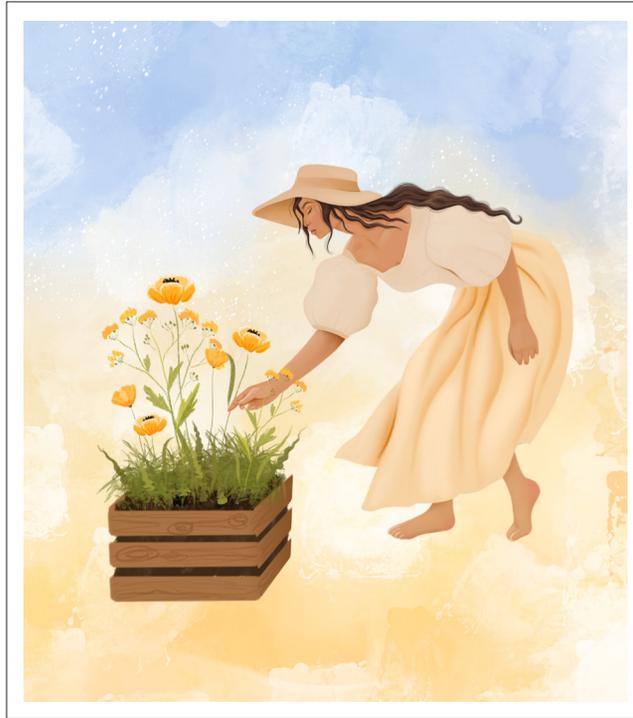
tions dictated by the vagus nerve can grip your lungs, so that your breathing becomes more strained. Your heart rate will go up or down, depending on how the vagus nerve perceives a threat. It will also affect the function of other major organs, such as the kidneys and the digestive system (see the following illustration).

Compromising the vagus nerve pulls us out of our window of resilience and propels us into heightened levels of stress and anxiety—or shutdown—as the body desperately seeks to bring itself back into balance. If the system stays in a chronic state of survival, the body will continue to channel its defenses against the threat and away from the essential life-affirming systems, such as the immune system’s ability to fight off disease.



## WHEN MIND MEETS BODY AND FALLS IN LOVE

So how can we regain control of the vagus nerve? Orienting is one practice that serves to bring the vagus nerve back into balance—particularly the social aspects of this bundle of nerves (see illustration).



### 🕯️🕯️🕯️ **Advanced Level Ritual: Orienting**

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Orienting engages the upper part of our vagus nerve—the social portion that supplies nerves to the facial muscles and throat. In primitive times, orienting meant we were scanning our environment to identify threats lurking in the tall grass. We still have that same threat bias driving us when we're under stress, scanning for the paper tigers lurking in the grasslands of our imaginations. Orienting is a ritual we should be repeating to help soften our negativity bias and strengthen our felt sense of safety.

If you have any form of social anxiety—whether that's in intimate relationships, one-on-one, in groups or presenting in front of a crowd—you get anxious because this part of the vagus nerve perceives threat instead of recognizing a social situation where you are welcome. Here's how you change socially and shift from threat to safety. As with all the rituals you're learning, slow yourself way down. The slower the pace, the better. That's what's going to support you in coming back into your window of resilience.

### **Orienting Ritual:**

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- Go to a place—indoors or outdoors—where you find your surroundings pleasing. Perhaps a garden or sunroom. Begin by breathing slowly and mindfully. Now, *let your eyes lead you* to wherever they wish to go. When your eyes naturally land on something pleasant, have them focus on just a small portion of what you see (e.g., not the whole tree or plant or picture, but a small part, like the leaf or something within the picture) so that your eyes can fully rest into the part without straining to see more.
- Using the leaf as an example, allow your eyes to observe it in detail: Notice the color of the leaf, its shape, the way it dances in the sunlight or sways with the wind. Now take this awareness inside your body and notice what's different (here's interoception again!). Take your time.
- Hang out with the body's internal sensations as you allow your eyes to gaze upon the object. Continue with this ritual for three to five minutes...or more if you find it restorative.

Depending on how much you need to repeat this practice, stay with it for as long as necessary. Over time, this ritual will help you stay calm and grounded in situations where you might normally experience social anxiety. Because the root causes of anxiety can be multifaceted, you may find that other exercises/rituals are more beneficial for a one situation or another. Experiment! You can also view the “Orienting” demo at [IrisInstitute.com](http://IrisInstitute.com)

(see chart on following page)



## REFLECTIONS

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# WHAT'S DIFFERENT?



### Advanced Level Somatic Dimensions Noticing Inner Experience

*Refer to the examples here to describe your inner experience (aka, interoception),  
use the Glossaries of Somatic Dimensions and Emotions  
(see appendix), or add your own:*

Airy	Emotion(s)	Image(s)	Softening
Breath	Expansive	Lukewarm	Softer
Brisk	Fluid	Melting	Smooth
Buzzing	Glowing	Oblong	Snug
Calmer	Grounded	Pulsing	Spacious
Comfy	Heart Beating	Relaxed	Tepid
Cooler	Heavier	Round	Tingling
Color(s)	Held	Settled	Vibrating
Dense	Hotter	Slower	Warmer

WHEN MIND MEETS BODY AND FALLS IN LOVE

**Answer These Questions For Yourself:**  
*See if you can notice where in the body you feel different...*

Before this ritual, my body's experience was...	After this ritual, my body is more/less...

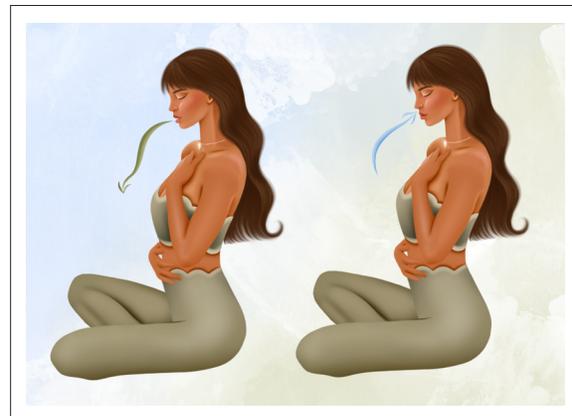
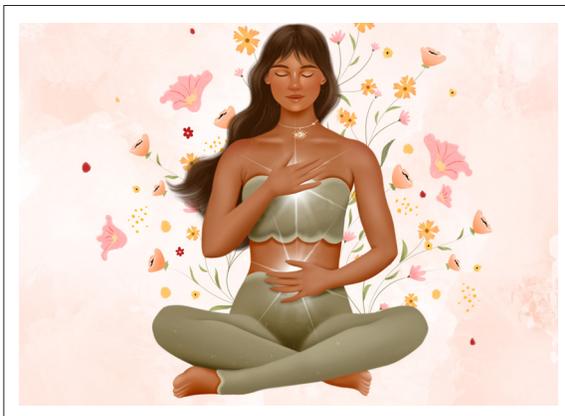


## Advanced Level Ritual: “Voo” Breathing Method

---

The next ritual that we’ll be learning is an advanced practice developed by Dr. Peter Levine, as part of his Somatic Experiencing® model. Dr. Levine developed a practice to balance the nervous system, which resets the connection between the vagus nerve and other critical organs. This exercise is known as the “Voo” breathing method.

The “Voo” breathing method vibrates the vagus nerve and, over time, increases regulation. Think of it as giving this very important nerve—the longest in the body and one that sends and receives messages from almost all your major organs—a gentle massage. Here’s how it works:



Begin by finding a comfortable place to sit. Close your eyes or cast them downward. Place one hand on your heart space, the other on your belly. Now, follow the breathwork ritual from earlier in this chapter and repeated here:

Use long, deep breathing as you inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth. Put some space between the top and bottom teeth, checking to ensure the tongue is resting on your lower palette.

On the next outbreath, make the sound: “Voo”

As you exhale, use the lower register of your voice to make the sound, bringing the vibration down as far as you can into your belly or your chest. That vibration is what’s releasing the vagus nerve’s grip, right down the center line of your body. If you use the lower register of your voice, it’s going to deepen your connection to that vibration further down into your body. Imagine you are almost making the sound of a fog-horn, guiding ships to safety. As you do, pay attention to the vibration you feel inside, right underneath your hands.

Repeat this breathing method up to five total repetitions of “Voo” breathing. No

## WHEN MIND MEETS BODY AND FALLS IN LOVE

more than that. If you find yourself a bit lightheaded, take gentle breaths in between or cut back to three repetitions. Go gentle and slow with this ritual.

On the final outbreath, repeat the words, at whisper-level volume, “I am safe,” cascading the resonance of these words all the way down into your belly. Using this phrase will help seal the relationship between body and mind.



REFLECTIONS

**WHAT'S DIFFERENT?**



**Advanced Level Somatic Dimensions  
Noticing Inner Experience**

*Refer to the examples here to describe your inner experience (aka, interoception),  
use the Glossaries of Somatic Dimensions and Emotions  
(see appendix), or add your own:*

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Cooler	Heavier	Round	Tingling
Color(s)	Held	Settled	Vibrating
Dense	Hotter	Slower	Warmer

**Answer These Questions For Yourself:**

Now identify *where* in the body you feel different...

Before this ritual, my body's experience was...	During this ritual, my body's experience was...	After this ritual, my body is more/less...

“Voo” breathing vibrates the vagus nerve so that it helps reset its communication with the organs and calms the body. **The benefits of this one single practice are so important that I’d suggest putting this practice at the top of your daily, to-do list.** Here are some of the potential rewards for “Voo’ing”!:

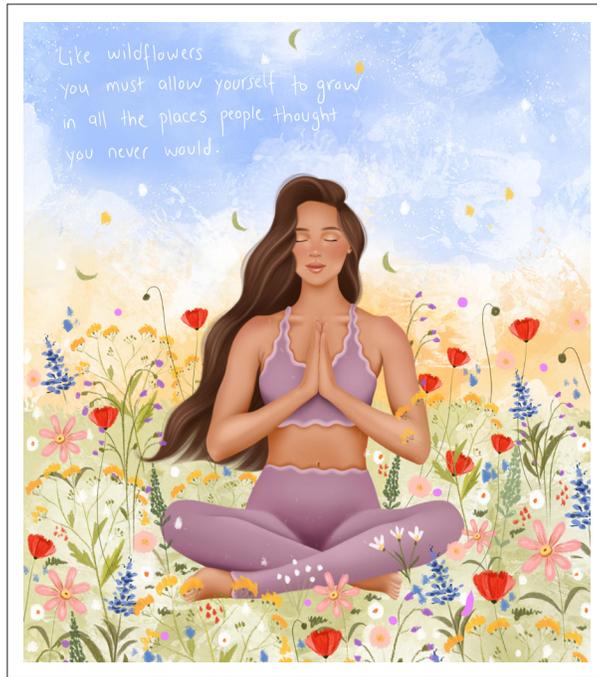
- Boosts your immune system’s ability to fight off disease—yesssss!!!
- Balances the nervous system’s giddy up and rest parts, improving resilience and regulation
- Enhances vocalization, which impacts feeling safe to speak up, to find your voice, to advocate for yourself, take up more space in the world, prioritize yourself, and

## WHEN MIND MEETS BODY AND FALLS IN LOVE

reduce social anxiety

- Improves your confidence, your ability to trust your instincts, and connects you to the release of emotions, such as healthy anger, grief, joy, gratitude and so on!

I could go on, but I think these are awfully convincing benefits to encourage you to “Voo” away!



### 🕉️🕉️🕉️ Advanced Level Rituals: Upregulating and Downregulating

---

Is your body prone to sympathetic or parasympathetic charge? If/when you run on high energy or anxiety (sympathetic), work your parasympathetic edges by practicing any of the downregulating rituals. If you have trouble sleeping at night, do the “Voo” breath or take a warm bath, so that you are more calm before you go to bed. Humming or laughter is a release, so it’s going to help calm you, too.

If/when you run low on energy, work your sympathetic edges by practicing the upregulating rituals. Here in the following chart is a short list of examples and by no means is this list meant to be exhaustive. But if you get the idea of the types of exercises and rituals that will benefit you, you can add to the list based on your personal needs.

Practice one or more of the rituals listed in the following chart at least three to five times a week for at least a week before moving to the next practice. Listen to your body. What is giving you more energy or more calm?

## RITUALS TO IMPROVE VAGAL TONE

### OVERALL BALANCE: “VOO” BREATHING

UPREGULATE <i>for more energy</i>	DOWNREGULATE <i>for more calm</i>
Beginning rituals from Ch 6 (running or jumping in place to increase heart rate)	Intermediate and Advanced rituals from Ch 6 (e.g., interoception rituals)
Focusing on inbreath	Focusing on outbreath
Tongue on roof of mouth	Tongue on lower palette
Aerobic exercise, including running, jumping, hiking or other high impact workouts	Noticing gravity beneath you Chanting “I am safe” on the outbreath
Dancing	Calming music
Smelling something pleasant	Restorative yoga, qigong, tai chi
Singing	Humming, laughter
Cold showers	Warm blanket, bath, tea
Social contact	Walk in nature

If you find your energy rising (edgy, agitated, restless) or dropping (yawning, sleepy, low energy) outside of the optimal zone, just do a practice from the opposite regulation strategy. Since this is not an exact science, if you experience the opposite of what you were seeking, try something else. Everyone is different. Experiment!

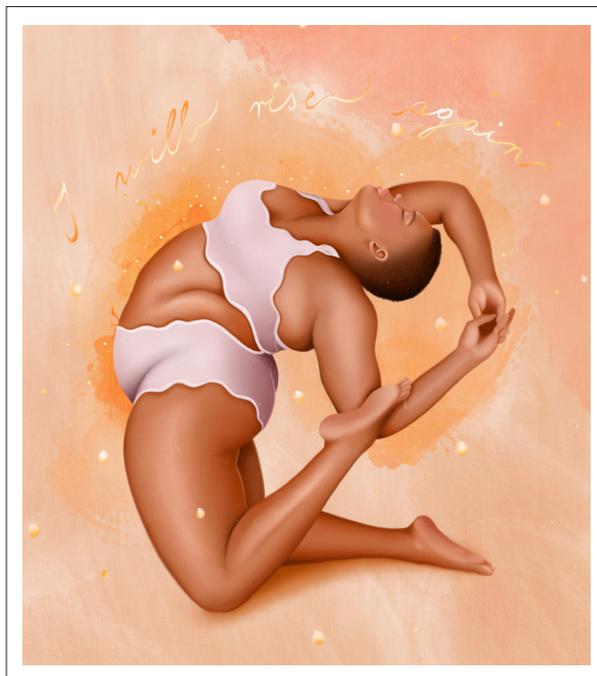
🕯️🕯️🕯️ **Advanced Level Ritual: Loving all of You**

---

You want others to love all of you—the good, the bad, and the ugly—but you cannot ask that of other people without loving all of yourself first. We have this unrealistic image of who we should be and how we should look, constantly judging ourselves and scrutinizing every inch of our bodies. It is cruel how we treat the gift of having a body which, in return for all it does to keep us alive, we don't show much appreciation for it, often taking it for granted, and seemingly ignoring how much it does to keep us alive and thriving every second of our lives.

This exercise is a *love letter to your body*. Take some time to share with your body how much you appreciate it—both inside and out. For example, your beautiful hair, eyes, smile, and skin, but also specifics about how much you appreciate having legs to take you places, hands to create beauty or to touch another being, and eyes to see beauty. Inside, there's a whole world happening to keep you thriving—a heart beating, the lungs breathing every second, blood circulating through your body, and so on.

Take some time to write the love letter your body always wanted to receive from you. Once you have the letter, take some time to ground yourself, then *slowly* whisper the words out loud, from your chest or belly, allowing each word to land in your heart space (like you learned from the “Voo” breathing method).



Here is an example:

Dear Beautiful Body,

I want to express my deepest respect and gratitude for all that you do—and have—done for me. It is very important to me that you fully receive these words because I mean all of them, from the deepest places inside of me, from the depths of my soul. Thank you for...

My breath, yes thank you, for this breath, for the breath before this one and the breath after this one, so that I can breathe into you once more, so that I can remember to be present for every moment..

My heart, for each moment that it is beating—so that I can love you for another moment, another day.

My eyes, so that I can admire this beautiful world around me and admire all of you, beautiful body.

My legs, so that I can dance with you and feel the joy inside of every moment I'm moving.

My arms, so that I can hold you and hold those I love so dearly.

My mind, so that I can stay connected to you, remember you, and imagine all that I have in my life.

Through you, beautiful body, I can see, touch, smell, taste, and listen to the beauty in the world.

You are lovingly carrying me through this lifetime—through all of its highs and lows.

I am grateful I have you; Without you, I couldn't delight in this life I've been given.

You are beauty. - You are my lifelong companion. - You are the container for my soul. - I love all of you.

A LOVE LETTER TO MYSELF:

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, occupying most of the page. It is intended for the user to write a love letter to themselves.



REFLECTIONS

**WHAT'S DIFFERENT?**



**Advanced Level Somatic Dimensions  
Noticing Inner Experience**

*Refer to the examples here to describe your inner experience (aka, interoception),  
use the Glossaries of Somatic Dimensions and Emotions  
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## WHEN MIND MEETS BODY AND FALLS IN LOVE

Before this ritual, my body's experience was...	During this ritual, my body's experience was...	After this ritual, my body is more/less...

### Commitment to Practice

---

Start with one ritual from this chapter that you'd like to repeat daily. Build it into an existing routine to make it easier to remember (e.g., after you brush your teeth, before you shower or drink your morning coffee, when you turn off your computer for the day). I'd suggest staying with the ritual until the change you experience is demonstrably different for you. Only then do I suggest moving on to another ritual from this chapter. All the rituals presented have something profound to offer. But you will only get the full benefits if you perform the ritual enough times to begin embodying the changes that result from repeated practice.

You can track your progress using the "What's Different" approach found throughout this chapter. If you need additional support, I encourage you to take advantage of the tools (demos and guided recordings, worksheets, and more) found at [IrisInstitute.com](http://IrisInstitute.com).



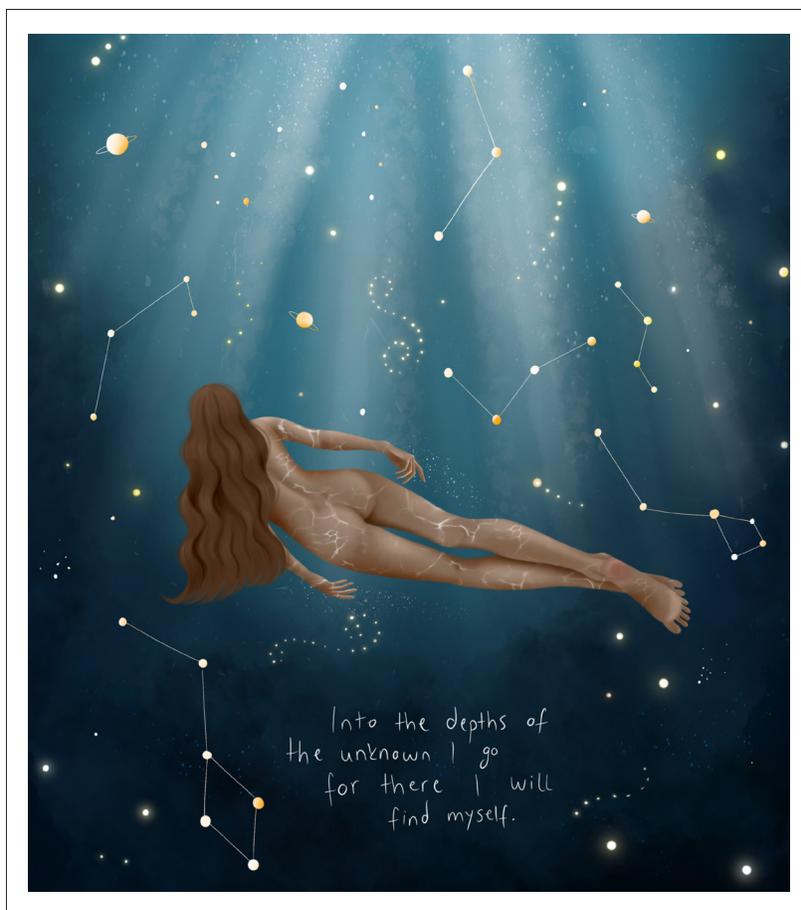
REFLECTIONS

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**WHAT'S CLEARER?**

After reading this chapter, what's clearer to you that you want to be sure and remember? Write your thoughts down here or in your personal journal:

Write your thoughts here:



---

## IMPORTANT

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Before we move to the next chapter, this is a good time to remind you that childhood trauma is not something that we can heal from an exercise. Fear and anxiety that arise from childhood trauma take time and support with a licensed professional who is trained in trauma therapy. Read through the next chapter and if you're unsure whether you are ready to do these exercises, please feel free to skip them. Instead, take loving care of yourself and refer to the resources I referenced in the preface of this book.

---



“

*If you want to fly, you have to give up the things that weigh you down.*

- Toni Morrison





Speak gently to  
your inner child,  
it may be hurtin'.



## HEALING CHILDHOOD WOUNDS

---

Reflecting on childhood, most people can recall experiencing some form of trauma or stress that interrupted their well-being in some way. That's normal. Life isn't a perfect journey. Healing that trauma requires that you distinguish between the memories of what happened in the past and the life that you're living in the present moment. That can be a tricky thing to do; oftentimes the emotional impact of your memories doesn't leave room for much distinction between what happened 20 years ago and what happened yesterday. But it's possible to change that by healing the parts of you that are still wounded from things that may have happened decades earlier.

We know that when a baby is born, the first two months of its life essentially shape the baby's imprint of the world. We also know that human development today is much the same as it was in primitive times. A baby born into the world thousands of years ago needed her survival strategies to kick in first. That's why the right brain—where our survival strategies form—is the dominant conduit through which children still navigate childhood today.

It's not until our teenage years that the thinking brain (neocortex) begins to catch up and then fully matures in our mid-twenties. It's in these in-between, youthful years that we can feel invincible and often still lack the full ability to make solid, logical decisions. It is no coincidence that I often have clients in their late twenties or early thirties come into therapy for the first time, when they start reflecting on their childhood with more of an adult perspective. Suddenly, they're able to see things that happened to them years before from the vantage point of their wise adult brain. They suddenly recognize that some of what they experienced in childhood wasn't normal but, in fact, traumatic

and/or abusive. They also begin to see the full impact of those experiences in their adult lives.



### *Mark's Story*

For example, I had a man in his early thirties named Mark (not his real name) who came to see me. Mark grew up in a middle-class neighborhood. By all accounts, he was a very well-adjusted person. But Mark came to me feeling deeply insecure about himself. He'd battled addiction for years and had finally recovered by developing a strong spiritual practice and a deep connection to his twelve-step program. Yet, Mark still couldn't get past his belief that his parents saw him as a failure. As a result, he judged himself harshly and had an overactive inner critic.

Mark felt a desperate need to please others that he couldn't shake loose. He sought out work, relationships, and friendships that he believed would validate him. Objectively, Mark had all the trappings of success. He had money, an impressive career in high tech, a fancy car, a loving girlfriend, and his colleagues admired him. But Mark didn't see himself as successful or worthy. He believed that his efforts to improve his life were backfiring. Instead of feeling proud of his accomplishments, he felt more and more insignificant and incapable.

Over and over, Mark's mind told him, *I'm a failure. I'm a loser. I'm unlovable. I can't please anyone. I'm not good enough. I'm not achieving. I'm worthless.* When he came to see me, he was preparing to end his relationship with his girlfriend. Mark loved his girlfriend, but she didn't fit the impressive "ideal" that he believed everyone else expected from him. After he ended the relationship, he realized with regret how much the woman had meant to him. This led us to one of our most important breakthroughs. For the first time, Mark began to re-evaluate his life from an internal, rather than an external, lens.

Mark had always believed that if he wasn't "adding value," he was useless. Conversely, if he was successful, people would love him. We all want to feel loved. But Mark's desire to win people's approval stemmed from unhealed childhood wounds, which clouded his judgment and prevented him from going after what he truly wanted in life. His fixation reached the point where he started to lie to people, being dishonest about his feelings, beliefs, and his accomplishments. He would embellish, telling people

that he'd achieved a certain standing at work, when it wasn't true. He wouldn't correct people if they said something flattering—but false—about him. The insecurity and the lies increased until he felt trapped by them.

Underneath, Mark really was a genuine person and behaving inauthentically felt terribly uncomfortable for him. In our first year of his therapy, Mark and I explored his relationships and the messages that shaped him. What messages did he believe about himself that he wanted to hold onto? Unfortunately, there were very few positive messages at the start. But one he appreciated most was how talented he was as a painter and musician. Then, we examined the beliefs about himself that he wanted to leave behind. There were many. But Mark grappled with two particularly painful beliefs that had haunted him for most of his life: *I'm a disappointment to my parents* and *I'm unworthy of happiness*.

We discussed the ways that these false messages sent him in directions that weren't in service of what he really wanted to do in the world, which included working for himself and not for a big tech company. As time passed and Mark started to feel more confident by focusing on his gifts, he began to initiate honest conversations with his parents about the challenges and struggles he'd been experiencing.

Contrary to what his fear-brain had been telling him, his parents fully supported his efforts to change his life. They celebrated him for being honest and authentic—not the fraudulent idea of the person he believed he needed to be. In the end, Mark changed careers. He started his own business, which continues to be successful and brings him great personal fulfillment. And Mark not only reunited with his girlfriend, he also married her, and they are expecting their first baby. He continues to see me for a session from time-to-time and it's always a pleasure to see him.

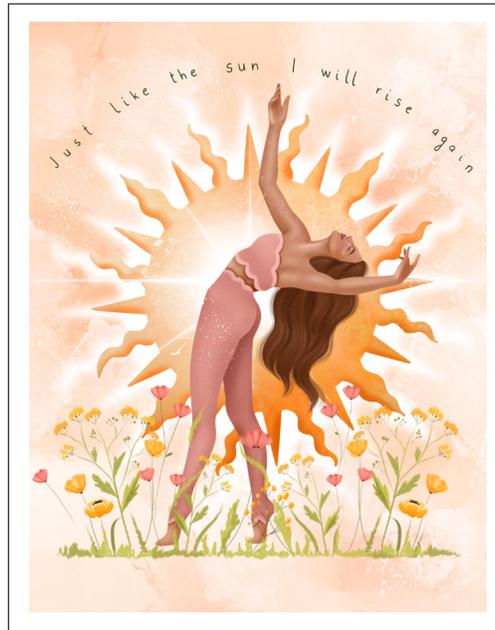
Children do their best to survive childhood. Still, sometimes caregivers don't meet certain needs the child has. For example, some children don't get a lot of support in learning life skills—how to study, how to stay on top of their homework, etc. Their parents may be working full time, so the children have had to figure things out for themselves, such as how to cook, clean, and get themselves dressed in the morning.

For adults who grew up this way, it can sometimes be hard to receive support from other people. Because they're so fiercely independent, when responsibilities such as children or a high-pressured job (or both) overwhelm them, they struggle to ask for help. They aren't practiced at it. The result of holding onto these old psychological

## HEALING CHILDHOOD WOUNDS

wounds can be isolating; they lose the intimate connection that people get when they allow themselves to be vulnerable enough to ask others for help.

When we're not practiced at getting our needs met from others, it can deeply impact our adult well-being. The task is to recognize and root out false, harmful beliefs that stem from unhealed wounds. By replacing those false beliefs with new convictions that are truthful, uplifting, and inspiring, we can move toward our fullest and most courageous selves. 📖



### 🕯️🕯️🕯️ **Advanced Level Rituals: Cultivating Healthy Beliefs** **False Beliefs (Introjects)**

---

So, how do you begin to identify your false beliefs? It starts by learning to distinguish between what's *really* true about you and the *false* beliefs you were conditioned to accept, also called introjects. *Introjects are ideas, attitudes or beliefs that are unconsciously adopted from other people such as parents, peers, teachers, social and cultural networks, or the media.* Introjects are a defense mechanism, first defined by Sigmund Freud, which occur when a person internalizes the voice of an external authority figure, such as a parent. The child will identify with that outside influence so strongly and intensely that he internalizes the introject as truth. For example, a father telling his son: “boys don’t cry” and the boy never cries again. This is an example of an introject and—I might add—a powerful and destructive one.

Introjects can also be positive and life-affirming. But when they're negative, they

can lead to experiences like Mark’s, where the psychological wounds run so deep that they impact every area of one’s life. We can heal false beliefs by swapping them for healthy beliefs that accurately reflect who we are today and strengthen our sense of self-worth. We do that through the repetition of saying what is true (or what we want to be true) about ourselves until the body and mind fully inhabit the new, healthy belief.

**Swap in Healthy Beliefs**

---

Look at the following list. As you reflect on your childhood, think about what introjects or messages are still shaping your attitudes and beliefs about yourself. Circle the ones that remain part of your present life. Divide these messages into two categories—ones you want to hold on to that serve you and the ones you want to leave behind.

**WHAT MESSAGES HAVE SHAPED YOU?**

*Click or circle all that apply*

**FALSE BELIEFS - *Introjects***

**SHAME**

- I should have known better
- I should have done something
- I did something wrong
- I am to blame
- I cannot be trusted
- My best is not good enough

**ADVERSE SOCIAL/  
FAMILIAL NORMS**

- Anger is bad, scary, and not safe
- Never show you’re afraid
- Race/gender determine intelligence
- Emotions are meant to be hidden
- We don’t talk about painful events
- Grief is painful; crying is weak
- We must be strong
- Vulnerability is weak
- You can’t trust people
- People are dangerous

**HEALTHY BELIEFS**

**CONFIDENCE**

- I did the best I could
- I do/did what I can with what I’ve got
- I do/did my best
- I am not at fault
- I am trustworthy
- I do my very best

**NOURISHING SOCIAL/  
FAMILIAL NORMS**

- I am angry
- I am afraid
- I am you
- I am expression
- I am in pain
- I am free to grieve
- I am delicate
- I am courageous
- I am discerning
- I am safe

FALSE BELIEFS - *Introjects*

UNCERTAINTY & ANXIETY

- I cannot trust myself
- I am not in control
- I must be perfect
- I must please everyone
- I am weak
- I am trapped
- I have no options

IMMOBILIZED

- I cannot get what I want
- I cannot handle it/stand it
- I cannot succeed
- I cannot stand up for myself
- I cannot let it out
- I am helpless

SCARCITY

- I am not good enough
- I am a bad person
- I am terrible
- I am damaged
- I am defective
- I am worthless/inadequate
- I am insignificant/unimportant
- I deserve only bad things
- I am stupid
- I am an outsider

HEALTHY BELIEFS

CHOICE & AGENCY

- I trust myself
- I am influential
- I am fluid
- I please me
- I am assertive
- I am liberated
- I am flexible

EMPOWERED

- I am assertive
- I am resilient
- I am success
- I am my voice
- I am a force
- I am powerful

ABUNDANCE

- I am more than enough
- I am good
- I am sacred
- I am whole
- I am exquisite
- I am 100% worthy
- I am significant/I matter
- I deserve abundance
- I am smart
- I belong

## HEALING CHILDHOOD WOUNDS

### FALSE BELIEFS - *Introjects*

- I am different
- I am a failure
- I am alone

#### BODY SHAMING

- I am ugly
- My \_\_\_\_\_ is too big
- My \_\_\_\_\_ is too small
- I am too \_\_\_\_\_
- I wish I was \_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

### HEALTHY BELIEFS

- I am special
- I am success -vs- successful
- I am rooted

#### BEAUTY & SELF APPRECIATION

- I am exquisite
- I am just the right size
- I am stunning
- I am just right
- I am beautiful just as I am
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

First, take a few minutes to simply celebrate the ones you circled on the right—the ones you do already and want to take with you! I applaud you for acknowledging how awesome you are, as you are (big applause!). Take a bow or pat yourself on the back! Yayyyy!

Okay, we can move on now...

In each section above look at the beliefs you circled in the left column. Draw an arrow to the corresponding statements on the right (or one you prefer). Start with the mantra you most want to be true from the *right column*. We will work with it next.

### “I Am” Mantras

---

Taken from Sanskrit, mantras are affirmations you say to yourself that motivate and inspire you. The next part of this ritual demonstrates how to use mantras based on the healthy beliefs (right column) you circled above.

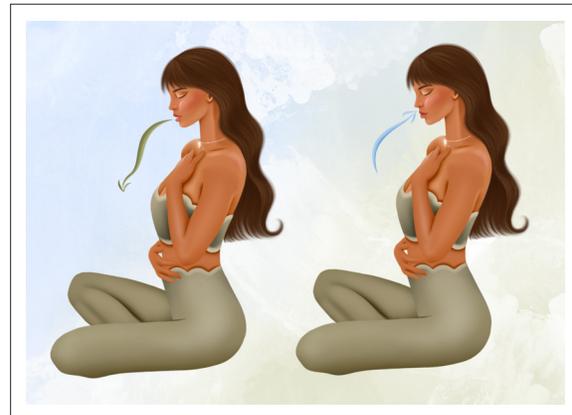
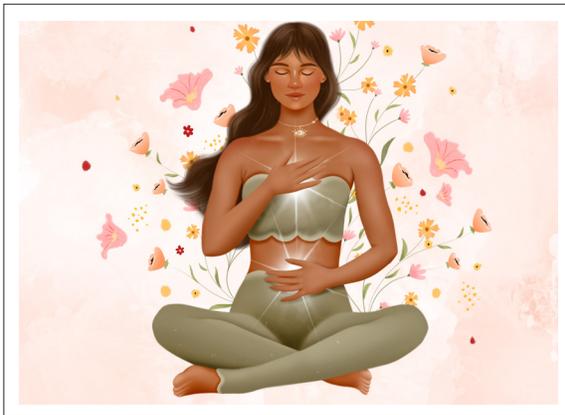
Mantras for this ritual will begin with the two most powerful words ever spoken: I am. In the English language, this is also how we can speak something into existence that hasn't happened yet. We can put it into *present tense*.

“I am” should be spoken from a sacred part of you—right in the center of your

heart space—that is aligned with your Infinite Source. With your mantra, you are speaking your wishes into existence, into the *present* moment, as if you are already *that*. In speaking what you wish for into the present, what you desire is already your reality. So, what is *that* for you?

Your mantra can be more than a counter to the false beliefs from above. It can be things such as: *I am vitality, I am aliveness, I am loved, I am enough, I am whole. I am thriving. I am ease.* Ignore being grammatically correct—your body doesn't care. There's power when we *inhabit* the words in our bodies, so for example, say “I am perfect health” is usually more powerful than saying “I am *in* perfect health.” See what lands better in your body. You want your mantra synonymous with your highest self—your Original Blueprint®.

If your mantra *doesn't* begin with “I am” that's okay, too. Whatever pithy statement resonates most for you is just right.



### 🕯️🕯️🕯️ Advanced Level Ritual: “I Am” Mantra

With your “I am” mantra in place, we'll begin with this ritual by finding a comfortable space to sit. Read these instructions in their entirety before beginning:

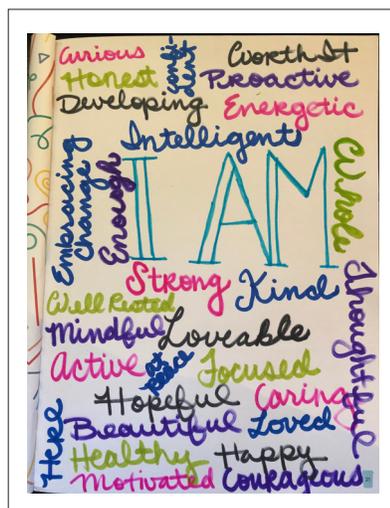
Place your right hand on your heart space, right in the center of your chest. Place your left hand on your belly. Gently close your eyes and repeat your mantra on each outbreath—*slowly* (!!!) repeating it at a whisper level and feeling it land in your chest each time.

Each time you say your mantra, speak your words into your heart space by using

the lower register of your voice (just like the “Voo” breathing), keeping your attention there as you *slowly* repeat your mantra, and as you notice what feels different in your body. In doing so, you are rewiring neural pathways and making your highest wishes align with the purest expression of your soul—your Original Blueprint®.

Repeat this ritual at night until you notice yourself fully inhabiting the mantra (when the mantra feels 100% true). As you recite your mantra, it’s sometimes helpful to use Mala beads (sold at [IrisInstitute.com](http://IrisInstitute.com)) whose origins date as far back as 3,000 years ago in the traditions of Buddhism, Hinduism, and yoga. I use them, and *slowly* repeat the mantra, using my thumb and index finger to count each of the 108 beads until I come back to the start. Once you start to feel that this mantra has become part of you, choose another from your list and begin saying that mantra to yourself at night. Take your time repeating it. It’s better to repeat it five times, really slowly and let it deeply land in your body than to say it a hundred times from your head. If it’s one you are passionate to have fully integrated in you, try repeating it 10-15 times daily until you reach muscle memory (300 repetitions) or embodied (3,000 repetitions) or stop when you trust yourself that you’ve got it.

Here is an example of one of my client’s creative ways to write her list of mantras, which she repeated over time until each one felt 100% embodied:



Complete the ritual by answering “What’s different?” You can download the “What’s Different” worksheets from [IrisInstitute.com](http://IrisInstitute.com). As you go, look for changes in your mood, body sensations and behavior. As with all the rituals you’ll learn in this book, keep track of where it’s beginning to show up in your life in the next two to four weeks. You may be surprised to notice the subtle change or even the absence of the old feeling you had about yourself!



## Advanced Level Ritual: Befriend the Inner Critic

---

We all have an inner critic. Essentially, this is the part of us that has internalized the false messages or introjects mentioned earlier. To reinforce your healthy mantras, you can establish a different kind of relationship with your inner critic—one that swaps out the false beliefs your inner critic says to you with healthy ones.

Doing this helps differentiate the inner critic from you. Because the inner critic is *not you*. It's a little introject gremlin that tries to convince you that all the unhealthy, limiting beliefs about you are true. Silly thing!

People generally form an inner critic by the age of five, especially children who live with a demeaning, demanding or abusive parent. In childhood, the voice of the inner critic generally consists of messages that we've overheard from our parents, conversations we've heard from peers or ideas we've adopted from our social networks or the media—just like all the other false beliefs we've internalized!

A young girl may say to herself, *I'm fat*, for example. But where did she first get that idea? Human beings have an evolutionary bias toward negativity that's directly linked to our bias toward threat. We're always looking to see, *where's the threat?* So, if I'm afraid of being fat, I may say to myself, *What's the worst thing that could happen to a person who's fat?* Well, if you really string that thought out all the way to its max, the fear is, *I'm going to be isolated. People will reject me. I'm unlovable and I'm alone. I'll disappear, be ostracized, or wither away and die.* The inner critic is the voice we take on when we don't feel safe in the world and its voice often has a catastrophic resonance to it.

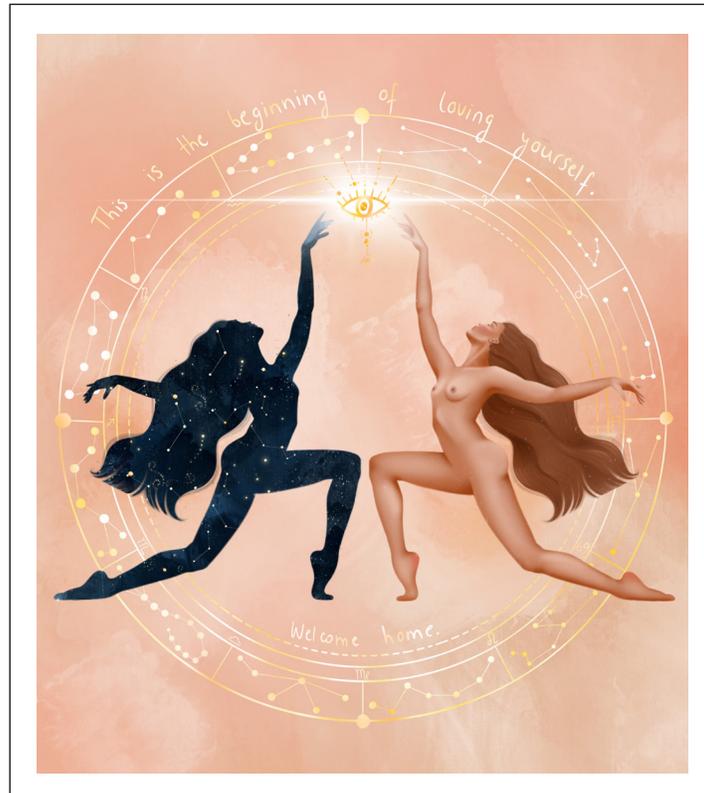
To change this, we can forge a new relationship with the inner critic. Asking it to be quiet, beating it up or asking it to go away doesn't often work for people. Rather than trying to do away with the inner critic, we can meet it with kindness and play. The inner critic is afraid; it needs to experience more safety, more levity, more humor. So, befriend it!

Reassure your inner critic that you have better ways to handle life now as an adult. Their only job is to play and to laugh and to enjoy themselves. Play is what this hyper-vigilant inner critic wants more than anything else. Play equates to safety: *If I can play, then I'm safe. There's nothing lurking behind me ready to pounce. There isn't anything that I must do to protect myself. I can let down my defenses. I can relax and enjoy life.* Check it out—can you notice in your body how it just felt to read these words? Try again—you should feel a settling inside. If you felt something, it's already working.

One of my clients drew a picture of her inner critic and named the grumpy lady

## HEALING CHILDHOOD WOUNDS

“Miss Esther.” I encouraged the client to have a conversation with Miss Esther. With eyes closed, one hand on her heart space and one hand on her belly, the client called Miss Esther forward and spoke to her with loving kindness. In her mind’s eye, the client said words to the effect of, *“You know what, Miss Esther, my sweetheart? Thank you so much for trying to keep me safe. I have better ways to handle these kinds of issues now. I’d love it if you and I just play together. Let’s dance.”*”



What can you do to relate to your version of Miss Esther with more kindness and play? Maybe tickle your own Miss Esther. Imagine that you are the only one who can make your inner critic laugh. Then, any time you hear your inner critic’s voice, you can say, *“Oh, we’re fine. Don’t sweat it. Keep playing, dancing, and laughing. We’re safe. I’ve got you, no matter what.”*

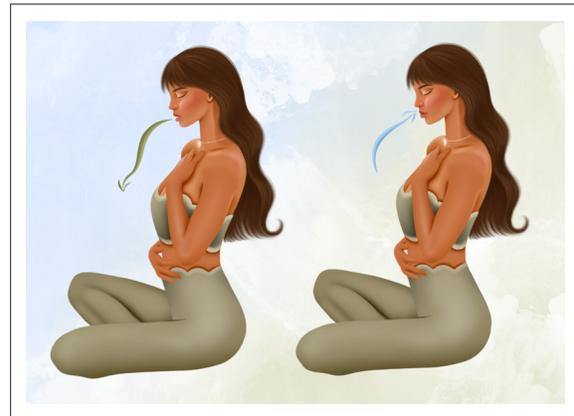
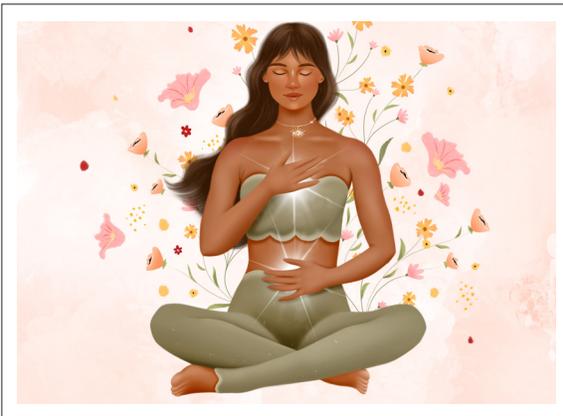
Over time, the relationship between you and your inner critic will change. You’ll no longer be tempted to try to silence, punish or correct the inner critic. Instead, she becomes a supportive companion—your inner buddy and best cheerleader.

Now you know that the childhood messages you’ve internalized are perceived fears, not real ones. As such, they can be handled with a lighter, sweeter touch.

## HEALING CHILDHOOD WOUNDS

Here we go!

- a) Draw a picture of your inner critic. It doesn't even have to be a person. It could be a little gremlin, a funny monster, or a swirl of colors. For this exercise, it's not somebody you know and it's not yourself. Otherwise, whatever you want it to be is great. No need to over-think it. This isn't art class! You can always change it later if you want.
- b) Name it something funny that you'll remember, so that your mind and body begin to see it as something separate from you. Don't over-think it. Again, you can change it later if you want.



- c) Interoception: Close your eyes, place a hand on your heart space and a hand on your belly. Begin long, deep, slow breathing, keeping your attention in your chest and/or belly. Call your inner critic (out loud) by name. Imagine it. See how it's feeling in this moment. Is it worried? Angry? Irritated? Crabby? Now, speak to your inner critic (ideally, out loud—even if it's just at whisper volume) with kindness, knowing that the inner critic's intention is to keep you safe. Tell your inner critic something like, *"I know you're trying to keep us safe, but I have better ways to handle these issues now. All you need to do is be supportive by playing, laughing, and enjoying life with me. I've got you, no matter what happens!"*
- d) Imagine doing something with the inner critic to start him on that path. Use your wildest imagination—dance with the critic, tickle him until he laughs, tell him something to bring more levity to his life. Stay with him until you notice your body loosening or settling and your inner critic becomes a playful, supportive, loving ally.
- e) You can repeat this ritual any time you find yourself experiencing internal conflict. If you ever find it difficult to change the inner critic's mood or words, it's possible you need to get your body more engaged. Try *actually* dancing to music or moving your body in some playful way, as you imagine the critic's transformation. Closing your eyes or casting the eyes downward while you do this may help, too.

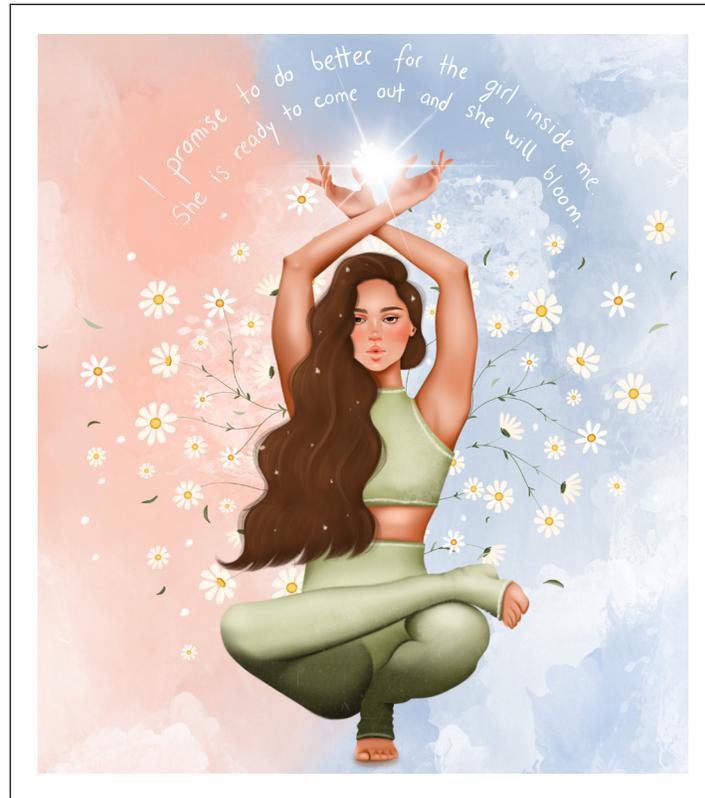
# HEALING CHILDHOOD WOUNDS

## CHILDHOOD NEEDS

	Providing Basic Needs	Learning Life Skills	Meeting Emotional Needs
	<b>Personal hygiene:</b> wash body, brush teeth, comb hair, clean clothes	<b>Household chores:</b> laundry, cleaning room, vacuuming, cleaning dishes, cleaning bathrooms	<b>Attention:</b> quality time, tending to your moods, listening with empathy
	<b>Financial security:</b> food, shelter, clothing	<b>Finance skills:</b> budgeting, managing credit cards	<b>Nurturing:</b> loving-kindness, acceptance, physical affection
	<b>Balanced meals:</b> consistent, balanced meals	<b>Meal preparation:</b> learning how to cook healthy meals	<b>Boundaries:</b> respecting boundaries with self and others
	<b>Safety:</b> secure home and neighborhood	<b>Homework:</b> study skills, time management, tutoring	<b>Unconditional love:</b> loving you as you are, no need to perform
	<b>Medical care:</b> regular physicals, dental appointments	<b>Exercise:</b> supporting physical activity, modeling self-care	<b>Being cherished:</b> celebrating and appreciating you
	<b>Education:</b> access to education	<b>Social:</b> access to family and friends for support	<b>Growth:</b> supporting and celebrating your talents
	<b>Transportation:</b> rides to/from school and activities	<b>Spiritual:</b> access to nature, church, synagogue or other sacred place	<b>Trust and Reliability:</b> dependability
<b>Add Your Own</b>			

## HEALING CHILDHOOD WOUNDS

Most of all, your inner critic wants to feel safe. If nothing else, use words of reassurance to help him settle, like *I've got you. You are safe. I will protect you. You can rest.*



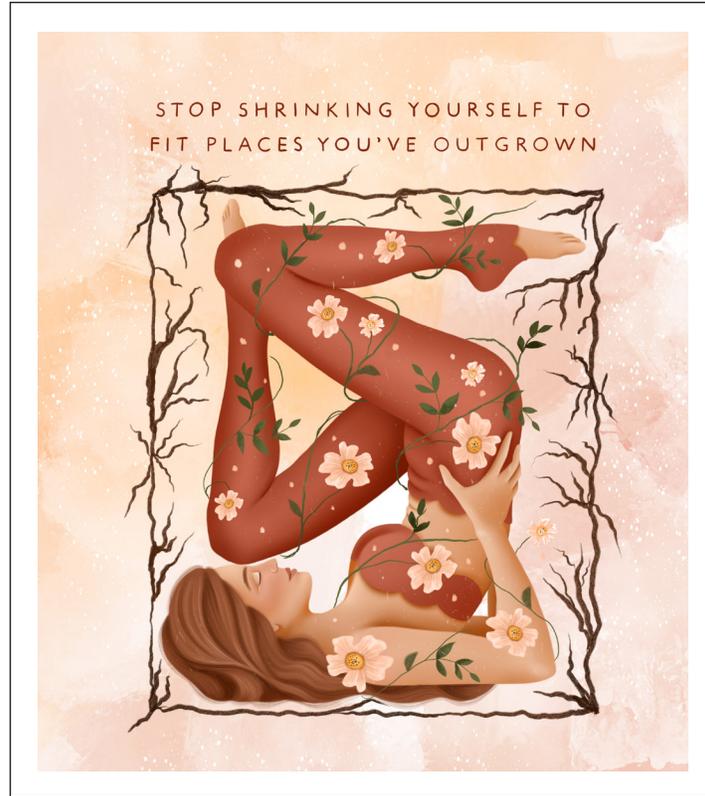
### Advanced Level Ritual: Getting Needs Met as Adults

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Without healing the wounds from the past, many people will (unconsciously seek unhealthy relationships, finding themselves attracted to those who will help them repeat the very same patterns they're trying to avoid. To change that, it's necessary to at least partially fulfill these needs for *oneself* first. Then healthy friendships and partnerships built on love and support (rather than the attempt to fill a void) can blossom.

Even under the best circumstances, parents and surrogate parents can't always meet your developmental needs for a variety of reasons. When that happens, either your unmet needs will remain painful trigger points for you throughout your life or you can learn to re-parent yourself with the love, patience, wisdom, and compassion that you need to truly thrive. You know *precisely* what you did/didn't get—you're living with the consequences. So, you can fill those gaps better than anyone else, including your parents, surrogates, friends, and partners.

## HEALING CHILDHOOD WOUNDS



### Part I: Childhood Needs

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Read through the list of childhood needs on the next page. If you had any needs that aren't mentioned on the list, write them down at the bottom of the chart.

Next to each category, write the corresponding letter(s) to indicate the person in your life who filled those needs for you: list "M" for mother(s), "F" for father(s), or "S" for surrogate(s) for the met needs. If **partially met**, place a "PM" next to the box and circle the ones that were **met**.

First, take a moment to notice what needs **did** get met. Under the circumstances you experienced as a child, is there something one or more of your caregivers did well or reasonably well?

It's often (but not always) more common for families to meet the needs listed in the first two columns more so than the far-right column. Consistently meeting emotional needs listed on the right can be more challenging. It's very likely one or more of our needs from any of these columns remain unmet or partially met.

For example, you may look at the list and say, "*I needed my dad to cherish me.*" That's valid. And if he did not meet that need, you may carry an emotional wound that

causes you to struggle with feelings of unworthiness, loneliness, or isolation. You may choose unhealthy partners who reinforce these feelings of not being cherished or appreciated.

## Part 2: Healing Turnarounds

---

While you can't undo what's happened in the past, you can change how you respond to it now. To resolve any emotional void carried over from your childhood, you can turn it around and heal yourself. Healing turnarounds put the power of healing back in your control and liberate you from relying on the people who weren't able to meet those needs for you. For example, if the need you chose was "cherished" and more specifically, *I needed my dad to cherish me*, then a healing turnaround would be: *I cherish me*.

### Step 1:

From the list of childhood needs, choose one unmet need from childhood that you want to work with today. Next, complete these prompts:

- My childhood need was... [*Example: I needed my dad to cherish me*]
- Healing Turnaround: What I know to be true now is... [*Example: I cherish me*]

### Step 2:

Now, write your healing turnaround in your own handwriting (do not type these). That movement of the hand and seeing the words in your own handwriting helps reinforce and affirm the new belief.

### Step 3:

Write an inventory of all the ways you already meet your healing turnaround for yourself:

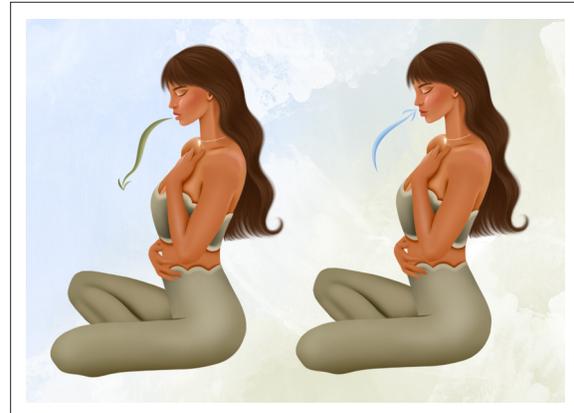
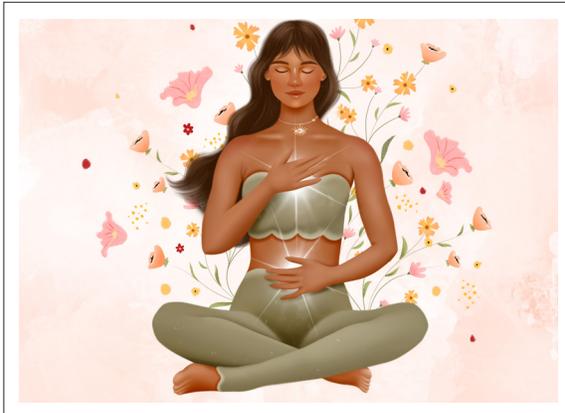
*Example: My childhood need was that I wanted my dad to cherish me. I felt unlovable. I felt insecure. What I know to be true now is that I cherish me. How do I know that to be true? I exercise every day. I get good rest at night. I surround myself with people who love me. My dog loves me. I also tend to the things that nourish me on a weekly basis, including yoga, gardening, cooking, reading, and drawing.*

## HEALING CHILDHOOD WOUNDS

### Step 4:

There's more—we need your body to get into the game now. Pull out your interoception ninja skills! Ready? Go!...

Using your healing turnaround, take some time to ground yourself. Find a comfortable chair to sit in. Close your eyes; feel your sitz bones, your feet, and your back, as you take in support from beneath and behind you.



With one hand on your heart space and one hand on your belly, inhale and exhale using long, slow, deep breaths.

*Slowly* speak your turnaround sentence at least fifteen times, whispering the words out loud, cascading each word and letting it land in your chest/belly, until your body feels a settling inside. You can also use your Mala beads in Step 4.

### Step 5:

As always, look for changes in your mood, body sensations and your behavior and keep track of where it's beginning to show up in your life in the next two to four weeks.

Repeat this ritual for each healing turnaround until each one feels true for you (take your time; this ritual may have a long shelf life!).

Being honest with yourself about your psychological wounds can be very difficult. It's human nature to avoid things that we fear will bring us pain. It may feel easier to avoid these wounds by denying or repressing them when they become too scary or painful to face. If you ever catch yourself in moments of fear, pain, avoidance, or denial, I

## HEALING CHILDHOOD WOUNDS

invite you to take a breath and ask yourself: *What am I afraid of? What keeps me from exploring what's underneath the fear? Is what I'm fearing just another paper tiger? Do I need support from a trusted source?*

The beauty of healing childhood/psychological wounds is that you don't need anyone but yourself to do it. Doing the healing yourself means you will know precisely what to say. Trying to talk to your parents or the people who were part of your upbringing will be less satisfying and potentially (depending on the responses you receive) re-wounding.

You are the expert on you. You know what needs didn't get met, and how to phrase those needs. Therefore, one of the most fundamental keys to healing even the most painful psychological wounds—is your dear, sweet self.



REFLECTIONS

**WHAT'S DIFFERENT?**

**Advanced Level Somatic Dimensions  
Noticing Inner Experience**

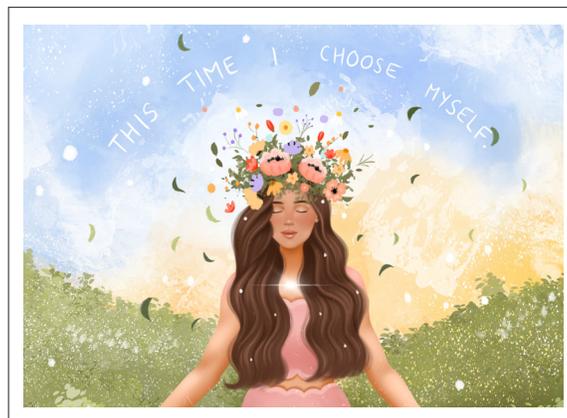
*Refer to the examples here to describe your inner experience (aka, interoception),  
use the Glossaries of Somatic Dimensions and Emotions  
(see appendix), or add your own:*

Airy	Emotion(s)	Image(s)	Softening
Breath	Expansive	Lukewarm	Softer
Brisk	Fluid	Melting	Smooth
Buzzing	Glowing	Oblong	Snug
Calmer	Grounded	Pulsing	Spacious
Comfy	Heart Beating	Relaxed	Tepid
Cooler	Heavier	Round	Tingling
Color(s)	Held	Settled	Vibrating
Dense	Hotter	Slower	Warmer

**Answer These Questions For Yourself:**

Now identify *where* in the body you feel different...

Before this ritual, my body's experience was...	During this ritual, my body's experience was...	After this ritual, my body is more/less...



🕯️🕯️🕯️ **Advanced Level Exercise: Marry Yourself**

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No other will be with you your entire lifetime but you. Not your parents, your spouse, your friends, not even your children will have known you for your entire lifetime. So, marry yourself first. Once you commit to yourself, you can be far more available to those you love. Be creative. Consider the commitments you wish to honor. Here is a sample vow for your marriage:

## HEALING CHILDHOOD WOUNDS

I, \_\_\_\_\_, choose you, and your beautiful body and mind for life. I promise you my deepest love, my complete devotion and tender loving care from this moment forward. I promise to love you, commit to you, and support you. I will appreciate you as you are, care for you and keep you safe. I pledge to respect you and your abilities and to remember all that you do for me each and every moment of my life. As you do for me, I will lend you strength, encouragement, and an abiding faith in challenging times. I promise to honor you, love you and cherish you for the rest of our lives.

I celebrate you exactly as you are, beautiful body and mind. I will respect and honor you always. I will accept and love you unconditionally. Just as you are, I love you deeply. I will have and hold you through tears, laughter, sickness and in health. I will love and cherish you from this day forward, beautiful Self.

This is my sacred commitment to you. From this moment forward, we are in a union before our Infinite Source.

I love and cherish you, always,

**My Marriage Vows:**



## REFLECTIONS

# WHAT'S DIFFERENT?



### Advanced Level Somatic Dimensions Noticing Inner Experience

*Refer to the examples here to describe your inner experience (aka, interoception),  
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## HEALING CHILDHOOD WOUNDS

### Answer These Questions For Yourself:

Now identify *where* in the body you feel different...

Before this ritual, my body's experience was...	During this ritual, my body's experience was...	After this ritual, my body is more/less...

As always, look for changes in your mood, body sensations and your behavior and keep track of where it's beginning to show up in your life in the next two to four weeks.

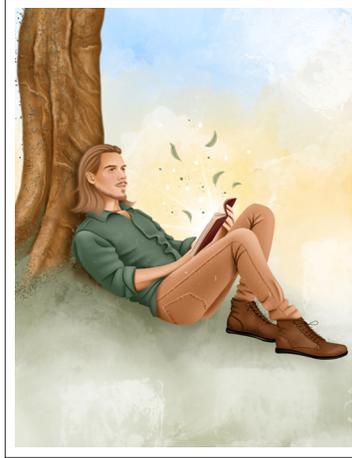
### **Commitment to Practice**

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Focus on one ritual at a time. Keep it simple and doable. You want to be successful with whatever you choose.

Be kind to yourself. This journey isn't easy and no one is perfect. There will be setbacks but if you stay committed, you will grow.

## HEALING CHILDHOOD WOUNDS



### REFLECTIONS

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#### **WHAT'S CLEARER?**

After reading this chapter, what's clearer to you that you want to be sure and remember? Write your thoughts down here or in your personal journal:

Write your thoughts here:



“

*Even after all this time the sun never says to the earth, ‘you owe me.’  
Look what happens with a love like that. It lights up the whole sky.*

- Hafiz



I HOPE YOU KNOW  
YOU ARE DOING  
BETTER THAN YOU  
THINK YOU ARE





## WHEN “NO” FORTIFIES RELATIONSHIPS

---

How do we preserve our relationships *and* speak our truth? How can we accept and make amends with those we’ve hurt? How do we take responsibility for intentionally or unintentionally wounding others? How do we live our legacy now, seeding love, joy, hope and peace wherever we go?

We “bring the weather” to our relationships and resentment is a Category 5 hurricane. Resentment happens when we’ve given more of ourselves than we really wanted to give. As Dr. Gabor Maté once said, “resentment is soul suicide.” We keep a tally in our minds when what we give no longer accounts for what we believe we’ve received; we’re building up a reservoir of our “good deeds” and feeling unappreciated. “Look at all the things I’ve done for you!” we say. If you’re resentful toward someone who matters to you, it is your personal responsibility to change that by being emotionally honest, starting with yourself.

How do you know if you’re resentful? Check in with your throat and chest—are you feeling constriction there? Do you find yourself ruminating, regretting giving too much of yourself to someone or something? Do you find yourself feeling envious of that person? If so, there’s a good chance you’ve gone too far with your “yesses” and resentment has taken over. Resentment often builds when you’re afraid to set clear boundaries. There’s no room for any of that in your Original Blueprint®.



### *Aaron’s Story*

Take for example, my 47-year-old client Aaron (not his real name), who deeply

## WHEN “NO” FORTIFIES RELATIONSHIPS

resented his father’s absence during most of his childhood. During our sessions, he easily recalled all the things that dad did wrong back then. It did not surprise me that, as an adult, he harbored similar resentments towards his wife and his boss, along with his father, for his lot in life. Using the resentment exercise, you’ll learn in this chapter he began to see that much of his present-day resentment stemmed from his old desire to please his dad. He desperately wanted his father to love and pay attention to him as a child.

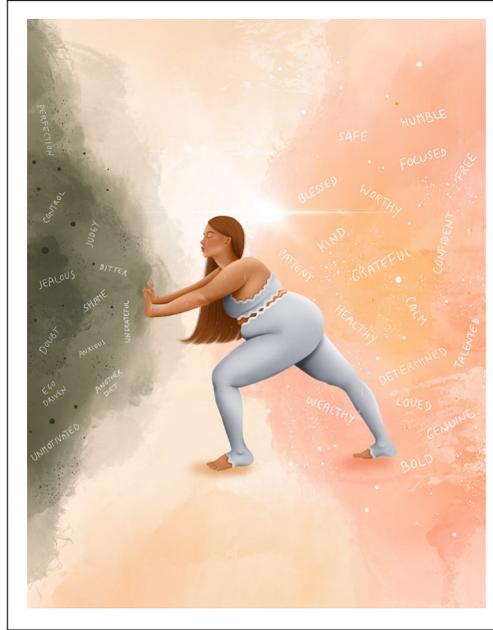
As an adult, the client would say “yes” to everyone. But when it came to things that he wanted or needed, he’d deny himself everything while continuing to accommodate those around him, slowly building resentment toward others but never advocating for his own needs. He was afraid he’d be abandoned or rejected—much like he experienced rejection from his father—so he refused to say “no” and continued feeling unappreciated, resentful, and envious.

My client felt miserable most of the time. At times, he even appeared to revel in his misery. He remarked, “I’m on the verge of long-term resentment toward my wife.” I confronted him and said, “You have no right to be resentful toward her if you didn’t honestly communicate your needs. You’re responsible for putting yourself in this position by not being honest. You didn’t do anyone any favors by saying “yes” to things you really didn’t want. And now, your resentment is eating you up. It all starts with your relationship with your dad. I think you need to resolve those feelings first, so that you can see more clearly what you need to do today to be more present and authentic with the people in your life.”

Because the therapeutic relationship was long-standing and resilient, the direct feedback I gave him shook him to his core and had him deeply reflecting on his own behavior. He took it to heart and went back to his wife, apologizing for not being more honest about his needs. The two are in couples therapy now, working through their challenges and he is far more accepting of who his father truly is and what’s possible (and not possible) in the relationship with his dad. 📖

Before we get to repairing resentment, let’s begin at the origins of resentment—the importance of setting boundaries.

## WHEN “NO” FORTIFIES RELATIONSHIPS



### 🕯️🕯️🕯️ **Advanced Level Ritual: Setting Boundaries**

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You’ll find this ritual either easy or difficult. For some people, setting healthy boundaries by saying “no” to others is a normal part of their everyday life. For other people, setting boundaries feels excruciatingly hard.

When you don’t set healthy boundaries, there’s a tremendous cost to yourself and your relationships. Trust is broken—sometimes indelibly. If the people in your life don’t know where they stand with you, it’s confusing to them. People may become wary of engaging with you on any meaningful level because they wonder when you’ll catch them off-guard, surprised that you said “yes” to something that, in reality, you didn’t want or intend to do.

While your intentions may be good—perhaps wanting harmony, balance, maintaining connection or approval—you’re likely to get the opposite result. Not setting boundaries will repel people from you. It’s very unkind *not* to say “no” when you mean “no”.

Saying “no” can (and should) be done with consideration. For example, “I’m sorry but that’s not going to work for me,” would suffice. “I can’t do that because...”, is another way to kindly say, “no.” “I can’t do that, but here’s what I *can* do,” is another. You’re using kindness and diplomacy *and* being direct. Keeping healthy relationships intact requires saying “no” sometimes and prevents the building of resentment that can destroy intimate bonds.

## WHEN “NO” FORTIFIES RELATIONSHIPS

To take care of yourself *and* your relationships, set healthy boundaries with others. Answer the questions below. Start with the easier situations or people and then build towards the more challenging ones in your life.

Who is the person with whom you need to establish a clearer boundary?

What's the situation?

What do you normally do to stay safe in that scenario?

What's the benefit to you?

What's the benefit to them?

What's the cost to you?

What's the cost to them?

## WHEN “NO” FORTIFIES RELATIONSHIPS

Next time, I will instead say:

When you actually have the exchange with the person in real life, write down what you noticed leading up to, during, and after saying “no”.



REFLECTIONS

**WHAT’S DIFFERENT?**



**Advanced Level Somatic Dimensions  
Noticing Inner Experience**

*Refer to the examples here to describe your inner experience (aka, interoception),  
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Cooler	Heavier	Round	Tingling
Color(s)	Held	Settled	Vibrating
Dense	Hotter	Slower	Warmer

## WHEN “NO” FORTIFIES RELATIONSHIPS

### Answer These Questions For Yourself:

Now identify *where* in the body you feel different...

Before this ritual, my body’s experience was...	During this ritual, my body’s experience was...	After this ritual, my body is more/less...

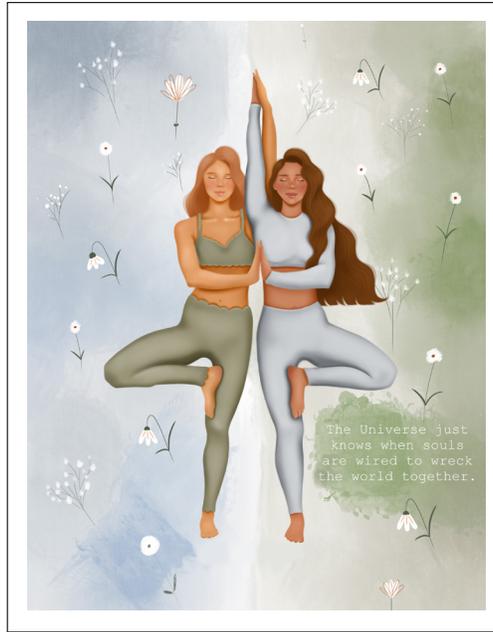
If this experiment was difficult in any way, repeat it as a ritual, until you feel settled and able to establish boundaries more easily.

However, if the experiment triggered a response that felt intolerable, you may need the support of a trained practitioner to support you with boundary setting (refer to the book’s preface for resources).

If you already knew this experiment would be too much and passed on it, that’s a boundary in and of itself!

Again, I encourage you to reach out for help if you need it.

## WHEN “NO” FORTIFIES RELATIONSHIPS



### 🕯️🕯️🕯️ **Advanced Level Ritual: Resentment-to-Acceptance**

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Name an authority figure (mom, dad, surrogate parent, teacher) from childhood whom you resent most.

This will be the person you will refer to for this next exercise (if you are unable to identify anyone from your childhood but you have someone in mind from your adult life, you can do this exercise using them).

Now, sometimes resentment stems from unforgivable acts, such as abuse, neglect or when a whole group of people have been systematically marginalized and abused. If that applies in your case, ask yourself if you're giving your abuser more energy than they deserve. Is the resentment you feel sucking your life force from you? If you can lift the resentment, it may free you to channel some of that energy in more productive ways—perhaps even change systems that perpetuate dysfunctional behavior like racism, sexism, antisemitism, and homophobia. Instead of attempting compassion or forgiveness (some things just simply aren't forgivable), *acceptance* may allow you to release the stuck energy that could be put to better use in your life. It's a tall order but perhaps, over time, we can lift each other up if we keep pressing forward.

Abuse and biases aside, if you resent someone from your adult life, such as an ex-wife or ex-husband, and you spend a tremendous amount of your precious time resenting them, you might as well have stayed with him or her because he or she is continuing to suck the joy from your life.

## WHEN “NO” FORTIFIES RELATIONSHIPS

Apply the following exercise with a person you’re feeling resentment toward:

Reflect on the person you resent most. Go back as far as you can to recall the earliest memory when you felt resentment or anger toward them. Complete the exercise by writing as many examples of why you resent them. You can find copies of this worksheet at [IrisInstitute.com](http://IrisInstitute.com).

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
<i>I resent (X) for...</i>	<i>Instead (X) should have...</i>	<i>How am I different than (X)...</i>	<i>How am I similar to (X) (radical honesty here!)</i>

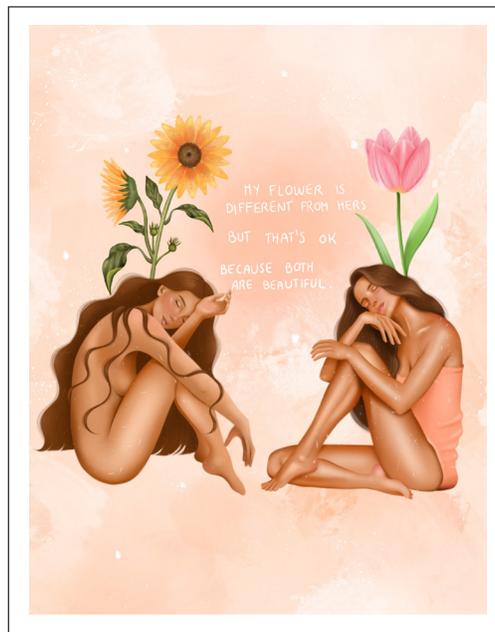


## WHEN “NO” FORTIFIES RELATIONSHIPS

Is your resentment or envy holding you back today? If so, how is it impacting your relationships, including with this person? What’s one thing you have the power to change that would liberate you from resentment or envy in this and other relationships?

Accepting and making peace with what happened in the past—with compassion and empathy—can release you. That’s what we all want for ourselves—to be accepted as we are; I find acceptance to be the most powerful antidote to resentment. If you can accept the person you resent, see him/her as flawed, just as we all have flaws (including you), it releases both of you. You can be at peace within yourself and free to live with grace.

Acceptance isn’t resignation either; you’re not *giving up*. You’re choosing acceptance over resentment. In fact, acceptance is the opposite of giving up—it’s a force multiplier. It frees up the stagnant energy to channel it into areas of your life that you want to see expand. It enables you to grow exponentially to your fullest and highest self.



### Advanced Level Ritual: Makig Amends

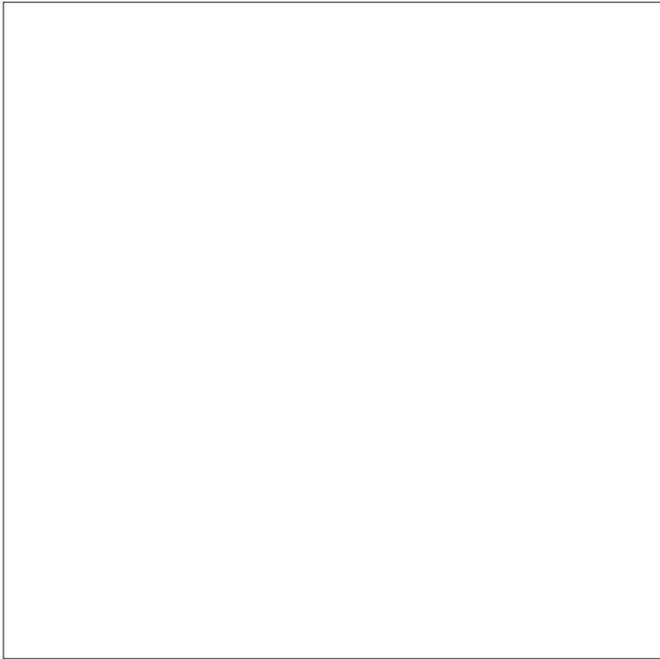
Now it’s time to make amends with anyone who you regret ever hurting along the way. If you’ve been abused by this person in any way, I’ll leave it up to you to decide if

## WHEN “NO” FORTIFIES RELATIONSHIPS

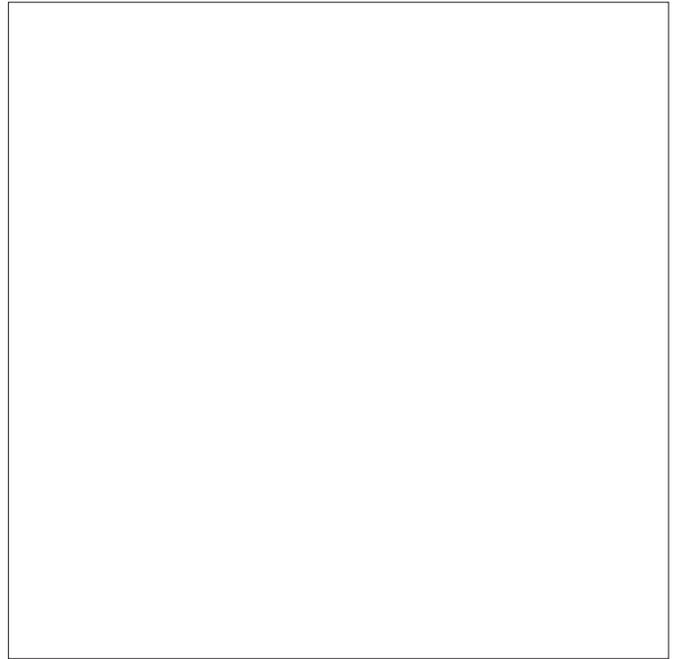
making amends would be helpful to you. I don't think we need to forgive everyone. If it's a toxic relationship, acceptance or forgiveness from afar are better antidotes.

Okay, let's take an inventory of those in your life with whom you want to make amends.

**People I want to reach out to**



**People I want to make amends with  
from afar or keep private**



From your inventory, identify the people you want to reach out to and the ones you would rather write about and keep private for yourself. If you've been through a particularly painful or traumatizing experience with someone, it may be better not to contact that person directly at this time. You may conclude that it's better to keep your distance because it would be harmful to either you or the other person. If that's the case, please don't feel pressure to make contact. The following exercise should feel safe and cathartic for *you*, without being destructive to anyone else.

Either way, if there are people you do not want to contact, you might want to take some time to read your letters to them out loud to yourself, maybe with a compassionate listener present. Each time you complete an amends with someone (written or spoken directly), ask yourself:

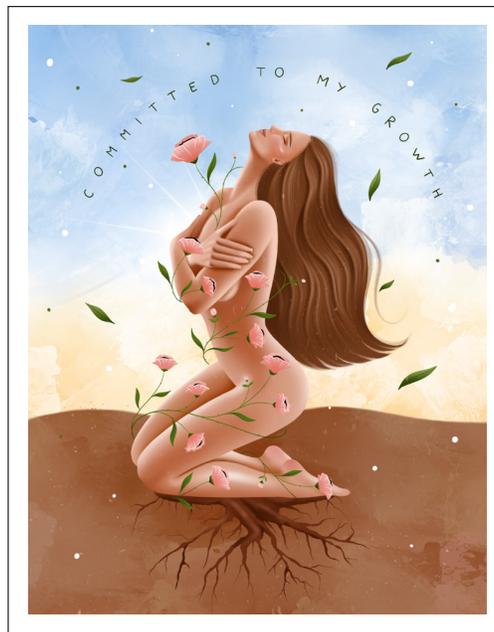
## WHEN “NO” FORTIFIES RELATIONSHIPS

How did it feel to extend a sincere apology to that person?

Were there moments where it stretched you out of your comfort zone?

What was it like to make peace with those you’ve had trouble with in the past?

Be prepared if someone you reach out to doesn’t accept your desire for amends. In this case, you can complete the amends with that person in their absence.



### Commitment to Practice

Watch for moments when you find yourself saying “yes” to things you don’t want to do. Pay attention to the impulse, write about it and see if you can be direct and kind with that person and tell them what is—and isn’t—working for you in the relationship.



## REFLECTIONS

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### **WHAT'S CLEARER?**

After reading this chapter, what's clearer to you that you want to be sure and remember? Write your thoughts down here or in your personal journal:

Write your thoughts here:

## Transition

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As you know by now, any time we shift from one thing to the next—big or small—it’s important to note it in our bodies. It doesn’t matter if the shift is something small, like taking a break at work, while you move from one meeting to the next, or something big like planning a wedding or having a baby. It’s important to take a moment to notice the transition.

First, stand up.

As we make the transition notice what’s at your back, what’s behind you. So far, you challenged yourself to apply what you learned through rituals and exercises. Notice what’s different for you now than before you took the challenge.

Look at what’s in front of you. You’ll be looking outward to take your work into the world.

Take a nice, long deep breath (inbreath through your nose, outbreath through your mouth).

Step forward.



## Bringing Your Fierceness Into the World

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Now that you have completed the inner journey to liberate yourself from fear and reclaim your Original Blueprint®, it's time to look at how we can positively affect the external world. Part Three is all about externalizing who you are in positive ways.



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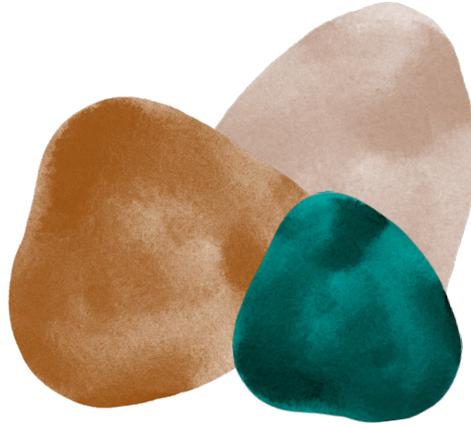
*One day you will ask me which is more important? My life or yours?  
I will say mine and you will walk away not knowing that you are my life.*

- Khalil Gibran





TO FIND  
YOURSELF  
IS TO TOUCH  
A WHOLE DAMN  
UNIVERSE



## MOBILIZING YOUR ORIGINAL BLUEPRINT®

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Humans are microcosms of the earth and our universe. Like the earth, we are 70% water (fluids) and 30% matter (organs). Science also has taught us that we are made from the same material as the stars in our universe. We also share 99.9% of the same DNA across gender and ethnicity; less than 0.1% of us is different from the next person. Knowing these facts tells me there's no doubt we are *One* single source of energy—what I call the *Collective You*.

Now that you have begun to reconnect with your Original Blueprint®, how will you transmit all the love you're fully embodying and share it with the world?

Until this chapter, you've been exploring yourself, how your experiences in life shaped you as an individual and how your village impacts your personal growth and development. In this chapter, you'll be turning the mirror around and looking at the *Collective You*; how your Original Blueprint® can positively impact the world. The mark you leave on the world isn't necessarily dependent on what you say or do. It's sometimes what you *don't say* and what you *don't do* that leaves an impression. Empowering your Original Blueprint® to have a positive impact on the *Collective You* is imperative to solving the most pressing issues of our time.

Virtually all the man-made problems that we face on this planet—from war to climate change to racism, sexism, and poverty—stem from people using others for their own ends (often to amass power and wealth for themselves) and ignoring the consequences that arise from their actions (or inactions). This is the opposite of how people behave when they're operating from their Original Blueprint®. True power is inseparable from personal responsibility and the commitment to being in service of the *Collec-*

*tive You.*

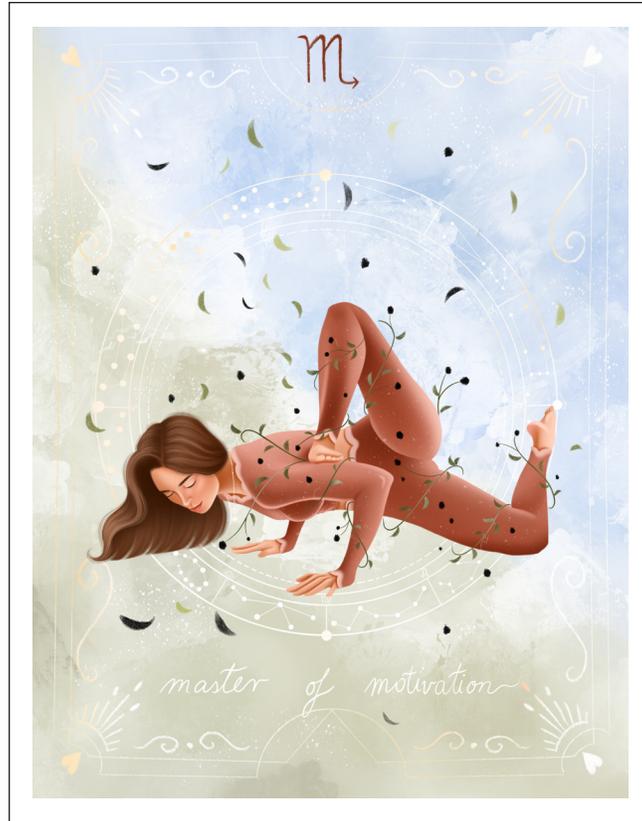
We all have positive and not-so-positive impact on the world. It takes courage and resilience to look at the unsavory sides of ourselves.

For example, many people believe we can't impact global issues, a belief that keeps us trapped in a narrow prism of the world, worrying only about ourselves and a small circle of family or friends. But, as we know, we aren't wired to be isolated. Humans are pack animals. We need each other. We need support. We are far more powerful when we come together.

With massive advances in technology in the past fifty years, the world has become much smaller than ever before. Travel, communications, technology, and other industries have made access to other people and other cultures far more accessible. Yet, we still fear "otherness." We must ask ourselves, *Why?* The truth is that our dividedness is something that we *can* change. In fact, that is one of the most crucial lessons that we must learn, as a global community, if human beings are to continue to survive and thrive on this planet.

One small contribution from you can have a butterfly effect (*meaning*: something small happening in one part of the world—like the flap of a butterfly wing—can have a big impact, creating massive change across the planet). How you make a positive contribution will become clearer to you over time. You are in the world right now, doing some job out there that ultimately is intended to help others. From CEO to street sweeper, we are all doing the same job—we are here to help each other. Make your helping count.

When families, communities and villages are successful, the potential for emotional, spiritual, and material abundance increases exponentially. Economies grow, innovation expands, and we do not leave anyone behind. A rising tide lifts all boats, as the old saying goes. Deficit thinking is a primitive, fear-based, survival strategy that is an antiquated way of looking at society through the zero-sum lens of the Haves and the Have Nots. It's short-sighted. If we lift each other up, success and opportunity can have a multiplier effect on our collective growth.



### Advanced Level Ritual: Living Your Legacy Story

Ask yourself: *What's the legacy that I want to leave for the generations to come? How do I want to leave the world better than when I entered it?*

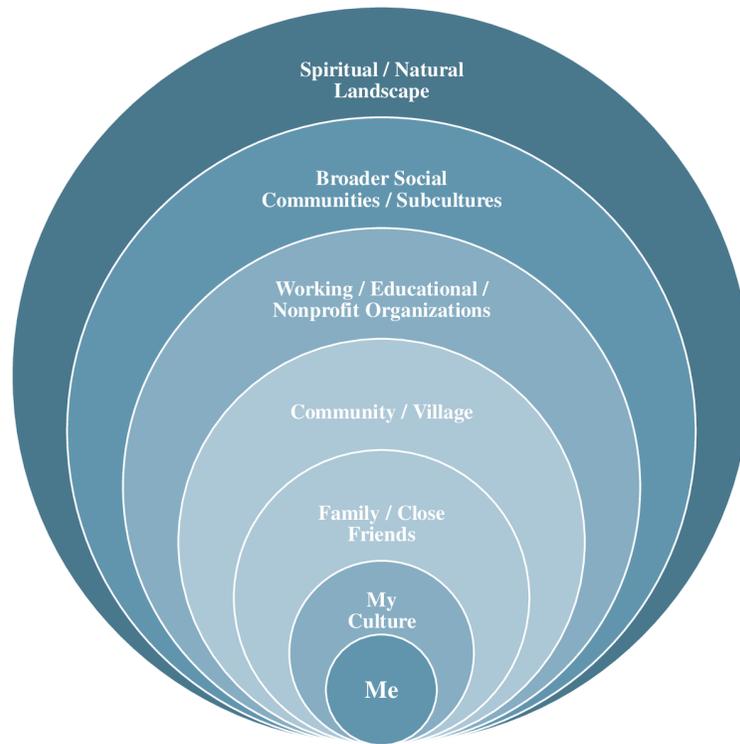
Fully inhabiting your Original Blueprint® is not just about healing and growing for yourself or your family—it's about the legacy of your impact on the wider world. Legacy is not about the end of life; it's about **living your legacy** right now, every single day. Your legacy shouldn't be a surprise to you or anyone else when you depart the world. It should be clear as day that you've been *living your legacy* all along.

Are you convinced that you matter by now? I certainly hope so because you have a *solemn obligation* to fully participate in this world.

Writing what I call a *Legacy Story* will help you define and put your purpose into action. Write the narrative in present tense. Make it specific and actionable. Before writing that story for yourself, let's get clearer about your legacy and how you want to impact others.

First, how big do you want to go? Do you want your legacy to influence your family, community, the world? Look at this **Legacy Map** to see increasing spheres of influence:

## MOBILIZING YOUR ORIGINAL BLUEPRINT®



Across these spheres of influence, explore the following legacy questions. For those who have children as a priority, I encourage you to also extend your answers beyond your children. Take your time, reflecting and writing your story, using these prompts to flesh out the narrative (2-3 paragraphs) If you're unclear, ask a few trusted confidantes to talk it through with you or you can go to my website to refer to a Legacy Story example:

What's your #1 superpower?

What are you most passionate about?

Who do you care most about?

MOBILIZING YOUR ORIGINAL BLUEPRINT®

What's the burning need you can fulfill in the world?

How far will you go to see it happen?

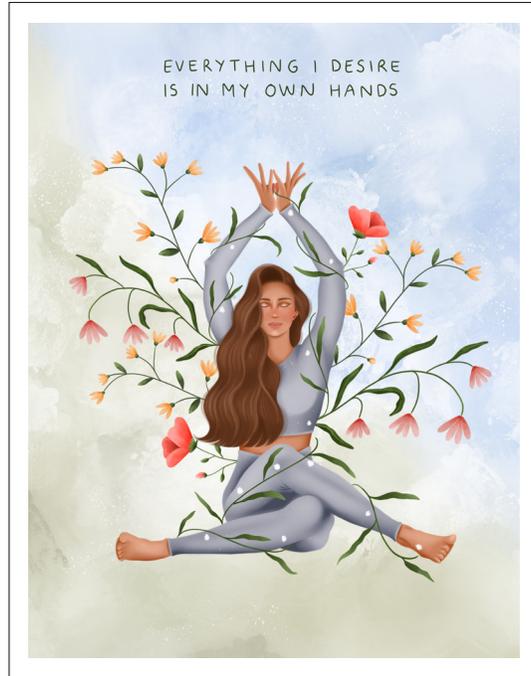
Will its impact happen in your lifetime or in generations to follow?

Specifically, what will be different because of your contribution?

What resources or support do you need to make it happen?

What might get in the way of your success? How will you overcome it?

How will you get yourself back on track *when* (not if) you lose sight?



**Advanced Level Ritual: Legacy Commitments**

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Ask yourself these questions:

Be specific...

In the next thirty days, I will:

In the next sixty days, I will:

In the next 180 days, I will:

In a year, I will:

In two years, I will:

In five years, I will:

In a decade, I will:

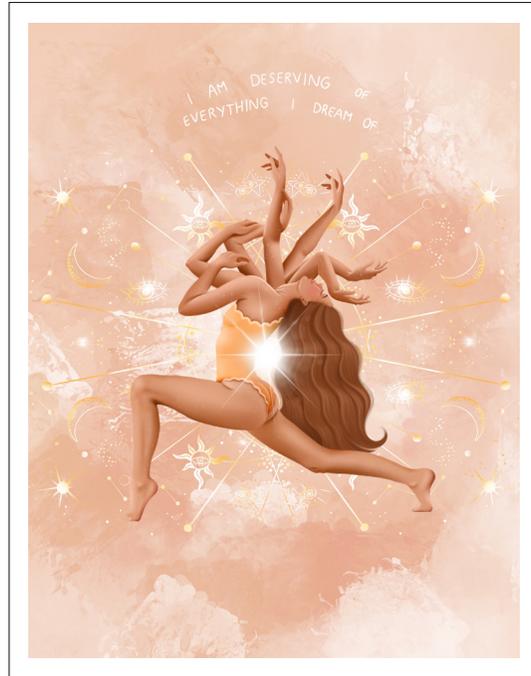
Before I leave this world, my legacy will look like:

If my legacy remains incomplete, I will ensure it continues with (name person or entity):

Everyone has the potential to be a leader; everyone can help shape the different systems of which they are a part. Look in your system—the answer to your legacy may be surprisingly close. For example, how can a CEO have a massive impact on our social systems? Prioritize diversity hires in the C-suite, mentor up-and-coming women and other marginalized professionals in the workforce, invest wealth in an underserved school and develop a pipeline of new hires from that community.

Conversely, what can someone with limited resources do? Volunteer time to disadvantaged youth as a mentor, teach in a school system that needs help or participate in a movement you care about—like combatting climate change.

You've already learned to do one of the single most impactful things that will help you define the legacy that you leave the world—you have learned how to regulate your nervous system. Going into the world with a body and mind that are working in concert means you're more likely to notice how safe you are, how others are safe, and how much the world needs you. Keep practicing that and you've already given the greatest gift you can give to the world. A nervous system that is regulated—is contagious.



### Advanced Level Ritual: Vision Board—Manifesting Your Legacy

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A vision board is a visual representation of your legacy and your heart's desires—an externalization of your hopes, dreams, aspirations, and intentions. By taking these dreams out of the internal patterns and systems in your head, you can bring them into an interactive field. You can invite the Universe to participate, listen, and help enact your vision. Manifesting is one of the most powerful ways to enact change in your life; it's drawing upon the sacred feminine in all of us (all genders) that doesn't require *doing* anything, it requires *being*—a powerful calling out to the Universe to make it happen for and with us.

The images, words, and phrases that you put on your board serve as a reminder of your commitments in your legacy and what you want most in life. In addition to an “I am” mantra, visualization is one of the most powerful things that you can do to bring what you want into your present reality. It's also a fun way to celebrate your commitment(s) and to create a visual representation of what you wish to manifest.

Collect magazines that represent you through imagery and words, find inspiring phrases and quotes to keep you motivated, and add the pictures of the people and things you love most. Once you have a good collection of all these items, cut them out and place them on a trifold board (like the ones kids use for science fairs). Make sure you use some form of adhesive that can be unstuck, too, so that over time, as the vision changes, you can update what you wish to see manifest. Avoid the temptation of using

your computer to print out images—the journey of discovery and *taking your time* with your board is part of your healing and growth. Don't rush through this journey.

Imagine all of what you see on the board is possible and right around the corner. Begin to notice in your body where the feeling of *anticipation* resides in you. Hang out with its dimensions inside and imagine you can call all of what you want in life here into the present moment. Feel the anticipation of it coming. What you create on your vision board is sacred, so keep it where only you and your Infinite Source can see it. Trust that what you request will be answered with your highest interests in mind. Make it a sacred pact and allow it to be something that continues to transform, as you do, throughout your life. As things manifest, save the images in a folder so that you can celebrate and appreciate how far you've come, and introduce new visions to the board.



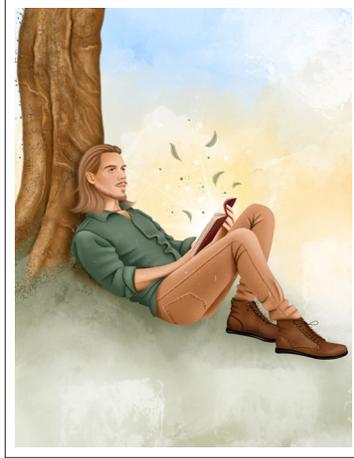
### Advanced Level Ritual: Appreciation Begets Abundance

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The relationship you have with your Infinite Source is very much the same as any other relationship in your life. We all want to be appreciated for our acts of love; when you appreciate your partner for their kindness or generosity, it simply encourages more of the same. Who doesn't want to be appreciated too! It makes us feel good and motivates us to do more of the same. Your relationship with the Universe is no different. It wants to know that what it's giving you is being appreciated. When you appreciate what you have—free of agendas or expectations—more goodness will come to you.

I prefer the word “appreciation” as opposed to “gratitude” because it’s more active. Every day, I’m in conversation with my Infinite Source, sharing what I appreciate about the life I’ve been given and the abundance I experience every day. This is my most sacred relationship, the one that feeds and nourishes my soul. This dialogue comes easy to me because I have cultivated it, just like any relationship in my life that matters to me.

With my Infinite Source, I know that I am loved, no matter what. I encourage you to be in the same—or similar—dialogue: to appreciate the abundance of your life, every day. In doing so, you will find that the Universe will respond in kind with more abundance for you. As with any love in your life, when we appreciate what we have, we get more of it. It is the most powerful ritual if what you want is to manifest more of what you love about your present, exquisite life.



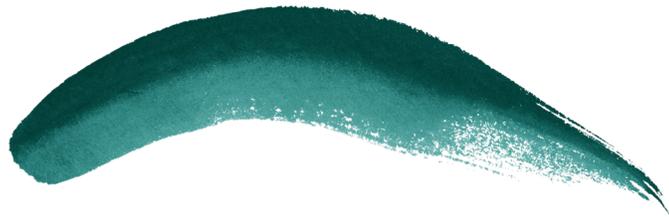
REFLECTIONS

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**WHAT'S CLEARER?**

After reading this chapter, what's clearer to you that you want to be sure and remember? Write your thoughts down here or in your personal journal:

Write your thoughts here:

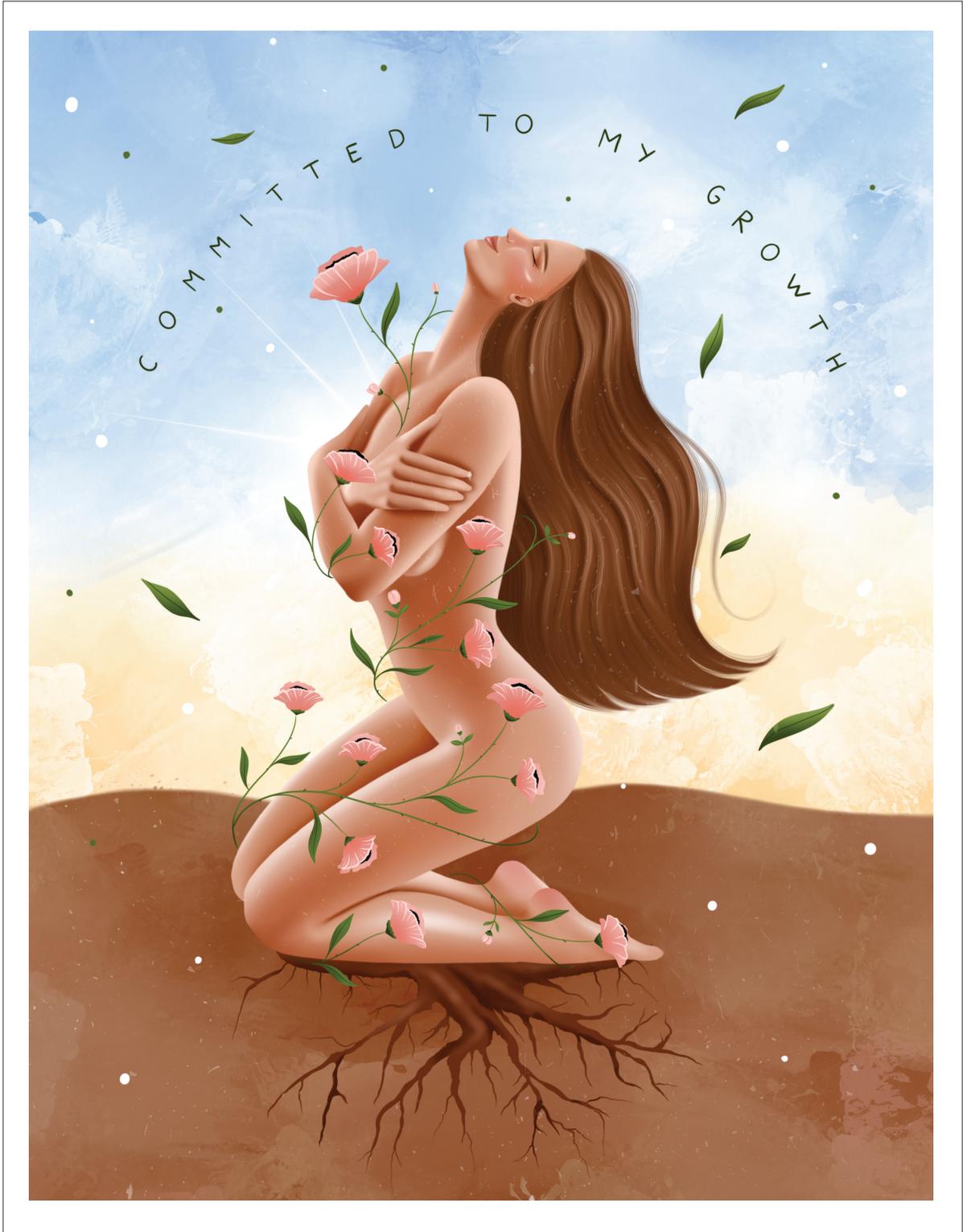


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*The path of the warrior is lifelong, and mastery is often simply staying on the path.*

- Richard Strozzi-Heckler







## CONTINUING THE WORK

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As you complete this stage of your work, first let me say how much I hope this work has supported your healing and growth. Anyone who picks up a book like this tends to place high value on themselves and the life they've been given so I commend you for your incredible commitment and devotion to yourself.

Before we close, it is important that you continue this healing journey and so I am offering some recommendations for you to consider. Also, be sure to check out all the helpful tools and resources at [IrisInstitute.com](http://IrisInstitute.com).

### **Commitment to Practice**

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In terms of choosing an ongoing commitment to something that keeps you connected to your Original Blueprint®, I recommend you choose one or two rituals. You should choose whichever rituals your heart desires most, but here are a few suggestions. I would also be certain that at least one of your choices engages your body.

From the chapter, *When Mind Meets Body and Falls in Love*:

- Advanced Level Ritual: Interoception—Beyond Sensation
- Advanced Level Ritual: “Voo” breathing method

From the chapter, *Healing Childhood Wounds*:

## CONTINUING THE WORK

- Advanced Level Ritual: Healing Turnarounds

From the chapter, *Mobilizing Your Original Blueprint*<sup>®</sup>:

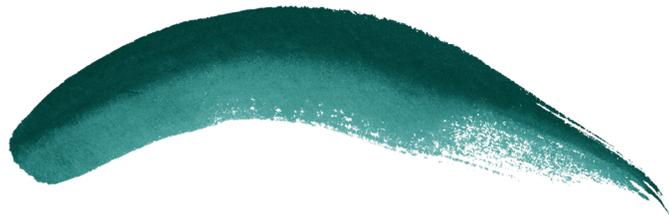
- Advanced Level Ritual: Legacy Commitment
- Advanced Level Ritual: Vision board

As you continue with your rituals, here are a few recommendations to support you:

1. **Accountability:** Choose an accountability partner—someone you live with is preferable. Be specific about how you want that person to support you (e.g., daily/weekly reminders, exactly what day and time, in person or virtual).

2. **Reflections:** Pull together any of the reflections noted at the end of each chapter that still resonate or that you want to remind yourself about in the future and take them with you.

3. **Support:** Start an Original Blueprint<sup>®</sup> group—keep it small and intimate (3-5 people is the ideal). You can use the worksheets provided on my website to get the group going—IrisInstitute.com. Personally, I have my own Original Blueprint<sup>®</sup> group of four people that meets every four to six weeks; we often use a topic from this book to explore an aspect of our Original Blueprint<sup>®</sup> each time.



“

*Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go.*

- T.S. Eliot



Look inside and then you'll see,  
You are the magic you always wanted to be.



A horizontal, irregular brushstroke in a warm brown color, resembling a watercolor or paint stroke. The word "CONCLUSION" is centered within this stroke in a white, sans-serif font.

# CONCLUSION



## CONCLUSION

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This is a long and challenging journey for most people. Getting this far is quite a cause for celebration. Your path is not about trying to be perfect. You're not going to close this book and be all done with this work. Becoming complacent or sliding back into old habits just allows your paper tigers to take up residence in your mind again—growling and snarling and trying to conjure up threats where none exist. No, this is the start of a lifelong journey to stay in touch with who you are in your Original Blueprint®—the part of you that embodies your mental, emotional, and spiritual integrity. This work is also about creating your legacy by challenging yourself to fully show up and be courageous in the world.

One of the most empowering goals you can set for yourself is to live fearlessly in the face of life's challenges. Everyone experiences fear, pain, and trauma at some point. Some of it is collective trauma, such as fighting through a natural disaster that strikes without warning or struggling to survive and provide for your family during hard economic times. You may wrestle with personal trauma, such as the loss of a spouse or a child. Everyone feels overwhelmed and out of control at some point. And the truth is that you can't control what happens in the world. No one can. But you can have mastery over what goes on within you. Mastery over yourself is paramount.

Imagine a majestic, thousand-year-old, redwood tree. That redwood tree has been through all kinds of changes in weather patterns. It's survived storms, lightning strikes, floods, fire—all kinds of hazards that could have destroyed it over the centuries. But that tree has endured because its stable roots keep it grounded. That mighty redwood

## CONCLUSION

tree has the resilience to persevere through all kinds of changes, triumphs, and crisis. It has “family” around it—due to the way redwood trees grow in pods—and it can lean on the family for support.

Collectively, a redwood family can exist for thousands of years, providing new saplings with the space to grow beneath their massive canopy of shade. The redwoods don’t wait for the perfect conditions to emerge before they can grow; new life emerges even during change and upheaval. These ancient trees persist through the fires, floods, and droughts, growing stronger with each passing year.

The redwood tree is tall and solid. But it also has many smaller branches that reach up to the sun’s light above. Those branches sway with the changing winds. The leaves on the branches move and tremble and fall away as the seasons change. They’re not stuck. They’re flexible. That flexibility allows the tree to reach toward the sun’s light, taking in the nourishment it needs and generating oxygen for life to grow around it—including you.

The redwood tree is the way I see myself: I’m rooted in the ground, with my support system firmly planted around me. I have the resilience to move through any storm, any crisis or trauma. And I move through it with flexibility. I metabolize and use the energy of whatever happens, whether society brands the circumstance good or bad. It doesn’t pull me off my center. In fact, I don’t label things as “good” or “bad” anymore. I acknowledge any change that happens in the world and I meet it in the moment, with full presence, as much as possible. Meeting experiences as they come allows me to stay rooted in my body—grounded, connected, and alive in the moment. But I had to confront my deepest fears, over and over again and each time, allow my nervous system to settle a bit more. As time passed, I was able to hold my ground with increased resilience and cross the threshold to reunite with my Original Blueprint®. The wild ride to get here has made the reunion even sweeter.

That was not the case before I began this work. A hurricane would come through and knock all my branches down. I couldn’t hold my footing when challenges or trauma rocked my life. Emotion swept me away with every crisis and I couldn’t pull myself back together.

I had to *devote* myself to nurturing and continuing the process of healing my deepest wounds. I focused on regulating my nervous system, building capacity and resilience, and loving the parts of myself that were still suffering from my childhood wounds. I took responsibility for the ways that I showed up in my life and how my actions affected other people. It’s been a lifelong journey to get to the point where staying open and curious has become second nature.

## CONCLUSION

I challenge my fears, making it a point to travel and meet people who are vastly different from me. In doing so, I've learned how much more we are the same than different. I have stared down the caustic shame I held—from the loss of my own children to the deep-seated corners of my own many biases amassed in my DNA from the generations who've walked this earth before me. Shame is ugly and hard to acknowledge because it takes great self-awareness, courage, and vulnerability; unacknowledged shame is the most corrosive and destructive force of all. It takes bravery, curiosity, and resilience to annihilate it. You've got enough of all those traits now.

Remember that everything that happens in life and every single person who comes into your tiny corner of the world is here to teach you something. You're here to learn and grow and evolve. That process is going to be joyous *and* uncomfortable. Challenge yourself to stretch into uncomfortable territories.

At this point in my journey, I no longer experience regret. One could argue that everybody has regrets; we all wish we could have do-overs in life. But I return to knowing that, even when things don't happen the way I hope, it doesn't diminish my life in any way. It simply means that I've been asked to embark on a new and unexpected adventure. It also means that I had an expectation, which is a sign I'm not in the present moment and that I'll likely learn from that expectation by getting more comfortable with disappointment. After all, change lives in uncomfortable places. That's life. The richness of falling down, of struggling, is not something I would ever want to avoid. We all go through experiences to activate the reservoir of resilience at our core. That way, when we finally connect with our Original Blueprint®, we're ready to embody it fully. Most of what happens in life is by design. Embrace it all.

I appreciate my life to a degree that I didn't know was possible. Every moment is sacred. I savor every breath. I savor my aliveness. I appreciate what I have and feel content with my life. I say my prayers of appreciation at night and find things to be thankful for comes much more easily for me now. *Life comes to me. Nature comes to me. Love comes to me.* The connection I've cultivated with my higher source is so strong now that we're in constant communication. And the most joyful feeling a human being can experience is that unconditional love.

I stay in my body. I breathe. I embrace the lessons that show up with each moment, each person, each interaction. My experiences all serve a greater purpose. Every moment is delicious and without judgment. There's nothing that happens to me or around me that isn't part of my growth and my journey.

Now that I understand how to maintain this connection to my Original Blueprint®, I relish this peaceful, fearless, courageous, spacious, joyful, loving presence.

## CONCLUSION

It's a hard thing to tangibly describe. But what is tangible is how I show up differently in every aspect of my life. My health is far better than it's ever been. Doing the rituals and exercises described in this book has enabled me to repair a lot of my health issues, along with many, many healers who've helped me along the way. I've healed my lingering emotional traumas. I feel physically, mentally, and spiritually vibrant. I know that within me is the capacity and resilience to get through anything.

If I sound like I've figured it all out, let me be clear: I am in no way perfect. I reserve the right to be imperfect! Perfection is boring, not to mention unattainable. Life is weird, wacky and one big surprise after another. I'd rather swim in life's murky mess and delight in it.

However you decide to move through your life, I hope that you heal and release fear, so that you can be in the richness of your own beautiful self—as present as possible in every moment. Crisis is a gift because times of crisis is when you begin to put things into perspective. Enduring at least one major crisis brings you face-to-face with the deeper facets of your character—the strength, determination, and flexibility—that you can then use to navigate anything. And you learn who will be by your side.

Being knocked about by the ebbs and flows of life is the equivalent to checking social media constantly to see how many people have “liked” us. When we get lots of “likes” and positive feedback, we're elated. We feel popular and admired. But when no one responds to our posts or, even worse, the responses are negative, we drop into depression. Don't let the winds of the moment pull you in either direction—rise above it.

If you choose to let external forces bandy you about, you'll find yourself at the mercy of the world, the fluctuations of life constantly knocking you off balance. The resolve with which you face life's ups and downs determines whether you'll be able to overcome hardships—like a powerful, majestic redwood. Lacking resolve, you'll eventually become gnarled and brittle, a tree whose roots are not firmly planted. When the rains come, the tree will topple.

But that all goes away when you realize that bravely meeting challenges without fear allows you to stay in the constant steadiness of your interior self. There's no need to respond to other people's judgments of you—or even your inner critic's judgment of you. That's all just gibberish—a never-ending stream of nonsense. Your Original Blueprint® is beyond such concerns. It's ripe with curiosity, joy, play and, most of all, love. It's free of both fear and judgment. It's a precious and present gem of ourselves that doesn't attach to an identity or move in whatever direction the wind blows.

Your Original Blueprint® doesn't resist the impermanence of life. For human be-

## CONCLUSION

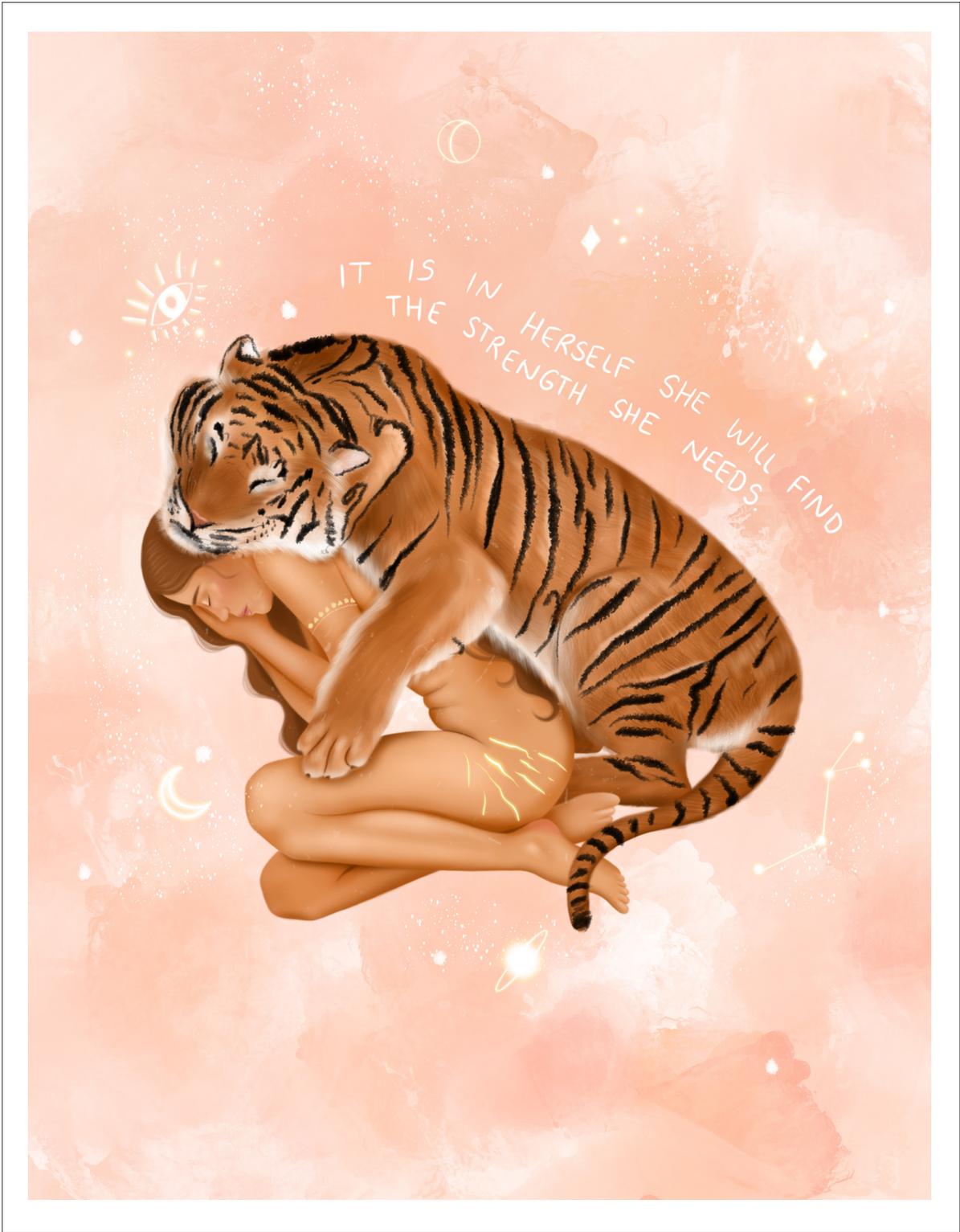
ings, the primal root of all our fear is the fear of falling into an abyss, no longer relevant and forgotten after we die. But death is part of life; it's a gift to have an ending to things because it means that there's some new chapter coming. And we are clearing the way for an emergence of newness—here on earth and wherever our *energy* bodies go from here. How cool is that— we free our physical bodies and our souls return to the universe!

If you can release your fear of death by accepting it and return to the present moment, life becomes an infinite source of exponential joy. And any false notion of falling into nothingness is simply a paper tiger. Death is simply a shedding of the physical body. The essence of you that transcends this physical plane is your Original Blueprint®. It's who you were before you came into this world and the aspect of your soul you have now re-awakened. It will be central to who you truly are when you leave this planet.

So, stop worrying about the future. You can't predict what it will look like or when things will end. Whenever the end comes, let it be a beginning of something new. Until then, live your life to the fullest and live your legacy today. You want to leave a legacy for those who come after you to show them what it's like to live fearlessly and be in your full Original Blueprint®. You want to leave the world better than you found it.

Life is full of extraordinary moments that show you how thin the veil is between here and the other world (or worlds—who knows). Some people seek those moments of aliveness and wonderment, such as a daredevil who skydives from a plane or bungee jumps off a tall bridge. Sometimes those moments come unexpectedly, through near-death experiences that result from accidents or illness. And sometimes they come through traumatic experiences that leave us shaken and reassessing what's really important in life. Regardless of how life ends up shaking you, those kinds of events can't help but leave you transformed. You don't have to have a radical experience to get there. Connecting with your Original Blueprint® will give you that sense of vitality in every moment. Every day becomes a new opportunity to face the veil fearlessly, with joy and gratitude in your heart and soul. Your Original Blueprint® is a beautiful reminder to be here fully, anchored in the wondrous beauty of the yummy, present moment.

Stay true to you.



IT IS IN HERSELF SHE WILL FIND  
THE STRENGTH SHE NEEDS



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## REFLECTIONS

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*Go back to the first pages of this book where you set an intention for yourself. Now that you have concluded the book, see if what you imagined is different than what you have now, in any way.*



# APPENDICES

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Activation:** Also called arousal or hyperactivity, activation is the stimulation of the cerebral cortex into a state of general wakefulness, or attention.

**Autonomic Nervous System:** Regulates the involuntary responses of our bodies, including heart rate, digestion, and sexual arousal. It is responsible for sympathetic and parasympathetic responses, including fight, flight, and freeze.

**Dysregulation:** Emotional responses that are not well modulated. Also known as “reactivity.”

**Original Blueprint®:** The purest form of the human expression of the soul.

**Paper Tiger:** Something or someone who appears threatening but is ineffectual. The illusion of danger.

**Parasympathetic:** The part of the nervous system that slows heart rate and increases intestinal activity. It is the “rest-and-digest” part of the autonomic nervous system.

**Presence:** The ability to notice a sensation of any kind in your body.

**Reactivity:** Acting in response to others or external stimuli. “Defensiveness” is often a synonym.

**Sympathetic:** The part of the nervous system that increases heart rate, blood pressure and pupil size. It’s the get-up-and-go part of your nervous system and supports any action-oriented behavior.

**Vagus Nerve:** Complicated but simply put, it is the largest bundle of nerves in the body. It carries signals to and from most of your major, vital organs back to the brain.

**Vagal Tone:** Increasing vagal tone engages the parasympathetic nervous system, which allows your body to relax faster after stress.

**Interoception:** The perception of sensations from inside the body that includes the perception of physical sensations related to internal organ function such as heartbeat,

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respiration, satiety, and the autonomic nervous system activity related to emotions.

**Microaggressions:** Indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group. For example, pulling one's purse closer in, eyes looking away, or avoiding a person of another race.

**Proprioception:** The body's ability to perceive its own position in space. For example, proprioception enables a person to close her eyes and touch her nose with an index finger, know whether feet are on soft grass or hard cement without looking (even while wearing shoes) or notice the support of a chair behind and underneath the body.

**Regulation:** the ability to manage our energy states, emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in ways that are acceptable and produce positive results such as well-being, loving relationships, and learning.

**Somatic (or Soma):** From the Greek language, meaning "Body."

**Window of Resilience:** The optimal range of capacity in our nervous systems to be able to navigate thoughts and emotions without overwhelm.

## APPENDICES

### GLOSSARY OF SOMATIC DIMENSIONS

Add your own, plus any colors and images you experience!

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Achy	Dense	Hazy
Airy	Dizzy	Heart-shaped
Alive	Dully	Heavy
Aromatic	Elastic	Held
Bloated	Electric	Hot
Blob	Empty	Icy
Blocked	Energized	Intense
Braced	Expansive	Itchy
Breathless	Faint	Jagged
Brittle	Fluid	Jittery
Bubbly	Flushed	Jumbly
Burning	Fluttery	Jumpy
Buzzing	Frantic	Knotted
Calming	Freezy	Light
Chilling	Frigid	Limp
Clammy	Frosty	Loose
Closed	Frozen	Lukewarm
Cloudy	Full	Nauseous
Cold	Fuzzy	Neutral
Congested	Geometric	Numb
Constricted	Glowing	Octagonal
Contracted	Goose Bumpy	Oblong
Cool	Gravitated	Open
Cozy	Grounding	Paralyzed
Cramped	Gurgling	Pleasant
Cube	Hard	Pounding

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Pressure	Shivery	Sweet
Prickly	Shudder	Tender
Puffy	Silky	Tense
Pulled	Smoky	Tepid Thick
Pulsing	Smooth	Throbbing
Pungent	Soft	Tickly
Quaking	Soothing	Tight
Quiet	Spacious	Tingling
Quivering	Spaciousness	Trembling
Radiating	Spasming	Triangular
Ragged	Spherical	Twitchy
Raw	Spicy	Unpleasant
Rolling	Square	Vibrating
Round	Sticky	Warm
Safe	Still	Weak
Salty	Stretchy	Weighted
Savory	Stringy	Wide-open
Shaky	Strong	Wobbly
Sharp	Suffocating	Wonderment
Shimmering	Sweaty	

...or add your own!

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Includes words from the five senses, sensations, emotions, shapes, temperatures, meaning.

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### GLOSSARY OF EMOTIONS

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Abandoned	Baffled	Cooperative
Able	Bashful	Cranky
Absorbed	Bereaved	Crestfallen
Abused	Bewildered	Cross
Accepting	Bitter	Crushed
Accomplished	Blissful	Curious
Adamant	Blue	
Admirable	Bold	Daring
Admired	Bothered	Defiant
Affable	Brave	Dejected
Affectionate	Buoyant	Delighted
Afraid		Depressed
Aggravated	Calm	Detached
Aggressive	Cantankerous	Determined
Agony	Capable	Devious
Agreeable	Carefree	Disappointed
Alarmed	Careful	Discouraged
Alert	Caring	Disdainful
Alienated	Cautious	Disenchanted
Aliveness	Chagrined	Disengaged
Alone	Charitable	Disgusted
Amazed	Cheerful	Disillusioned
Ambivalent	Cold	Disinterested
Amused	Complacent	Dismayed
Angry	Composed	Dismissive
Annoyed	Compulsive	Distant
Anxious	Concerned	Doleful
Apprehensive	Confident	
Ashamed	Considerate	Eager
Astonished	Contemptuous	Ecstatic
Awed	Content	Edgy
Awkward	Contrite	Elated

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Embarrassed	Guilty	Joyous
Emboldened	Happy	Judged
Enraged	Heartbroken	Judgmental
Enthusiastic	Helpless	
Envious	Hesitant	Keen
Euphoric	Hopeless	Kind
Excited	Horrificed	
Exhausted	Humbled	Lackluster
Extravagant	Humiliated	Lazy
Exuberant	Hurt	Leery
	Hyperactive	Lethargic
Fair	Hypoactive	Listless
Fatigued	Hysterical	Lonely
Fearful		Loving
Flustered	Ignorant	
Foolish	Ignored	Mad
Forgiving	Impatient	Malevolent
Frightened	Impertinent	Manic
Frustrated	Inadequate	Manipulated
Fulfilled	Indifferent	Manipulative
Funny	Inquisitive	Marvelous
Furious	Insecure	Mean
	Inspired	Meek
Generous	Inspiring	Melancholy
Glad	Interested	Melodramatic
Gleeful	Irked	Mischievous
Gloomy	Irrational	Miserable
Glum	Irritable	Misunderstood
Gracious	Irritated	Moody
Grateful	Isolated	Mopey
Greedy	Jaded	Morose
Grief-stricken	Jealous	Moved
Grouchy	Jittery	Manic
Grumpy	Jocular	Manipulated
Guarded	Joyful	Manipulative

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Marvelous	Overjoyed	Reasonable
Mean	Overloaded	Reasoned
Meek	Overpowered	Reassured
Melancholy	Overstimulated	Rebellious
Melodramatic	Overwhelmed	Refreshed
Mischievous		Rejuvenated
Miserable	Panicked	Relaxed
Misunderstood	Panicky	Relieved
Moody	Passive	Reluctant
Mopey	Peaceful	Remorseful
Morose	Peeved	Repulsed
Moved	Pensive	Resentful
	Perturbed	Reserved
Naïve	Petrified	Restless
Nasty	Petty	
Naughty	Petulant	Sad
Needed	Placid	Safe
Needy	Playful	Sanguine
Neglected	Pleased	Sarcastic
Neglectful	Powerful	Satisfied
Nervous	Powerless	Scared
Nice	Pressured	Scornful
Nonchalant	Prickly	Secure
Nonplussed	Prideful	Sensitive
Numb	Preoccupied	Serene
	Proud	Serious
Obedient	Puzzled	Shy
Obligated		Silly
Obsessed	Quiet	Sincere
Obsessive	Quirky	Skeptical
Obstinate	Quivery	Smug
Offended	Quelled	Sociable
Open		Sorrowful
Open-minded	Rageful	Spiteful
Optimistic	Rational	Startled
Outraged	Rattled	Stressed

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Stubborn	Unafraid	Vulnerable
Surprised	Unappreciated	
Sympathetic	Uncertain	Warm
	Uncomfortable	Wary
Tearful	Undecided	Wasted
Teary	Uneasy	Weak
Temperamental	Unhappy	Weary
Tender	Unimpressed	Weepy
Terrified	Unnerved	Whimsical
Thankful	Unruffled	Whiny
Thoughtful	Unruly	Willful
Threatened	Unsteady	Willing
Tickled	Unsure	Wishful
Timid	Unwavering	Wistful
Tired	Uplifted	Withdrawn
Tiresome	Uptight	Witty
	Useful	Worn
Tolerable	Useless	Worried
Tolerant		Worthless
Torn	Vacant	Wronged
Touched	Vain	
Tranquil	Valuable	Yearning
Trepidatious	Valued	Yielding
Troubled	Vexed	Youthful
Trusted	Vibrant	Zany
Trusting	Victimized	Zealous
Trustworthy	Victorious	
	Violent	
	Vital	
	Vivacious	
	Volatile	

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