



33 Practices
to Transform Your Health,
Your Well-Being,
and Your Life

BY SOPHIA GODKIN PHD
& JEN THE WELLNESS COACH

meet sophia godkin, phd



Thank you so much for being here everyone. I am so glad that we find ourselves here together on the path to everlasting joy, health and wellness. I am delighted to, with my friend and colleague Jen, share with you what I have learned and embraced on my journey of self- and life- understanding thus far in navigating the things that feel incredible and make us glad to be alive, the things that feel not-so-great that in time transform into things that feel incredible, and everything in between. It's in the in-betweens that we often find ourselves, and I hope that with this book as one resource of many you will be guided to during your life, that you will have all you need to get to know and love yourself evermore, and to make each moment the best moment of your life.

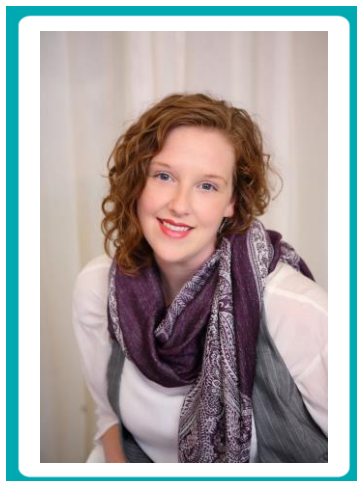
my journey

When I was a young adolescent, I learned that my mother, the person I love most dearly in this world, had breast cancer. Sadness about my mother was almost instantaneously coupled with fear about my own future and the future of anyone with illness that runs in their family - a deep sense that it was only a matter of time before we too would be impacted by the same symptoms and illnesses as they were. An Aha moment came in one of my university Psychology courses when I learned about the mind-body relationship- the immaculate interconnectedness of all parts of us - our thoughts, emotions, passions, preferences, desires, behaviors, lifestyle choices, and the very motions of the cells within our body. There was not one thing that made someone happy that didn't also make them healthy... The path to happiness *WAS* the path to health, I realized. Newly empowered, I set out to become aware of, and to lovingly guide my thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in the direction of health and happiness. Despite making the necessary changes to my lifestyle, I continued to experience unpleasant physical and emotional challenges. It wasn't until I embraced the principles of *Personalized Health* - that our paths to health and wellness really are as unique as we are - that I discovered and enacted the ways of thinking, being, moving and eating that would allow me to become the happiest, healthiest version of myself.

my background and what i do

I received my PhD in Health Psychology from the University of California, Irvine, where I devoted my personal and academic interests to understanding what motivates people to do the things they do and the ways of being and doing that catapult people into utmost health and happiness. I completed my Reiki Master certification, Group exercise certification, and Yoga teacher training and went on to teach yoga and meditation classes at a local yoga studio. All throughout, I continued to transform my knowing into doing, learning what was best for me in body and mind, becoming more and more of my true self and acknowledging the individuality within everyone around me. Today, I help others on their journeys to knowing and being who they are by supporting them in understanding their inherent uniqueness and in enacting the wisdom within their own hearts, minds, and bodies. I do this in one-on-one and group sessions as a Personalized Health and Happiness Coach, via university courses as Adjunct Professor of Positive Psychology at Chapman University, and as Health Psychologist on the team developing Shae, the world's first virtual health assistant. It is my deepest wish that we each become fulfilled and happy in who we are, that we acknowledge the beauty within and around us and support each other in living the lives of joy and freedom we came here to live.

meet jen the wellness coach



Hello fellow health conscious friend, I'm Jen and I'm ready to share with you the knowledge I have about mindfulness, health and well being. I, like most of you, wanted to find a way to live life without interruptions, to the fullest, with optimum vitality. This mindset lead me on a journey down the road of whole living foods, supportive natural supplements, techniques to reduce and relieve stress, and ways to aid the body in the process of detoxification. However, once I began to really take care of myself, I realized that the cleansing and healing wasn't just useful and needed in my body, but also my mind, heart and soul. I discovered that my entire energy system was in need of a cleansing of old patterns and habits for me to fully realize the wonders life has to offer me and I had to offer the world. I began to understand how the integration process of each one of us, although very unique to each individual, had some common themes. Releasing the old stories of the past, developing loving and accepting

thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in our daily life, and trusting that we are supported in a loving continuum of oneness with all things were the main components.

my journey

I wanted to know what steps I could take to insure healthy lifestyles for myself and my family. See, I grew up witnessing, first hand, the damage that a poor diet, inadequate exercise, a bleak outlook, and a number of unsuccessful lifestyle choices could do to any individual's quality of life. I didn't want to see my family members suffer through the years in pain and unfulfilled. I realized at a young age that health was a dynamic, ever changing medium that was supported or hindered by what you put in your body and how you dealt with the world around you. And so the passion I had for diet and overall well being as a young person developed into a career as an adult.

my background and what i do

I graduated from the Global College of Natural Medicine in Santa Cruz, California with a Certificate of Nutritional Consultant. I went on to complete training as an IBMS Coach and Reiki Master Practitioner. Throughout my education process, I independently studied books, expert motivational speakers, lifestyle choices of many cultures, all while continuously looking inwards for my personal truth and preferences. All of these modalities and life experience have prepared me for the opportunity to help people enrich and integrate each aspect of their being. Be it emotional, mental, physical, energetic or spiritual support and guidance, or any combination. As a Wellness Coach, I encourage and support individuals in making their personal health goals and then assist them in attaining those goals through the relationship that we develop. I customize a program specifically for each client's needs, goals, and desires. I offer a safe and nurturing space for you to move through the process of self-alignment with grace and ease. With my love of writing, I have begun to share my knowledge and philosophies, not only as a coach, but through blogs, e-books, and coming soon, my first book. It is my deepest desire to support as many people as possible to increase their sense of fulfillment, vitality, trust, and authentic self expression through the work I do.

Contents

5	Introduction
6	It's Playtime
8	Accepting Yourself
10	Surrendering to Your Authentic Self
13	Wisely Applying the Law of Compensation
15	Integrating Your Shadow Self
16	Changing Limiting Beliefs
18	Cultivating Self-Compassion
20	Connecting with Your Authentic Needs
21	Developing a Growth Mindset
23	Cultivating the Power of Preference
25	Being Present With Yourself and Your Emotions
26	Grounding Yourself into the Here and NOW
27	Awakening Your Life Force Energy
29	Living with Embodied Awareness
31	Expressing Self-Love Through Movement
32	Finding the Positive in Any Situation
34	Practicing Gratitude
35	Healing Through Forgiveness
36	Living in Integrity
39	Being a Purposeful Creator
40	Being Present With Others
42	Breathing for Health
43	Prioritizing Rest and Rejuvenation
45	Living in Hormonal Harmony
47	Creating Healthy Habits
49	Being Self-Focused, Not Selfish
50	Creating an Incredible Start to Your Day
51	Establishing Healthy Energy Flow Within Your Body
52	Cultivating Self Care as a Way of Life
54	Connecting with Like-Minded People
55	Engaging in Healthy Communication
57	Preparing Your Personal Sanctuary
58	Giving
59	Closing Thoughts
60	Resources

Introduction

Dear fellow conscious friends,

Embarking on a journey of self improvement and discovery is often impacted by the daily activities, patterns, and habits we have established over the course of our lifetime. This e-book is intended to offer many options to you, the participant, to shift out old habits that feel disempowering, that no longer resonate with the person you are becoming, and/or that you may judge as sabotaging your goals and progress. It is not enough to stop an established pattern in your daily life. The habit must be replaced with a new activity that, in the beginning requires mindfulness, effort, intention and attention, but over time develops into a new pattern of self care, self empowerment, and conscious expression.

Throughout this book, we will highlight techniques, modalities, principles, teachings, and processes that can replace old habits that you are ready to let go of once and for all. It requires a commitment on your part. But when this commitment is coupled with curiosity, enthusiasm, and compassion, you have the opportunity to develop a lifestyle for yourself that is nourishing, balanced, fulfilling, *and* sustainable. It is our deepest desire that at least a few of these concepts will resonate with you and enrich your personal process of self realization and creative expression.

We invite you to experience each concept in a personally meaningful way by engaging with the exercises we present. Take a few moments, choose a notebook to designate as your self-reflection journal, and let's begin.

sophia & jen

It's Playtime

How many times have you heard someone wishing they had a child's energy and enthusiasm for life? How many times have you wondered where they get this seemingly endless reserve of stamina and vitality to keep running, jumping, playing, laughing, and getting into mischief? How many times have you envied that energy and wanted to manifest it within your own daily life?

It is not surprising that many people long for the vitality that we see in the young to be expressed in their lives. Oftentimes we feel depleted throughout the day and yearn for more liveliness and vitality as we go through our daily activities. Returning to the playful state of our youth can be just what the doctor ordered at times like these. Playfulness and creativity are companions in the process of living a fulfilled life and can energize a day with relative ease. When we are engaged in activities that tap into our imagination and playful nature, we come alive, feel creative, and see the potential, the beauty, and the mystery of the world around us. We step back in time to a stage of our evolution that was full of wants, desires, and dreams, leaving behind the obligations, duties, and tasks of a grown-up existence.

There is a reason that adult coloring books have become a modern day phenomenon. The collective consciousness is crying out for more fun, more play, more creativity, more self-expression, more relaxation, more carefree-ness. And you can manifest all these qualities in your life experience when you begin to value and devote time to playing.

Returning to the playful
state of our youth can be
just what the doctor
ordered.





For some, playing is dancing, coloring (in those adult coloring books), creating art, and playing with their energized children. For you, it may be riding a bike, not for exercise, but because it feels good to have the wind blowing on your face, because it's exciting to go speeding down that steep hill, or because you can play in a waterfall if you take this certain bike trail in the national park near your home. There are endless outlets for us to tap into the playful energy of creating for the sake of creating, having fun just because we want to, and losing ourselves in an activity that brings us joy, invigorates our spirit, and shines our personal brand of awesomeness into the world.

When you are feeling depleted, ask yourself these questions and write down what comes up in a self-expression journal.

- What did I like to do when I was a child?
- What games did I play?
- What toys did I like?
- What adventures did I go on in my mind?
- What books did I immerse myself in while growing up?

Tap into this youthful energy and spend time reconnecting with your inner child - the innocent part of you that remembers how much fun it could be to be alive in a physical form and create in a physical environment.

Accepting Yourself

“I wish I had her hair.” “I wish I was smart like her, pretty like her, and had dance moves like her.” “I wish I had his sense of humor, charisma, charm, and his eye for beauty.” “I wish I could think like she does, walk like he does, or be as they are.”

Why are we so blind when it comes to seeing our own worth? And what can we do about it?

We've been told and shown from a very young age who we *should* be. This leads us, to some extent, to far more easily see beauty everywhere except when we look in the mirror. For some of us, depending on our early childhood experiences and beliefs, this is a minimal issue; for others, it dominates our whole experience of life. Because we are each inherently different than the ideal that society has conjured up for us over time, we are therefore left feeling unworthy, inferior, or lacking in some way. Wherever we go and whatever we do, we do not see our own worth, our own beauty, our own gifts. We resort to social comparison,



measuring our qualities against those of others, oftentimes reinforcing the belief within us that we are not good enough or that we ought to be better, smarter, faster, stronger, taller, and so on. The more often we reinforce these beliefs, the more true they feel.

So why don't we drop the act? Why don't we stop pretending that there is something wrong with us? We are - each of us - perfect. Even - and especially - with all of our insecurities, fears, and perceived flaws. When we can remove our masks of faux confidence, we can experience *true* confidence - the kind that arises from a *love* for ourselves just as we are. There is no one we should be other than ourselves.

The next time you notice yourself judging and not accepting some part of yourself, or comparing yourself to others or to yourself as you once were or would like to be, take a moment to notice the judgment arising. Bring awareness to it and acknowledge its presence. Be conscious not to judge yourself for judging! Acknowledge that at this very moment, this is you - with “bad” thoughts, judgments, maybe even shame or guilt about having these thoughts and judgments. Acknowledge also that there is nothing wrong with any of it - that you are such a perfect human that you've mastered the art of having things you like about yourself and other things you don't like about yourself, as humans often do. Your judgments are not something to hide; they are something to be accepted and hence released. You can accept something as part of your current reality whether you find it pleasant or not. Interestingly, when you judge something and try to make it go away, it tends to stick around. When you accept what is, give it freedom to move, it dissipates all on its own.

So now that you've brought acceptance to your thoughts, you can begin to shift them. Take note of what happens as a result of these judgmental thoughts. What is the energy behind those words you use to describe yourself? How do you feel? And how do you behave when you believe the words? Then ask yourself, “Do I really want to experience the emotional pain that believing this destructive thought causes me?” “Do I want to keep behaving in ways that limit me from living the life I want, and that slow my personal growth, by choosing to believe these judgments?”

Assuming the answer to the above questions are “no,” you will have begun to create an active ability to weaken your judgments and release your self-comparisons. The more you acknowledge and deeply feel the suffering and unpleasantness that your self-judgment and non-acceptance cause you, the easier it will be to shift your thoughts away from them as time goes on.



Noticing and reversing self-judgments as they arise can be a transformational practice. But you can also prevent judgmental thoughts from taking precedence in your life by consciously diverting your attention to what you appreciate instead. For instance, when you practice gratitude throughout the day, don't forget to include yourself in it. Make it a habit to express appreciation for yourself and the incredible qualities you possess that blend into the unique perfection that is *you* - those things that make you completely indispensable to this world and the people in it.

Accept yourself as you are. Love yourself as you are. Because you really, truly are perfect as you are. The Universe conspired to make you exactly as you are - with that personality and those eyes, ears, and mouth - so you could bring to the world something no one else does. No one has ever been or ever will be exactly as you are. Your brilliance and uniqueness is something to get excited and rejoice about. Once you do, you will become the best version of you. Because when you accept yourself, anything can happen. In this space of acceptance, change isn't precluded; it's encouraged.

And what does it look and feel like?

Accepting who you are implies being honest with your thoughts, words, feelings, desires, expressions, and motions. Whether in the presence of others or just in your own company, being who you are means being vulnerable... crying if you want to cry, yelling if you want to yell, jumping if you want to jump, and living in alignment with your truest values even if no one else around you is. It's dropping the "shoulds" you put on yourself to look, speak, act, or think a certain way and the thoughts of how others might perceive, respond to, and/or treat you if you look, speak, act, and think as you really, naturally do. What other people think is their business, not yours.

So accept and be unapologetically, honestly, obnoxiously and simply who you are. Put your attention on the empowered position of recognizing and shifting your own thoughts, actions and feelings to reflect self-love and acceptance. This will eliminate the need to be accepted and loved by anyone else.

Surrendering to Your Authentic Self

Think of a young child, like the adorable one in this photo. Think about how quickly they move in and out of different emotional states. One minute they are crying, the next minute laughing and playing. They are present to what is, and they do not hold onto the past. This is the art of surrender and it is a priceless asset on the journey to optimal health and happiness.

The terms “letting go”, “surrendering”, and “releasing attachment” have long been associated with the spiritual journey and process of self-realization. Unfortunately, many of us have created patterns of being controlling while trying to let things go. We meditate to forgive and release the past. We dowse, light candles, say prayers, visit healers, take workshops, read books, and engage in a plethora of other activities in the hopes that somewhere along the line, we can evolve beyond the level of needing to know, control, manipulate, and determine a certain outcome. It is often in an effort to be present and open to life’s many gifts that we embark on this process. However, like trying to apply the law of attraction from a couch or reclining chair, imagination can only get you so far. Applied knowledge and inspired action coupled with a clearly defined approach to old topics with new responses and conscious habits takes time, but the surrendering that happens is much easier to access in the present moment. And it looks something like this.



You are in a moment and you feel a feeling, think a thought, or have a reaction. You begin to judge, critique, reject, or suppress this response because it is somehow, in your opinion (and this is an important distinction), inappropriate, wrong, unconscious, immature, evidence of some old pattern or trauma that you should (red flag word) be over by now. This is the controlling response that can indicate to you it is a perfect moment to surrender. It is not a moment in meditation where you give all your emotional content to God. It is not the time that you asked to transcend your addictions or self-sabotaging habits during an energy healing. It is the moments when you do not allow yourself permission to be where you are in any given moment. The power of surrendering in these moments can open you up to the life-changing experiences that we long for and often do not experience in many of the healing practices we engage.

[And here is why.](#)



When you are open to a healing process and are flooded with the good vibes of an attuned practitioner or an aligned group of like-minded participants, it is easy to feel open and let go of the past. But in the daily activities, the moments that triggered you last week, last year, and last decade, it is much more challenging to respond differently than you did every time before that. We are creatures of habit. When we are stressed, tired, distracted, overwhelmed, disempowered, ignored, disrespected, or unheard, we are more likely to fall victim to our own unconscious reactions and patterns and then, for those of us committed to a spiritual journey, judge and reject those responses.

During these times of distress, we can take the opportunity to surrender to what is, give it a voice, accept it for the information it provides, and allow ourselves to follow the guidance that comes from these internal messages. For example, you are eating dinner with your family during a big holiday celebration. You have already felt some feelings of irritation towards a family member that is known for interrupting people and telling embarrassing stories about you and other family members at these types of gatherings. You are full on into a spiritual practice at this point in your life, so you feel confident that you will not let yourself get triggered on this day. You have the tools, the affirmations, the visualizations, and the techniques in place to keep you at the highest possible vibration and perspective. But a few hours into the gathering, you are beginning to crack. Now, you may choose to internalize this frustration and assault this person in your head while keeping a smile on your face. Maybe you explode at them over the dinner table and then beat yourself up for the rest of the day for not keeping your temper in check, yet again. Perhaps you go outside with another person and form an alliance through gossiping and badmouthing 'that idiot in the house that was probably adopted or dropped on their head as a baby'.

Regardless of your reaction, the precursor to all of these actions is your own inner resistance to your emotional response, your triggers, your attachment to people behaving in a certain way at family gatherings, and your judgment of the moment. Now, had you fully surrendered to how you were reacting in this scenario, the internal battle for things to be different, mainly your perception, would not have spilled out onto the external scene being played out for your personal growth. You may have simply acknowledged, "Wow, I think so-and-so is a rude, disrespectful jerk and I don't like his/her behavior at all. In fact, I don't want to be around him/her. I am doing such a great job of judging him/her, rejecting that behavior, and feeling superior to him/her. I am feeling so much resistance."

This surrendering is not to the circumstances, catalysts, and happenings in your external environment. That is like trying to move from feeling victimized by someone to instantly feeling unconditional love towards them. There are steps in between these two states of being. And the steps between resistance and surrendering are all internal ones. Resistance to your response to a situation evolves into acceptance that you are where you are, have the triggers that you have, and carry the beliefs and expectations that you do. Once you can calm the internal conflict that arises from self-judgment and rejection, you can create an opening for peace to arise and clarity to emerge. Surrendering to yourself allows for a deeper appreciation for your preferences and assumptions, which we all have, without making them wrong or inappropriate. And let's face it, your reaction is most assuredly already in the past, so now, in the present, you can begin the process of self realization, acceptance, and compassion. This is the art of surrendering. Surrendering to yourself in total harmony with whatever may be presently happening around you creates space so that growth and expansion are available to you in any given moment. And with this approach, you are absolutely creating a trajectory to create more harmonious unfolding moments in your future, because the harmony has been born, established, and focused within - the only place we have complete and utter freedom.

Here are some questions to ask yourself during moments of resistance:

- How am I relating to myself in this moment? When we make this moment about our inner experience, instead of the other, we can let go of the belief that the outside has to change for us to experience relief.
- What am I feeling in this moment? Can I accept this feeling and give it space to exist? Oftentimes during the journey of spiritual enlightenment, we worry that acknowledging or indulging certain emotions will magnify their existence in our lives, however, this is far from the truth and, in fact, it is in resisting them that they tend to become more dominant.
- What is the benefit of this belief, reaction, feeling, or outlook? Maybe you will see a benefit, maybe you won't. Nevertheless, realizing that irritation can be a motivating precursor to self care or self-compassion (described later in this e-book) can create a desire to take action in harmony with feeling peace, relief, comfort, or acceptance.
- Who is in resistance to this moment? Identify that part of yourself that protects, judges, curses, explodes, manipulates, or clams up in a moment of stress. Say "Thank you characteristic of my personality that was developed to help me feel safe, superior, right, justified, righteous, important, or credible. I am so glad you have my back. I accept that you are part of personality." We all have these parts of ourselves, whether they are frequent players in our personal movie or just make cameo appearances, they are part of the cast and want their credits, just like everyone else.

Wisely Applying the Law of Compensation

There are many times in life that we question the whole 'eye for an eye' concept or wonder about the validity of the law of compensation. Let's face it, life doesn't always seem that fair, or black and white. How can this person or that person be experiencing what seems like success, acclaim, wealth, or health when they have done this or that thing? The law of compensation is a universal truth, like gravity. It just doesn't express itself the way you may think.

As Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "Take what figure you will, its exact value, no more nor less, still returns to you. Every secret is told, every crime is punished, every virtue rewarded, every wrong redressed, in silence and certainty. What we call retribution is the universal necessity by which the whole appears wherever a part appears."

An eye for an eye from the perspective of a child translates into "you hit me in the arm, I will hit you in the arm." It is an equal and exact retribution model in the undeveloped mind. However, as we evolve into a higher wisdom and understanding of the complexity of the world around us, that idea – an eye for an eye – transcends the 'tit for tat' mentality. It is replaced with an appreciation for balance and appropriate compensation throughout one's lifetime. Perhaps we see a financially successful man, revered by his colleagues, but bankrupt in time, poor in personal relationships, and lacking any true feelings of joy and fulfillment. This is the mature outlook on the law of compensation. It is an understanding that actions, circumstances, and behaviors are justly balanced in the totality of our lives. It is not an assumption that some day "that guy will get what is coming to him." He is getting what is coming to him. And so are you. The power of our mind is only usurped by the power of applied, inspired action. Actions such as service, love, compassion, understanding, creative expression, and heart-centered living are compensated just as fairly as expressing the qualities of greed, hoarding, spite, envy, judgment, rejection, and dishonesty. All balance sheets are brought to zero in the end.

Now, for those of you prone to self-judgment, guilt or shame, rest assured that your punishment has already been given. And you have been serving your sentence of pain, suffering, and trauma for a while now. Realize now, in this moment, that in so doing, you were the judge, jury, audience, witness, prosecutor, and defendant. You were all the evidence you needed to convict yourself and you were the jailers and other inmates with whom you shared a prison of your own making. This is the unexpanded viewpoint of the law of compensation- an idea which tells you that to make a mistake is to be guilty, and to be guilty is to warrant punishment. This is a cycle many people on a spiritual path have experienced in their lifetime. Hopefully, you have transformed these habits and beliefs into self-reliance, compassion, and acceptance. But if you have not, now is the time to set yourself free. Now is the time to see that you have applied the law of compensation in a juvenile way and now you are ready to set yourself free from the shackle of blame and banishment. You will no longer hold yourself outside of the realm of freedom, joy, peace, inclusion, abundance, well being, and authentic fulfillment.



The power of our mind is only usurped by the power of applied, inspired action.

Today is your independence day. The law of compensation allows each action to have a counterpart of equal value to offset it. If you take something that doesn't belong to you, your internal feelings of shame, fear, guilt, remorse, worry, concern, and anxiousness have already begun to balance the scale in your daily life. The idea of karma, which is closely related to this philosophy, states the same concept of an equilibrium forever being achieved in life. Imagine that concept, which many interpret as past life decisions and actions playing out in one's current life, happening in real time. From this perspective, you don't have to keep carrying your deeds, actions, wrongdoings (we call them 'learning experiences'), shortcomings, weaknesses, or thoughts continuously down your personal life path, in essence re-creating negative karmic patterns over and over based on one ill-fated decision or folly. Instead, you can face the retribution head on in real time and move on. The law of compensation can free you from a life of endless self-judgment and punishment, the idea that life isn't fair, and give you the opportunity to embody self-reliance, accountability, and appreciation for all the parts of you and your life.

To experience this first hand, begin by lying or sitting in a comfortable position. Close your eyes and imagine yourself standing in front of a judge seated above you at his/her bench. Imagine this bench to be very high up. Sometimes, we see the judge as a person in our life who we feel particularly ridiculed or judged by, or as someone whose approval we desperately seek. If you wish to have the judge be a person like this from your life, you are welcome to do that. It can also be a figure of authority that you are intimidated by or scared of or just a person that has no significance for you. Let the judge just develop without an effort for the best and highest outcome.

Now, begin to receive the list of what you are accused of from the judge. You are accused of eating too much at dinner, not taking out the garbage, lying to a friend, cheating on your taxes, skipping out of work early and telling your boss you were there until close, etc. Whatever you judge yourself on, let the judge accuse you of these things. After every accusation, say, "not guilty" or "I am innocent of all charges"- whatever feels more freeing to you. As you absolve yourself of all missteps, witness the judge's bench getting smaller and lower. Allow this dialogue to go on as long as it takes for you to release any guilt you may feel about anything you have done, thought, or believed about yourself or anything or anyone else. Feel the freedom in your mind and body as you relinquish all restrictions you have put on yourself and your life as punishment for your past actions, ideas, and mistakes (learning experiences).



At the end, see the judge face to face, on level footing with you, transform into a mirror. See the reflection of your most powerful, confident, self-loving, relaxed, peaceful, healthy, and vibrant self looking back at you. Then say "I am free", wiggle your toes and fingers, shake your arms and legs, wriggle your body and snap your fingers. Stand up with your arms outreached above your head like a "Y" shape, look up to the sky, and say loudly and with enthusiasm "I am FREE."

Integrating Your Shadow Self

Are you needy if you ask for help? Are you stingy if you pay attention to your daily spending? Are you vain if you care about your appearance? Is it bad to ask for help, to watch closely over your finances, or to invest time and energy in your appearance?

During our upbringing, many of us learn to repress certain parts of our emotions and qualities- a process which prevents us from living authentically; from being and accepting ourselves as we really, truly are.

This part of ourselves that we don't want to look at or be – those qualities that we judge, deem unattractive, try to push away, overlook, sugarcoat or hide – is our *shadow self*. Through practicing awareness and exploration of our shadow self, we can integrate, heal, and embrace these unconscious and unresolved aspects of ourselves such that there is no aspect of our self that need be kept hidden. By bringing that which was once hidden into the light, we invite it to become a part of our real self... the self that is whole, perfect, and complete.

A great way to get to know your shadow self is to notice where you hold strong judgments. The places where you hold strong judgments often represent who you don't want to be and form the very basis of your shadow aspects.

For the next few moments, think of someone who pisses you off, triggers you, irritates you, who you criticize, are angry at or harbor resentment towards.

For the next five minutes, write to them. Tell them about how they irritate, anger, or piss you off and why. Be specific and thorough. Don't hold back. Mention exactly what it is about them and their actions that leads you to feel this way.

Then go back to what you wrote and replace their name with yours. As you read through what you wrote, recognize where these qualities show up in yourself, even if to a lesser degree.

“Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves” – Carl Jung

When you feel complete with this first activity, repeat for *someone you admire or are fond of*.

For a few moments, think of someone you admire or someone you've recently complimented, whether by thinking or actually telling them good things about them.

Then, for five minutes, write to them about the qualities you admire about them and the details of why. Be specific and thorough. Mention exactly what it is about them, their actions, and way of being that you appreciate.


What's interesting is that we not only project our negative traits and actions onto others, but our positive and admirable ones as well. So take a moment, or five, and revel in the knowing that you - yes you - have those very same qualities that you appreciate and admire in others. Everyone is just a mirror; what you see time and time again is yourself.

Changing Limiting Beliefs

If you really pay attention to your inner self throughout the day, you will never need to question the existence of free will. Though we do not often consciously choose the thoughts we think, our free will rests in how we choose to *respond* to the thoughts we think. Do we focus on, repeat, and give the thoughts we think more attention, thereby making them appear more “real”? Or do we notice them and let them go on their merry way? We choose the stories we want to tell every moment of every day when we choose the thoughts we believe.

Like attracts like when it comes to thoughts. If deep inside you believe that you’re not important, it’s likely that you had an experience early on in life that led you to believe that. Perhaps you had to cry for a long time as a child before your mom or dad would give you the attention that you wanted and deserved or perhaps your brother or sister got their way more often than you did. Later on in life, you probably had other interactions and experiences that, in your mind, reinforced the notion that you weren’t important. By then, you became firm in your belief that you are not important and you began to act accordingly. Perhaps you shared your opinion with your colleagues but not loudly enough for them to hear and consider it, or maybe you attended the workshop of one of your favorite authors but didn’t get chosen to ask a question during the Q&A. Think a thought once, twice, three, four, five times and it becomes a belief. Soon enough you have a wealth of information, induced and supported by your thoughts, as to why you’re not important.

“I’m not important” is just one of many possible (and false) beliefs we may have adopted about ourselves during the first 6 or 7 years of our lives. “I’m not good enough,” “I’m not smart enough,” “I’m not creative,” “I don’t have what it takes,” or “I don’t deserve a healthy, loving relationship,” are some other examples. We also adopt beliefs about the world and how we operate within it... “You have to work really hard in order to be well off financially,” “women (or men) can’t be trusted,” “the world isn’t a safe place,” “people are inherently selfish,” or “you have to be ruthless to get what you want.”

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A good indicator of whether our beliefs, or the stories we tell ourselves, are serving us or hurting us is to pay attention to the emotions we feel. Feeling angry or sad? It’s likely that you’re telling and believing a story of injustice, hurt, or betrayal. Feeling happy and at peace? It’s likely that you’re telling and believing a story of feeling loved, valued, and appreciated.

What story do you want to tell yourself?

The good news is that because your beliefs are stories that your mind tells you, they can be rewritten to better suit the kind of life you want to lead and the kind of person you want to be and really are - confident, important, valued, beautiful, made to succeed, and more than capable of creating the life of your dreams.

So how do we rewrite our beliefs?

Since experts and thought leaders in the consciousness movement acknowledged that 90-95% of how our life experience unfolds is a function of our subconscious beliefs, many strategies and methods of adjusting our beliefs, and rewiring the neurochemistry that underlies them, have emerged. Below, we explore one such method in detail and invite you to explore many others by visiting the Resources section at the end of this e-book.

1. Start by identifying a limiting belief you have that you want to change. State the belief (eg “I’m not important”) to yourself and notice whether you have some emotional or physical response to it. Does it feel true in your physical body? Does it feel true in your emotional body? If so, continue to the next step.
2. When did you form this belief? Do any specific experiences from your childhood or adolescence come to mind, or just a general sense of the belief perhaps? Take some time to get a sense of what was happening and to feel back into those experiences. What was going on at the time with your parents or whoever was involved? And how did you feel?
3. Acknowledge the validity of how you could’ve come to the conclusion that you came to given the experiences and feelings that you had. As a child, it’s not surprising that you would’ve thought [insert belief here] (eg “I must not be important” or “I’m not good enough”) given the experiences you had, right? In fact, it’s quite likely that other children, given the same experiences, would have come to the same conclusions too.
4. Now imagine that your friends are here and they’re looking back on these same experiences with you. Ask them what some other potential interpretations of your experiences might be? Is it possible that there are alternative explanations for them? Can you give those experiences a meaning that is different, and perhaps more accurate, than the meaning you originally gave to them? Think of and jot down at least 3 possible alternative explanations.
5. Notice, from the previous step, that the explanation you gave to, and the conclusion you drew from, the events you experienced was just one possible interpretation out of many. This is what we do... We experience events and choose meanings to ascribe to them. Nothing that happens and nothing that anyone says or does has meaning- until we give it meaning. Really, truly feel and embrace the sense that these events from your past had

no inherent meaning all on their own. What happened did matter and did affect you; there’s no denying that. Yet what happened had no meaning until you gave it meaning. Your belief was never an objective event that you witnessed. You never really saw [insert belief here] (eg “I must not be important” or “I’m not good enough”). You felt it because of the meaning you gave it, not because of anything anybody actually did or said. And, if you did happen to be unfortunate enough to actually hear those words spoken to you, remember not to take it personally. As a child, you were incapable of dismissing hurtful statements or actions directed at you as untrue. However, as an adult you’ve had many experiences to reference and can gauge, and most importantly decide, whether or not you want to accept something as true. As an adult, you know that we only ever project those judgments we have of ourselves onto the people we are in relationship with, whether that our your child, lover, friend, or co-worker. So, ultimately, if someone said or did something hurtful to you, they were only speaking about and judging the unmet or shadow aspects of themselves they have yet to accept and integrate (for more on this, feel free to revisit the “Integrating Your Shadow Self” section of this e-book). Aaah! Breathe a sigh of relief, knowing that nothing actually meant what you thought it did. It was just a projection of your mind and maybe their mind too.

6. Now that you’ve come to the realization that events in and of themselves have no real significance and that your feelings arose from the meaning and truth you gave to those inherently meaningless events, it is clear for your psyche that [insert belief here] (eg “I must not be important” or “I’m not good enough”) wasn’t an objective truth... And poof! Just like that... it’s gone!

You can now enjoy walking in the world as more and more of your real self- the magnificent, important, worthy, loved, loving being that you truly are. By doing so, you are writing new stories with new beginnings, middles, and ends.

Cultivating Self-Compassion

It's one thing to be kind to others. It's another to be kind to yourself. Self-directed kindness, or self-compassion, is one of the most powerful tools of transformation that exists today. Maybe you just made a mistake. Maybe you just failed at something. Maybe the circumstances you find yourself in are far more difficult than you imagined. Maybe you reacted instead of responding to a situation in a way that feels inappropriate. Maybe everything feels like it's going wrong. These are the perfect times to engage in self-compassion.

It seems almost nonsensical to practice self-compassion and be kind to ourselves in these moments of pain and suffering. "If I am nice to myself when I fail, how will I ever get better?" you may say. "If I'm kind to myself when everything is going so badly, won't I just repeat the same thoughts and actions that got me into this mess in the first place?"

Well, we can throw that myth out of the window! Interestingly, science shows that the reasons that we tend to resort to self-discipline or self-criticism over self-compassion (ie we think it will help us get better and be more motivated) are actually unfounded. It's when people practice self-compassion upon perceiving a weakness, setback, failure, or imperfection in themselves, that they are actually *more* likely to want to learn from their experience, be *more* optimistic, and feel *more* motivated to improve on their perceived weakness, imperfection, or failure.

[So what does it mean to be self-compassionate?](#)

When you show yourself compassion, you mindfully acknowledge that you're experiencing an unpleasant moment or series of moments. You

don't try to deny the experience or think "it shouldn't be this way." You accept that it's happening even though it may be unpleasant and you treat yourself with kindness, care, and understanding. What does it mean to treat yourself with kindness and care? Well, firstly it implies that you drop the self-judgment that you may be all-too-familiar with and instead relate to yourself as you would to a friend who is experiencing some kind of unpleasantness in their life. It also means that you adjust your words, tone of voice, and body language to let yourself know that you care about you and that you're important to you. Maybe you tell yourself "I love you", "I care about you", "I know this is hard for you right now" or whatever feels easy and true in the moment. You also acknowledge that everyone experiences moments like this- that moments of pain and unpleasantness, and feelings of imperfection, failure, and inadequacy are something that all of humanity shares. Life can feel hard or challenging and is this one common feeling that binds us.



To practice being compassionate with yourself now, grab a sheet or two of paper, your openness and honesty, and start answering the following questions:

- Is there any personal characteristic that you criticize yourself for having? Something that you perceive as a weakness or imperfection that leads you to feel insecure, shameful, or as if you're "not good enough"? Maybe you constantly tell yourself that you're too lazy, too overweight, too indecisive, or unable to maintain healthy relationships because you think being hard on yourself will help you change?
- How do you feel when you think about this imperfection, weakness, or inadequacy that you perceive? Does it make you sad to think about it? Afraid? Angry? Insecure?
- How do these feelings reflect in your actions? When you think about this imperfection, weakness, or inadequacy that you perceive, how do you behave? How do you talk to yourself? And what do you tend to do as a result?
- Now imagine that you have a friend right here with you. This friend is supportive, forgiving, kind, and unconditionally loving and accepting. This friend understands the nature of humans to have strengths *and* weaknesses, and to perceive inadequacy based on many things that have happened in the past that were outside of our control. This friend, like you,

wants nothing more than for you to be truly healthy and truly happy. From their perspective of unbounded compassion, what would they say to you about your perceived imperfection/ weakness/ inadequacy? How would they express compassion towards you and the pain and suffering you feel when you criticize and judge yourself with unnecessary harshness?

- If they were to help encourage you to make a change that you want to make, how would they do so from a place of love and compassion? Can you think of a kinder, more caring way to help yourself realize how your behavior is unproductive, while at the same time motivating yourself to make a change? What is the kindest, most supportive message you can think of that's in line with your underlying desire to be truly healthy and truly happy?

Then, for a moment, tune into your emotions, to the sensations in your body, and anything else in your present experience. Notice how it feels to relate to yourself with compassion and unconditional love and acceptance, as a friend would. Let this feeling sink in and remember, the next time you are critical of yourself, that you have a choice to think and act differently, to be compassionate with yourself, and to love yourself into being the person you are and want to be.



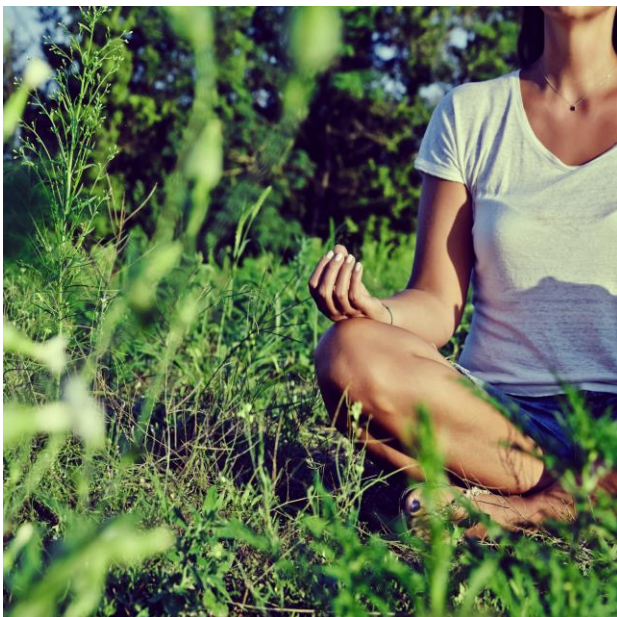
Connecting with Your Authentic Needs

As we live our lives, we rarely, if ever, experience a shortage of demands on our time and our mental well-being. Society consistently relays messages to us, whether through books, commercials, news or tv programs, about how it is best to allocate our mental and physical resources. The people in our lives—parents, relatives, siblings, teachers, friends—often do the same. They share with us, directly or indirectly, their hopes and wishes for what we ought to do and how we ought to be. And while there is nothing inherently wrong with listening to the desires of others, and even using them to better understand our own, we must make sure that we are, in fact, hearing and heeding our own unencumbered thoughts and preferences—those songs that live deep within us, waiting patiently to be sung and those seeds that we planted a long time ago in our hearts that are waiting to sprout and grow beautiful flowers.

Sometimes we assume that what's worked for us in the past will work just as well for us now and into the future. Sometimes we assume that what's best for *them* (our good friend, partner, family, and so on) is what's best for us too. Sometimes we're right. And sometimes we're not. Just because something has worked well for us in the past doesn't imply that it still will, and just because something has worked well for someone else doesn't imply that it will work just as well for us. One aspect of ourselves that is irrefutable is that we are fundamentally unique beings—different from anyone else and different from whom we've been at any other given point in our lives.

So what do *you* really want? What is your inner guidance system telling you that you need at this very point in time? What is working well, and what is working less well for you right now? What feels right, and what feels not so right? The only way to really know is to pause, ask, and check in with your needs, wants, and preferences periodically.

Let's do this now.



Take 15 minutes to contemplate or write in silence in response to this prompt:

What I REALLY need and want for my own sense of well-being, replenishment, stress release and/or inner peace at this time is...

Whether you are contemplating or writing, simply capture what you are hearing from within. Trust the process. Trust yourself.

Once you are done, make a conscious choice to take one action in the next 24 hours based on the insights you gained. Allow yourself to be courageous, self-giving, and spontaneous.

Developing a Growth Mindset

“I love myself the way I am and still I want to grow” – Jai Josefs

What are you good at? What are you not so good at? What are some of your positive qualities? What are some of your less desirable qualities?

Throughout our lives, we develop ideas about where our skills and limitations lie. These ideas – that we don’t have great willpower, that we are easily hurt or irritated, that we’re not so good at making decisions or solving problems – often take shape early on in life and become a part of your perception of who you are as a human being. Once substantiated, these ideas seem to pop up again and again and can be difficult to disregard or ignore.

Without proper awareness, that is.

With proper awareness, we can begin to notice the beliefs and mindset we hold about our qualities, abilities, and skills. Do we subscribe to a fixed mindset, believing that our qualities can’t be changed in any meaningful way, that they’re set in stone, and that heredity, luck, and destiny have more to do with our success than does effort?

Or do we subscribe to a growth mindset, believing that our future is something we get to create with effort, and that with experience, everyone, no matter what the initial gifts and temperaments they came into the world with, can develop the skills, abilities, and qualities they desire?



The difference between having a growth and fixed mindset can mean the difference between experiencing vibrant health, joy, and success or experiencing poor vitality, frustration, and failure. When we can approach ourselves (including our qualities, talents, and skills) from the perspective of growth, we know that any challenge or failure is an opportunity- an opportunity to learn, grow, and expand our qualities and abilities. We take risks, we go for what we want, and we get what we want. Because unlike with a fixed mindset, we know that mistakes and single failures don’t mean anything about our abilities and qualities as a person. We fall down, we get up. We try again. We graciously accept feedback to help us learn and grow. We work hard. And before we know it, we have skills and qualities that we’ve never had before.

Having a growth mindset is not an attempt to dismiss your natural talents or abilities or to create circumstances or characteristics that are not representative of your true self. Self-acceptance and self-love are the foundation of living in harmony with your highest expression, honing your highest mental capacity, and experiencing the benefits that come from a life lived authentically and fully.

The key to creating a growth mindset then is to first acknowledge where you currently hold fixed beliefs about yourself. You’ve got to become aware of those ideas you developed about yourself early on in life so that you can begin to change them if you find that they’re having a not-so-great effect on your thoughts and actions and prohibiting your highest expression.



Think back to an early life experience where you became discouraged about your own abilities, skills, or qualities based on something someone told you, or something that you believed and therefore told yourself.

Jot down the skill, ability, or 'favorable' character trait that you at some point decided you didn't have, be it intelligence, cooking skills, an athletic build, ability to make good decisions or a good sense of humor.

Now write the reason, if you can remember, why you reached this conclusion about yourself. For each reason, ask yourself:

- Is this reason rational? Is what happened, what I was told, or what I told myself really truly evidence that I don't have this skill, ability, or character trait?
- Is this something I can still work on, get better at, and improve on?

Hopefully the answer to the last question is "yes" and you can clearly see that the belief that you don't have this favorable quality, skill, or ability is simply unfounded. If you want it, you can have it and you can be it. With this newfound awareness, you can now freely choose the skills and abilities you wish to develop with each passing day. What skill will you choose to improve on and be great at? What quality will you choose to develop and flaunt as your own?

Cultivating the Power of Preference

What if all of your preferences, likes, interests, and passions were actually clues to help you fulfill your life purpose and live your highest potential? What if, after unravelling all your conditioning and self- or socially-imposed false beliefs about good and bad, right and wrong, acceptable and unacceptable, your true preferences were the road map, the always accurate GPS, that led you down the most direct path to a joyous and authentically-expressed life? What if, just what if, your highest, most aligned and empowered self created these tendencies to lead you in the direction it intended to go in this lifetime. What if...

So often in life we stray from our path because we are trying to be someone else. We are trying to please other people, fulfill others' visions for our life, conform to a social structure or family expectation that has nothing to do with our passions, preferences, gifts, talents, and authentic self expression. If this pattern continues long enough, we can lose all sense of our true self and interact in the world wearing only the well-constructed mask of the 'self-image' - this, of course, really being the 'other image'. But there are signposts and course corrections available each step of the way and the indicators are your preferences.

Preferences can become distorted into a part of the mask as well. For example, say you consider yourself a pacifist. You prefer to handle differences and challenges in a place of mutual respect and personal accountability. This is the conscious expression of pacifism. However, as a young person, a desire to avoid conflict may have morphed into people-pleasing, remaining silent instead of setting boundaries, and being treated disrespectfully to avoid potential conflict. This distorted facade overlaid onto a preference of yours, when expressed from an empowered and authentic space, was actually a gift- the ability to approach challenging issues or situations from a non-threatening and open perspective. Now, you may think, doesn't

everyone prefer to approach situations or potential conflicts like that? And we would say no. Some people have a preference towards opposition, argument, and engaging in a good fight. And this preference can be just as inspiring, important, and spiritually attuned as the previous example. The lesson in this example is that preferences are a means to honoring who you are and what you came into this lifetime to express. Each preference, passion, and intrigue we possess is a way for the Infinite Intelligence to experience itself and they all have value.





Here are some ways to identify the signposts and indicators along your path of self-discovery and authentic expression.

1. Acknowledge the catalysts you have that create resistance. Do you feel enraged when someone is mean to animals? Do you feel it is your personal responsibility to speak up for those who have no voices? Perhaps you have the fight in you that breaks through the surface whenever you see a dog chained up outside or hear about someone who abandoned their pet. This is a signpost. See where you can engage in activities that express this preference and honor a part of your being that adds value and compassion to the world around you.
2. Make a list of five to ten things that have been a consistent part of your life and feel good when you do them. Maybe they started out as hobbies and have developed into regular practices for feeling alive and fulfilled. Maybe they've even transformed into a way of supporting yourself and sharing your talents with others in a professional capacity, like writing has for us. Whatever those things are that make you feel alive, jot them down now and make a commitment this week to participate fully in the expression of one of these preferences.
3. Perhaps you prefer to have silence before bedtime in your home. But night after night, there is a TV or noise-producing circumstance that is always present up until the lights go out each night. This week, tell your household that one night this week, the whole house will be silent for 20 minutes before bed. Set a boundary that you will continue to do this each night until the 20 minute time limit you have set is honored. For those of you with partners or housemates that have a fighter or confrontational preference, let them know that you are worthy of experiencing and sharing your preferences just as much as the next person and for a harmonious household, everyone has to share the power and preferences.
4. Understand that this is not an exercise in dominating your environment or indulging in self gratification. This practice is about reconnecting with and reclaiming the aspects of yourself that have been unexpressed or expected to be different. There is only one you. And everyone else is already taken, so best to start expressing your unique essence *now*.

Being Present With Yourself and Your Emotions



What's real? Is it our thoughts or emotions about what has happened? Is it our memories of what has happened? Or is our experience of something as it is in the present?

When we experience something in the present, we experience it directly. This direct experience is real and can be felt through our bodily sensations. Before we say or ascribe meaning to something, we feel or sense it. And something powerful happens when we do. By meeting our emotions with gentleness and non-judgmentally observing the physical sensations in our body that underlie these emotional states, we allow healing to take place.

Bring something to mind - a person, situation, or problem - that feels unpleasant when you think about it.

Now, for just a moment, let go of any thoughts about it or them, let the stories fall away, and go a little deeper to the sensations that are present in your body when you think about this person or event. Ask yourself, "What do I feel in my body as I bring this to mind?" Let what wants to come come, as you begin to feel rather than think your way through to healing.

Feel what you feel. Sometimes it may take a few or more moments of presence - of pure, unadulterated attentiveness to your body - to begin to notice the sensations. Be patient. Ignore any commentary that wants to come in and continue to focus on feeling, rather than rationalizing or analyzing, the issue. Stay focused on the sensations themselves. These sensations,

unlike your emotions, represent a pure objective experience. Your emotions are often entangled with thoughts and therefore hold judgment. When you place your attention on what's actually here, you are surrendering to it. You are allowing your emotions, which are just energy in motion, to flow through you. You are, in essence, allowing your shadows, the judgment that your thoughts held about the issue, to transform into light.

When you start to notice the sensations and have a felt sense of the issue, it may help to label it. Does the sensation feel like pressure? Swirling? Vibration? Heaviness? Heat? Is it in your belly, chest, head, back, arms, or legs? Whatever it is, just keep your point of attention on it. As you are present and stay with the felt sense of this experience or problem, it will begin to release, process, and change. If it doesn't begin to shift right away, that's okay. Spend some time with it and continue approaching it in the present, as if for the first time. Feel whatever is there at this very moment. We do not determine when a shift occurs. Given our undivided, nonjudgmental attention, it will occur as it needs to. Your body knows what needs to shift. Let it speak to you through the sensations you feel.

As you begin to feel a shift in sensation - maybe it gets smaller, bigger, changes shape or quality or moves to another part of your body - stay with it. Watch it. Presence it. Be with it as if for the first time. Remain sensitive to what you need right now and allow your soul to speak to you through your body. By letting come whatever wants to come, you let go of whatever is ready to go. With no thought or judgment in the way, only presence, healing happens all on its own.

Grounding Yourself into the Here and NOW

It is easy in life to get distracted with thoughts, worries, to-do lists, and the many tasks of the day. When we have moments free from all our many duties and responsibilities, oftentimes, we can still find ourselves thinking of things not related to the present moment. Distracted from the reality we are actually experiencing, we are consumed by a figment of our imagination. Perhaps you are preparing the rebuttal to an argument you anticipate you will have with a loved one. Maybe you are still mulling over the insensitive comment you made the other night at dinner to a new love interest. You may just be worrying about money, relationships, health, career, or not having enough time to do what you want. On the other hand, you could be spending the precious hours of your day fantasizing about future dreams and desires without coming back to the powerful present moment, the only place that manifestation occurs.

Spending too much time in the mind can create a perfect breeding ground for anxiety, discomfort, and inaction, and it can increase incidents of injury or mishaps. When we are in our head, we are not in our environment. We stub our toes on the coffee table. We half-heartedly listen to our children tell us about their day. We make mistakes at work, we get into car accidents, and fall back into unconscious patterns and habits. In short, we aren't present and conscious for our daily lives.

The following exercise is a grounding technique that you can use to reconnect with your body and with the present, and take a step away from an over-analyzing mind.

Sit in a comfortable position with both feet resting on the floor or ground, as you say and/or feel the following statements.

I feel my feet
My feet are on the ground
I feel my ankles
My ankles are connected to my feet
My feet are on the ground
I feel my lower legs
My lower legs are connected to my ankles and my feet
My feet are on the ground
I feel my upper thighs and hips
My upper thighs and hips are connected to my lower legs, ankles and feet
My feet are on the ground

Continue this dialogue as you move up your body from the hips to the lower back, upper back, stomach, chest, shoulders, neck and head.

At the head speak the phrase:

I feel the energy in the top of my head flowing up and out into the Universe
This energy is connected to my head and neck
My neck is connected to my entire torso
My torso is connected to my legs and feet
My feet are on the ground
I feel the energy flowing from my feet into the ground
I am present and fully connected in this moment



Awakening Your Life Force Energy

For as long as mystics and philosophers have roamed the earth, there has been a theory or understanding about what we are, what we are made of, what underlies our human being-ness. These ideas, which were merely concepts or beliefs for thousands of years, are now being validated by science, to great depth by quantum physics. It is now common knowledge that everything is made up of energy and, even more specifically, vibrational frequency. This is what the terms Universal Life Force Energy, Life Force, Prana, or Chi, among other names, describe. It is the energy that permeates and animates all things, living and nonliving. The belief that this energy can be shared, directed, focused, and expressed through another for the purpose of supporting their optimum health, healing and well-being is the basis of all energy work being offered today.

There are countless energy modalities practitioners work with today. From Aura Clearings to Zero Point Energy Balancing, from Prana practices to Reiki sessions, each one is founded on the principle that energy can be directed, balanced, improved, and expanded and can lead to improvements on all levels of the recipient's being-ness. We are, after all, energy beings living in agreement with physical laws for the sake of experiencing life in a physical plane.

“Reiki”, one medium of tapping into the universal energy, is a term used in Japanese culture to denote life force. It is a form of energy healing in which a certified practitioner offers the client hands off or hands on life force energy for the purpose of balancing, enhancing, or improving overall well-being. People who are receiving Reiki during a session may feel any number of sensations, visualizations, or insights just as commonly as they feel little to nothing or simply a sense of peace or relaxation.

As with all energy work, the foundation of the Reiki exchange is two or more people coming together with the intention of supporting someone's continued journey of self actualization and optimal wellness. Although some people feel more impactful shifts when working with a practitioner or energy worker, even on our own, we are all capable to opening up to the healing benefits of the Universal Life Force Energy. As such, it is important to remember that you are as much an active giver as a receiver in an energy exchange and can offer these uplifting energies to yourself. All that is required is intention, faith, and a willingness to receive.



If you feel drawn to receiving an energy session, choose a person with whom you feel open and comfortable. Drink extra water, 16-32 oz. more than usual before and after a session. In the days preceding your session, write down anything you may wish to receive clarity with or improve on. Immediately after a session, write down any insights, visuals, or information you received during the session. Some individuals find it helpful to bring a digital recorder, notebook or journal to recall insights or information received, either during the session, like with the recorder or after in the form of writing.



It is valuable to remember that these experiences can be joyful, light, and fun which is just as transformative of an experience as the sessions that are challenging, painful, or upsetting. Either way, take great care to be compassionate and understanding of yourself during this time and allow plenty of space in your life for reflection, rest, and silence. Meditation can support the integration of new energies and knowledge, so set aside 15 minutes daily where you can sit in silence. There needn't be any other intention than sitting there silently for the set amount of time. Choose a comfortable position in a place that you can be undisturbed and without distraction.

Distance healing is just as effective as in-person healing, so stay open to hearing about a practitioner that may resonate with you, regardless of location. Know that it is your inner voice helping you pay attention to these messages and synchronistic moments.

Living with Embodied Awareness

We tend to view our body as something separate and disassociated from us and we express this through the way we move, the way we relate to and how we talk about our body. Maybe you are amidst a deeply stressful experience and puzzled as to why your head hurts or your shoulder pain is back. Perhaps you acknowledge the correlation, but react to that information with self-judgement and criticism. Sure, your mental and physical experiences may have different causes and effects and just as well, they may be arising in unison. After all, our mind and body are always connected and functioning as a single, interrelational unit. It is within and through our body that we get to experience ever-more of ourselves and invite consciousness to take physical form.

The practice of yoga postures or asanas can be a wonderful way to experience our body in relation to the consciousness from which we are born. “Yoga” means to yoke, bind, or bring together. In the practice of yoga, we unite our body and mind. We acknowledge the body not solely as a form to be altered or strengthened but as a form to get to know and develop true relationship with. We develop this connection to our body by bringing awareness to its many subtleties, during yoga or any other type of movement, as we attend to what our body is expressing in each moment.

Whether you are taking part in a formal group yoga practice or watching a YouTube video and following along at home, remember that this is your opportunity to discover and feel every movement your body is making.



Focus on your breath, and invite movement to join along with it. As you sync breath and movement, you are binding mind and body, allowing the universal life force energy that runs through your body to move through unencumbered. With each new breath is a new opportunity to pay attention, see and feel what's there, and rediscover the nuances that form your body and its motions.

As you go about your postures, let your attention focus on the many ways your body communicates your inner wisdom with you. Give attention to your breath and the intricacies of every inhale, as you draw air into your lungs, and every exhale, as you expel air from your lungs into the environment around you. Draw attention to the subtleties that make up



your movements and to any sensations that may be present in your body. How does it feel as you inhale, circle your arms and reach up towards the sky as you begin to salute the sun? What sensations do you feel in your awareness as you exhale, fold over, and reach your fingertips towards the earth?

Each posture invites with it a new awareness- an awareness of how easily, or not so easily, you are able to change, adjust, and morph into a new way of being. As you move from posture to posture, be mindful of the current state of your thoughts and emotions, and the physical sensations of tension and flexibility that these thoughts and emotions arise with you. Allow yourself to feel these sensations through your breath, expanding with each inhale and relaxing with each exhale.

As you bring together mind and body through your breath, notice the ever-changing qualities of breath, mind, and body. Notice whether your body yearns for some variation of the posture you are currently in, whether it desires movement, or whether it wants to be still. There is no particular way your body *should* move or look. Invite movement based not solely on the instructor's cues or on how anyone around you is moving but based on the message your body is sending you. Be comfortable in the knowing that your body, mind, and breath are always evolving and communicating with you, both individually, and together,. Your inner bodily wisdom is always at your disposal if you remain receptive to it. Let your awareness of breath and body be your guide as you allow pure consciousness to be expressed through the physical form that is you.

Expressing Self-Love Through Movement

We have all heard about the benefits of exercise, but many of us do not acknowledge the mental and emotional benefits associated with a regular exercise routine. Mental and emotional well-being are just as positively impacted by exercise as physical health. There is a plethora of different physical activities one can engage in to support this process. Yoga, walking, swimming, running, working out in a gym, dancing, or pilates, just to name a few, have all been found to increase mindfulness, reduce levels of stress hormones in the body, and release emotional baggage.

The trick is to implement this action from a place of empowerment and self care, as opposed to lack. “I need to lose weight, get fit, or have more energy” are all valid reasons to work out, but are far less sustainable motivating factors than just wanting to consistently participate in practices that express your self-love and self-worth. You are worthy of having a vitalized, strong, and flexible body and mind. You deserve the opportunity to release unexpressed emotions, stresses, and dis-ease. Find an exercise routine that is in harmony with expressing these concepts through the art of body movement.

On an index card that can easily fit in your wallet and that you can see every day, write down one physical activity that you can engage in everyday for one week. Even if it is as simple as walking everyday for 15 minutes in the morning, write it down. At the top of the index card write the words, ‘I promise myself I will...’ At the bottom of the index card, write the words, ‘I always keep my promises.’ Read the card every morning with total confidence and enthusiasm that you will complete the task and keep your commitment.

The following week, write down the same task or a new physical activity you will engage in for the next week. This not only will help you to develop a strong sense of commitment to your intentions, it will strengthen your inner sense of accountability and develop a pattern or habit of following through with the promises you make to yourself. Make sure you choose something that you will easily be able to complete, as *not* following through will send an equally strong message to yourself that you can *not* trust that what you say or intend will come to pass.



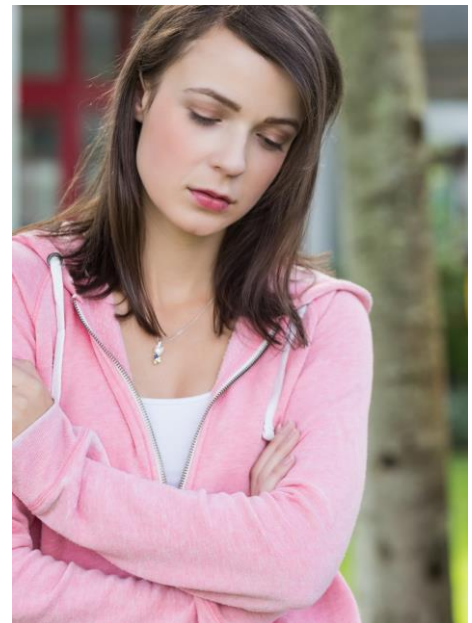
Finding the Positive in Any Situation

No situation, person, place, or thing is inherently positive or negative. It is positive or negative because we make it so. We attribute meaning to it based on our past experiences, preconceived notions, and current emotional state which leads us to either move toward greater joy, excitement, pleasure, and other positive emotions or toward greater fear, anger, bitterness, sadness, or other negative emotions.

Our thoughts and the associated meaning we give to these situations, people, places, or things in our lives dictate our very experience of health and happiness. Here's one example.

Your boss just told you that your company is downsizing and she regrets to inform you that your position is one of the ones to be eliminated.

- You think: "O no!" "I thought I was an invaluable asset to this company!" "How could they not see it? How could they dispose of me just like that?!"
- You feel: Angry, frustrated, betrayed.
- You act: You panic and complain firstly to your boss, then to your friends, colleagues and partner. Three weeks later, you are still in disbelief, complaining, and worried about whether you will be able to find another job.



The same situation can go very differently. Your boss just told you that your company is downsizing and she regrets to inform you that your position is one of the ones to be eliminated.

- You think: "Well, that's a surprise. I thought the company was doing well. This will be a great opportunity for me to devote my talents to something I'm really passionate about, which I've been wanting to do for a long time and haven't really been able to do at this job."
- You feel: Calm, hopeful, optimistic, content.
- You act: You express your surprise to your boss. She lets you know that she too was surprised and that although your performance was top notch, there was nothing she could do to keep your position active given the financial circumstances of the company. She connects you with several people who can help you find a job in the field where your passions lie. You appreciate the opportunity and can't wait to do work that you love. In the meantime you decide to spend some time reconnecting with friends who you've been wanting to spend more time with and learning new skills you've been wanting to develop.

Same situation.

Different thoughts. Different emotions. Different actions. Different life experience.

The direction is always up to you.

One great way to stay focused on that which brings you joy no matter how unpleasant the situation you find yourself in is to focus deliberately on only the positive aspects of the situation.

Pick a situation, person, place, or thing that at present detracts you from feeling good, and ask yourself:

What is positive about this (situation/person/place/thing)?

What about it makes me feel good when I think about it?

Once you've found your first positive aspect, ask the question again.

What about this is positive and makes me feel good when I think about it?

Repeat until you find yourself amidst positive aspects only and feeling the effects of re-focusing your attention on what you want more, rather than less, of in your life. If you come across something that



doesn't feel good, simply withdraw your attention from it and direct it to something more positive, something that feels better.

Be authentic in your responses to yourself. If something doesn't feel good, don't try to force it and tell yourself that it does. Focus on something else that feels good authentically, that your body and mind can believe as truth, and therefore use as a vehicle to carry you to better and better feeling thoughts.

When you change your point of focus, your emotional experience changes. This is why this practice is particularly useful to encourage better-feeling thoughts about something that doesn't, at present, automatically bring you joy. Just as well, it can be used as a way to enhance, embrace, and expand on the joy you already feel in relation to some situation, person, place, or thing. In-joy!

Practicing Gratitude

The quality of our life all comes down to where we place our attention. At any moment of any day, we have a choice - do I place my attention on that which I want more of in my life or on that which I don't want at all in my life? The practice of gratitude is a wonderful way to focus our attention on that which we desire by enhancing our awareness of what we have, rather than spending mental energy focusing on what we don't have, that which we want, as opposed to that which we don't want.

When we practice gratitude, we invite ourselves to celebrate the present positive circumstances of our lives. Stress and negative emotions like resentment, anger, or regret become difficult to keep up when gratitude takes center stage. We may even begin to experience an enhanced sense of self-worth and self-appreciation because we see time and time again evidence of goodness in the world, and evidence that we are worthy recipients of this goodness and well-being.

Our object of gratitude or appreciation can be big or small. We can appreciate the simple pleasures of the smell of a flower or the sky on a bright sunny day. We can appreciate other people, whether for their support, companionship, or for sharing a beautiful smile as you pass them by. We can take time to appreciate the Source of all that we get to experience in our lives. The possibilities are endless.

There are many ways to make gratitude a part of your life. One way is to keep a gratitude journal and make the practice of appreciation a conscious daily habit. At the beginning and/or end of each day, ask yourself "What 5 things made me feel joyful in the last 24 hours?" As you come up with moments that inspire appreciation within you, really re-imagine, re-feel, and re-experience the moment. Take yourself back in time and relive and savor the experience as if it is happening *right now*.

Another way to reap the rewards of gratitude in a very pronounced way is to write a letter of gratitude to someone who has had a positive and lasting influence in your life. The positive effects of expressing gratitude in this way can be immense, and are especially powerful if you haven't thanked the person properly in the past, or if you can read the letter aloud to them face to face. Whether you involve the person directly or not though, you may be happily surprised to see the positive impact it can have on him or her and the relationship you share.

So what are you waiting for? Grab a sheet or two of paper, a pen, and start writing. To whom? The first person you thought of as you were reading this... you know who they are.



Healing through Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a process of letting go. When we forgive, we forego experiences and hurts from our past. We release what we don't want in our life, and thereby make room for what we do want. Forgiveness is the very definition of (inter)personal freedom. No matter what happens in our lives and whom is involved, we know that we need not carry this experience, and the meaning we gave it, with us into the future.

Forgiveness is not simply tolerating, forgetting, denying or minimizing a hurt, condoning or excusing what was done, or waiting for an apology. It is possible to forget hurts whether or not they have been forgiven. Likewise, it is possible, and often necessary, to forgive regardless of whether the other person shows remorse or asks to be forgiven. Forgiveness is a process we undertake with and for ourselves- the other person needn't be told verbally that we forgive them.

By forgiving, we allow ourselves to live in response, rather than in reaction, to the events in our life. Because we direct our attention to what is currently present, and leave the past in the past, through the act of forgiveness we are able to truly become conscious creators of our life experience.

One form of practicing forgiveness is known as the Ho'oponopono prayer. Any time thoughts or feelings of past hurts arise in your awareness, or are triggered by current circumstances or situations, try reciting the ancient Hawaiian prayer below.

As you recite the mantra, you are asking that any pain and negative energy present or that remains from the past situation be cleared away from your body, mind, and soul. You can use the mantra when you feel a need to forgive another person, or when you feel a need for self-forgiveness. When used to forgive yourself for something you feel you've done wrong and feel shame or guilt over, it can be a very powerful act of self-love. When we open our hearts to forgiveness, we move forward to a bright, fulfilling future full of love. When we open our hearts to self-forgiveness, we open ourselves up to a greater connection with Source, Creator, God, or pure Love.



*Please forgive me.
I'm sorry.
I love you.
Thank you.*

Living in Integrity

Everyone has told a white lie here or there. If you say you haven't, congratulations, you just did. It is inevitable. You are asked how you are doing and without even thinking about it you say, "I'm fine," even though, if you were being truly honest, you would have a different response entirely. You tell a friend that their new haircut looks great, when, in truth, you liked it much better before. And, of course, there are the big leaps in truth, flat out and consciously lying about this thing or that. Telling someone an exaggerated version of the truth, taking things that don't belong to you, betraying a trust, or making claims about yourself or your life that are partially or completely fabricated, whether you realize you are doing it or not, make an impact on your subconscious mind and psyche that can have far reaching consequences.

For starters, not trusting yourself, not believing in yourself, and carrying the stress that you will be discovered for your dishonesty somewhere

down the line are all negative aspects of living out of integrity. Another powerful side effect is not being present in the moment. You see, when your habits lack the consistent expression of transparency and integrity, you are constantly trying to keep everything straight in your mind. You are consumed with the efforts required to maintain the structure of a fantasy world and life, showing one mask here, another one there, and all the while spending countless hours justifying and defending this behavior to yourself. 'If I told so and so I liked their hair better the other way, it would hurt their feelings,' you tell yourself. This type of thinking doesn't take into account the fact that the majority of our communications and interactions are felt energetically and expressed with body language. Words are only a small portion of our interactions with one another. The majority of communication happens non-verbally, which means that the truth is felt much stronger than the falsehood being told.




So, how do you live in integrity?

First, forgive every moment in the past that you didn't fully show up in authenticity and integrity. Understand that you were always doing the best you could do and that you can do nothing to change something that has already happened, so it is time to move on. Try the exercise described in the "Healing Through Forgiveness" section of this e-book so you can have a fresh slate. If you feel the need to come clean about this thing or that with the people in your life, practice the art of living in integrity for at least 7 consecutive days so you can build up some momentum before you start to involve your loved ones or social circle. As with all processes of self-development, this is much more about your inner world and having integrity and transparency with yourself. After you establish this habit, the outer expression of it will be a natural byproduct of your inner commitment.

Second, forgive everyone you have ever thought or found out was being dishonest with you. They, like you, were doing the best they could do, and deserve a clean slate, just as you do. Now that everyone has been given a level playing field, begin implementing these habits and practices today:

1. If you need to justify it, it is probably not a decision/action made in integrity. For example, imagine watching a co-worker one day take a sandwich she did not pay for and then begin the process of defending that action. Hear the justification she uses to excuse this behavior: they (her co-workers) were going to throw it away at the end of the day anyway, she worked hard and didn't get paid what she deserved, other people did it too, and so on... Imagine you have made a commitment to the integrity practice, making you devoted to standing in and speaking your truth. Perhaps in this scenario, your co-worker wants you to join in on her deception. If so, see and hear yourself saying...

Living in integrity is 
your way home to
your authentic self.

2. "I am not willing to lie for you or anyone else." Make a clear statement in your relationships that you are a person that can be trusted with private information, but that you are not willing to lie for anyone. This can be challenging to approach with people because so many people feel justified, yet judged, for being dishonest. But that is *their* journey to travel, not yours. You are worthy of keeping your slate clean. Living in integrity has room for saying 'I can't say' or 'you would have to ask him/her about that' or 'I am not at liberty to discuss it'. Just make it clear that you will remain silent or speak as truthfully as possible about the topic.

3. Release yourself from the desire to be perfect. We all make mistakes, recall things inaccurately, say something and realize we were incorrect. This isn't a quest for sainthood; it is a commitment to transparency and honesty to the best of your ability.

4. Ask yourself the question, "Is that true?" As described in the 'Developing a Growth Mindset' section of this e-book, thinking "I am horrible with finances", "I eat too many carbs", "I am bad at remembering names", and the like is a little sneaky way in which we dishonor ourselves for the sake of making an excuse for this behavior or that characteristic. The question, 'Is that true?' gives you the opportunity to inquire about whether this belief is fact or fiction. And since it is a belief, and therefore, most assuredly a product of the past, it can be altered or let go of entirely. Living in integrity gives you permission to be honest with yourself. And when you are truly honest with yourself, you aren't any of these things. You are pure energy manifesting itself in form based on its vibrational resonance. In this ever-changing continuum, you are free to adjust or shift any frequency in whatever way you wish. Living in integrity is your way home to your authentic self.

5. At the end of the day, ask yourself, “Where was I lacking in integrity?” Were you silent with a co-worker whom you wanted to confront about an unresolved problem, but didn’t because you didn’t want to be perceived negatively by that person or your other co-workers? Did you leave the bank with their pen, fully aware that you had it as you got in your car, but felt too busy to return it to the counter inside? Did you tell a friend you were busy that day with errands and couldn’t hang out because you just wanted to stay home and watch your favorite show on Netflix? Did you tell your spouse nothing was wrong when truthfully you were worried about the bills and he/she had just gone shopping for something that was not needed? Notice whether you were aware at the time that you were not honoring your commitment to integrity or whether you noticed it ‘after the fact.’ Whatever the case, where did you not step fully into your integrity practice? This is wonderful information to discover subconscious responses and avoidance patterns in your life. Then you can begin to uncover the underlying cause of these behaviors and bring it into your integrity practice.

6. Surround yourself with people who live this way. Avoid those who gossip, lie, cheat, or condemn others. Be cautious around people who don’t trust anyone or think everyone is lying, two-faced, fake, or disloyal. Oftentimes, we fear or judge that which we don’t acknowledge and accept within ourselves.

7. Be gentle on yourself and have fun with this process. In the beginning, when you feel that you may be falsely presenting yourself, just respond with, “I’ll have to think about that” or “I’m not into gossip”, or answer a question with a question. For example, when that friend asks you what you think of her new haircut, ask her, “What do you think? It is, after all, the most important opinion on the subject.” Be creative and open-hearted in your approach to honoring your authentic expression while making it clear what you do and don’t want in your life.

8. Discover the power, abundance and receiving that develops along the path of integrity. When we are true to ourselves, we are open to all the gifts life has to offer.

“When we are true to ourselves,
we are open to all the gifts life has to offer.”



Being a Purposeful Creator

If you want it, you can have it. It's true. With time, you can really, truly have all the experiences you want in your life. What is it that you want to experience down the road? How do you want to feel? How do you want others to feel in your presence? Among many techniques, visualization can be a very powerful tool to get in tune with your heart's desires, envision what it is you *really* want, and turn your wants into haves.


Picture this.

You've broken free from the chains of the past and from the cages of any perceived self-limitations. You can have, do, or be *anything* you want.

Close your eyes and allow your mind to wander and your imagination to run wild.

Three years from now...

- Who are your friends and how are you spending your time?
- What does your family life look like?
- What does your love life look like?
- What do your health and body look like?
- What kinds of thoughts are you thinking?
- How are you feeling day to day?
- What does your professional life look like?
- What new skills have you learned and absorbed?
- What acts of service are you contributing to your community and to the world?
- What new traits have you brought into your character?
- What beautiful experience are you having to bring fun and adventure into your life?

Being a 
purposeful creator
comes down to
flowing with the
currents of life.

Being a purposeful creator comes down to expressing your desires through thoughts, visions, and most importantly emotions. When you experience positive emotions like joy, contentment, enthusiasm, excitement, curiosity, and love in the present moment, you invite more of the same into your life. This idea is akin to the concept of 'like attracts like' and a fundamental part of the umbrella of the "Law of Attraction."

And it's all about how you do it. Being a purposeful creator comes down to flowing with the currents of life. It requires an understanding that your creative power and ability to manifest the life of your dreams is accessible only in the present moment. And this realization must be followed by an intentional directed focus and awareness of the current circumstances in your life that are in harmony with and support that which you desire. You needn't force or try to make your desires happen. The only thing you need to do is to let go of the idea that there is something specific, grandiose, or vital that you need to do. Realize that what you are doing now, when it is infused with vitality, enthusiasm, openness, and appreciation, is most assuredly along the path to your desired destination in the future. This is how your wants turn to haves and your wishes turn to realities. Voilà!

Being Present With Others

Life is a series of moment-to-moment experiences. These experiences rarely occur in isolation. As humans, we are relational beings; our brain and nervous system are always responding to self, to other, and to the interaction between ourself and other. My perception (what I see through “my” eyes) is always influencing and being influenced by your perception.

Being mindfully present with another person begins with being mindful of ourselves in relationship or interaction with this other person. We continuously pay attention to our own mind-body states - the feelings, attitudes, reactions, bodily sensations - that are always flowing and always changing within us. And we maintain a keen attentiveness and receptiveness to the other person, their feelings, and attitudes, whether communicated verbally or nonverbally through their movements, gestures, posture, eye contact, or tone of voice.

As we continue to pay attention to our own qualities and to the qualities of the other, we can begin to expand our awareness to the qualities of the moment to moment relationship between us. Each of us can see past our own perception to the perception of our mutual interaction. I can see through “your” eyes, you can see through “my” eyes, and we can also see what “we” see together. By doing so, we can experience true mutual empathy. I sense your perceptions, sensations, and insights because I am so tuned in and present with you. I can understand, from your perspective, your thoughts, feelings, and pain. As I shift back and forth between seeing you and seeing me, I can see that this experience belongs to you and I can “be with” your pain without calling it my own. I bring empathic qualities of care, compassion, and emotional intelligence to the situation, and you feel seen, heard, and supported in your experience.





The next time you are with someone you know, take a moment to be with them as they are at this very moment, as you are at this very moment.

Become aware of your own breath, your body, and everything in between.

After a few moments, slowly begin to invite the other person into your experience by looking at them, listening to them with your full attention, receiving their words and feeling their presence as if for the first time. How are you experiencing him/her? How are they experiencing him or herself? Gently pay attention to the qualities of their verbal and nonverbal behavior that provide clues to their experience of themselves and others in this very moment.

Maintain non-judgmental acceptance of yourself and of them. Notice when you may be drawing conclusions about them from something they're saying based on how you experienced it or them in the past. How are you and this person experiencing one another in this very moment? Return to your breath and the sensations in your body and regain awareness of your own feelings and reactions.

Who is this person without the preconceived notions you have of him/her? Enjoy meeting them for the first time.

And who are you without this need to project an image or perspective in this moment with the other person? How can you be more vulnerable or authentic with your expression?

Repeat this practice the next time you interact with them and enjoy meeting them for the first time (again).

Take note of how being present with this other person made you feel towards them. Did it enrich your connection? In what ways?

Breathing for Health

“We have one constant and life-giving relationship with the world around us- the breath.”

We have one constant and life-giving relationship with the world around us- the breath. Each breath we take can charge our body with vitality, increase our oxygen levels, circulate healthy blood through the system, and connect us with where we are. It is the ever-present access point into presence and mindfulness. Our atmosphere has been in existence since the beginning of the planet's creation and each breath is a way of uniting with the whole of our existence on this life-sustaining rock floating through space. When you think about it, each inhale can transport us through time to connect us with the whole of history and each exhale offers our contribution to the infinite future. The breath is a bridge to All That IS, and you have access to it every minute of every day.

Although you may be breathing in and out day after day, and if you are reading this book you most assuredly are, the question is are you doing it mindfully? Are you breathing deeply into your belly, with a relaxed face and jaw, relaxed shoulders, an open chest, and spacious, expansive inhalation, followed by a releasing and relaxing exhalation? Seem like a tall order? Though it may seem too much attention to put on something as simple as your breath, breathing is the most vital physical function for the body. You can go weeks without eating and days without drinking water but you won't survive more than a few moments without air.

Breathwork is a great tool to use in order to connect with the present, bring awareness into the body and develop a deeper relationship with the vital energy of the body through the breath. It requires no props, no special training, no classes, and no equipment- just you and your desire to not

just stay alive, but to live a fulfilled, present life. One common and simple breathwork practice is simply bringing your attention to the breath and mindfully breathing into the belly while sitting or lying in a comfortable position.

To do this, put your hand on your belly just below your belly button. With your hand on your stomach, breathe deeply in to raise your hand with the belly and exhale fully bringing your hand back down with the breath. Do this for 5-10 minutes to relax your mind and body. With each breath that you take in, imagine that you are inhaling a white or yellow healing light that penetrates every cell of your body. As you exhale, imagine a gray cloud, representing your worries, concerns, stresses, or dis-ease, leaving your body and floating away while getting smaller and smaller as it goes. Exhale fully and completely while giving your attention to the silent, still space that naturally occurs between the exhalation and the next inhalation.

If you are using this method for physical pain or discomfort, imagine the healing light going directly to that area of your body, filling that space with healing and rejuvenating energy. You may also choose to imagine each part of your body, beginning at the toes and ending at the head, relaxing and releasing tension as you go from one body part to the next. When or if you notice some discomfort, stay in that area for a moment and send the light there with a few breaths to really increase improvement in that space. This is a great practice to do as soon as you wake up and just before you go to sleep.

Prioritizing Rest and Rejuvenation

You need it to function optimally. It has been a part of your life since the day you were born. You can literally lose your mind if you don't get it. Normal physical function and bodily repairs cannot happen without it. What are we talking about? Sleep.

Sleep is essential to health and well-being. It is one area, like exercise, that we tend to feel is expendable in our modern-day, busy lives. But it cannot be neglected long term without some less than desirable backlash. Regardless of whether you are a self-ascribed night owl, working a second shift job, or suffering from insomnia, sleep can become your friend if you are open to appreciating its gift and doing some activities that promote healthy sleeping patterns. These may be things you have heard of before, but hopefully there are some new gems below you can be inspired to apply to your daily/nightly routine immediately.

1. Turn off all electronic devices and dim the lights in your home one hour before bedtime. This prompts your body to produce more melatonin, the hormone responsible for regulating your body's internal clock and your sleep and wake patterns.
2. Disconnect WiFi units, especially if they are close to or in your bedroom.
3. Leave your cell phone off the night stand. It wasn't too long ago that you had to talk with people on a phone that was connected to a plug in the wall. Trust us, you can go the night without it by your side. As a side benefit, you can then awake to a mindful morning routine as opposed to checking your messages, Facebook, or your emails as soon as you open your eyes.
4. Drink 1 to 2 tablespoons of tart cherry concentrate or fresh pressed juice one hour before bed can help to increase levels of melatonin. You can also eat tart cherries, particularly the Montmorency variety. Other foods such as milk, peanuts, turkey, chicken or almonds contain tryptophan, which raises brain serotonin which can be converted to melatonin and help you get a better night's sleep. As described in the "Living in Hormonal Harmony" section of this e-book, remember to find out what is right for *you* when choosing any sort of lifestyle regimen.





5. Try some yoga, stretching, or self massage before sleep. Relaxing the body helps to initiate the feel-good, rest-promoting hormones in the body to support a peaceful night's sleep.
6. Exercise during the day. Exerting yourself physically during the day balances out your physiology with sound sleep.
7. Banana Tea. The banana peel is naturally rich in potassium and magnesium. In addition to these phytonutrients, making a tea from the whole banana, including the peel may help your blood vessels and muscles relax, thus aiding in better sleep. Remember to feel into and discover what is best for *your* body, mind, and soul when choosing any sort of dietary or lifestyle regimen, a process we delve into in the "Living in Hormonal Harmony" section of this e-book. If you find that banana tea supports your unique health and wellness, we've included a simple recipe for you below.
8. Implement breathing exercises throughout the day and night that you can use in moments of stress or discomfort. Deep breathing helps to oxygenate and relax the body, calms the mind, and reconnects you with the present moment. You can find at least a few meditation or breathing techniques in this e-book that will serve you well in developing a practice that works for you.

Ingredients for Banana Tea

1 raw banana (organic preferably)
1 small pot of water
sprinkle of cinnamon (optional)

Directions

Boil water. Cut off both ends of banana and place in water. Boil for about 10 minutes. Pour water through colander and into mug. Drink one hour before bed.

Living in Hormonal Harmony

Happiness is all about harmony. Harmony of thoughts, of emotions, and of hormones too.

In fact, our hormones, and their extent of balance or imbalance, often influences the thoughts we think, the emotions we feel, and the actions we do or don't take.

So how do we achieve hormonal harmony?

Well, have you ever wondered why that diet worked so well for your friend but not for you?

Or why that person doesn't have to exercise intensely to maintain a fit physique but you do?

Or why you can do the same exact activities as your partner and they feel incredible while your body and mind can't wait until it's over?

It's because one size doesn't fit all. Whether a food, exercise regimen, or supplement, how well it works for you can be hit or miss. Eating, moving, and/or supplementing for a healthy stress response can end up adding more stress to your life as you try to find what works well for you.

To achieve harmony in your hormones and in your life takes a unique blend of the nutrients you ingest, the ways you move your body, and also the thoughts you think, the environments you spend your time in, and how and with whom you spend your time. This blend will be different for you than for your friend, sister, partner, parent or co-worker because after all, your levels, ranges, and balance of hormones and neurotransmitters responsible for health and wellness (serotonin, dopamine, oxytocin, epinephrine, norepinephrine, estrogen, progesterone) is different too.

You are a completely unique person... genetically, biochemically, metabolically, and psychologically. What you need in order to stay in hormonal harmony and be healthy and happy must be tailored to fit the unique person that you are. Your body knows this and always communicates to you, in subtle ways, what may or may not be suitable for your vitality.



Give yourself some time to reflect on yourself and your life as you consider the following questions:

- What do I love doing every day? What am I naturally good at? Am I using my natural gifts and talents as part of my current job? Do I enjoy what I do every day? Is there something I can do to infuse my passions and gifts into my daily work?
- When am I functioning at my best? Is it in the morning? Or at night? Do I enjoy moving at a fast pace or a slower leisurely one? Does my schedule suit my body's natural preferences? If no, how can I adjust it?
- What kind of social environment makes me feel good? Do I like to be around a lot of people or just a few close friends? Do I enjoy spending most of my time alone or with others? Who do I feel great around? How can I create a social routine that is more in alignment with these natural preferences of mine for people and situations?

- What sort of physical environment helps me to feel joy and function at my best? Do I enjoy quiet environments or ones with more noise and activity? Do I prefer spending time by the beach, near a lake, or in the mountains or desert?
- How do I enjoy spending my free time? Do I enjoy staying in and relaxing, being active and productive, or some mix of the two?
- How does my body like to move? Does it enjoy the rigor of intense exercise? The stretch of yoga? The rhythm and fun of dance? The feel of a brisk walk, hike, or swim? How long and how often does my body like to move? How can I give it more of what it effortlessly enjoys?
- What foods nourish my body? How do I feel after I eat *this* or *that* food? Do I feel light, satisfied, and full of energy after eating, or do I feel heavy, bloated, tired, uncomfortable, and/or sluggish soon after I eat? Am I eating to feed my physical body or my emotional body? When I am hungry, is there something that my soul is actually craving?

Along with these questions for self-reflection, the concepts and activities described in this e-book have been designed to enhance your ability to listen to the messages being communicated to you from the inside. When you are joyful and mindful, when you practice self-love, forgiveness, and gratitude, you are naturally more aligned with what is "right" for you, in body and mind.

If you find yourself wanting a bit more guidance in tuning in to the signals and messages of your body after having asked yourself the above questions and practiced the activities in this e-book that resonated most with you, not to worry - there are plenty of ways to tune in to your inner wisdom. We've provided some great tools for further exploration under the Personalized Health and Wellness heading of the Resources section at the very end of this e-book.



Creating Healthy Habits

“We are what we repeatedly do.” If we think positive thoughts and speak in a positive manner, others may consider us, and we may consider ourselves, a “positive” or “optimistic” person. If we exercise often, we become fit and toned. If we meditate repeatedly, we become more mindful. The same is true for those less desirable behaviors and qualities. If we think negative thoughts time and time again, before we know it we may very well be regarded a “negative” or “cynical” person. If we don’t move our bodies very much, we become less fit, maybe even a “couch potato.” If we repeatedly eat unhealthy foods, we experience signs and symptoms of being unhealthy— fatigue, pain, poor digestion, poor sleep, mental exhaustion, and so on.

Life is all about the habits we do or do not create. If we can just get into the habit of *consciously* building habits, in lieu of adopting habits involuntarily from our environment and the people around us, then we can influence the course of our lives in a very meaningful way.

We are creatures of habit. When creating a new one, it helps to start small, even tiny. Termed “tiny habits,” these behaviors we want to create are something that we will do at least once a day, that take us less than 30 seconds, and that require little effort.

Life is all about the
habits we do or do
not create.



For example, if it is my desire to become a more grateful and appreciative person, the tiny habit I would want to create may be “to think of one thing to be grateful for.” If it is my desire to be less reactive and reduce my stress, the tiny habit I would want to create might be “to breathe consciously for 2 seconds.” If it is my desire to exercise more, the tiny habit I would want to create might be “to prepare my workout clothes for a workout.” These tiny habits serve as entry points to creating larger habits and are more simple and less shocking for our body-brain system to incorporate and easier to maintain long-term.

Making the desired habit tiny is a great starting point. But to really make it stick, we’ve got to anchor it into our daily life. How do you do this? Well, you pair it with an existing habit that you already regularly do, or to something that already happens all on its own (eg coming home from work, hearing the phone ring, or laying your head on the pillow at night). Once paired, this existing habit becomes a trigger for our new tiny habit.

Here are a few examples:

- “After I open the door when coming home from work, I will take out my workout clothes”
- “After I lay my head on the pillow before going to sleep at night, I will think of one good thing that happened in the last 24 hours that I can be grateful for”
- “After I hear the phone ring, I will focus on my breathing for 2 seconds, inhaling and exhaling consciously to relax”





Take the next few minutes to think of three new habits that you want to create. For best results, really make them tiny. Ensure that each will take less than 30 seconds to do and that you won't need to put much effort into doing it. Then for each, think of an existing habit that will serve as its anchor. Make sure that the anchor you choose is specific and effortlessly and logically goes with the habit you want to create. For example, if you want to make meditation a regular practice and you have a comfortable place to meditate in your bedroom, you may fare better if you decide to meditate for two minutes right after you put your clothes on in the morning rather than right after you make your morning coffee or tea. One existing habit takes place in the same location as the habit you want to create (your bedroom), while the other takes place in a different location (the kitchen) and can therefore feel like more of a chore or 'stretch'.

Here's how to pair your Tiny Habits with their anchors:

"After I [existing habit or anchor], I will [new tiny habit you want to create]"

- After I _____, I will _____
- After I _____, I will _____
- After I _____, I will _____

Once you've tried creating your tiny habits for a week, revisit them. Reflect on how the process

went. Were you successful in creating new habits? If so, what worked well? If not, what can you do to help these behaviors become habits in the future? Can you make them tinier and less effortful? Can you find an anchor that makes the habit feel easier to do? With just the right amount of tiny and just the right anchor, any behavior can become a habit!


One caveat to keep in mind is this: When things in your life change, whether you are traveling, have some sort of illness, or you or your environment change for whatever reason, your routine changes too. This likely means that your anchors aren't there anymore, or aren't operating in quite the same way, and your previously-created habits may now all of a sudden be harder to maintain. Not to worry. A change in you or a change in your environment simply calls for a change to how you create the habit day to day. Ask yourself- would changing an anchor help me to maintain this habit? Or am I okay to just let things be and pick up the habit once I return from traveling, start to feel better, or I or my environment feel more stable?

Remember most of all to celebrate your successfully-accomplished tiny habits right after you do them. Feeling good about the progress you are making is a BIG part of continuing to make progress and create the habits and life that you want!

Being Self-Focused, Not Selfish

Are you selfish if you care for your own needs? If you do something kind for yourself? If you don't sacrifice your needs for the needs of others (your children, parents, partner, friends, whoever it might be)? Mmm. No. Despite what culture and society may have led us to believe through subtle and not-so-subtle messages that label these kinds of behaviors as 'selfish', focusing on yourself first is actually the most selfless act you can ever undertake.

When you put yourself first, you naturally put everyone else first. When you are happy and healthy within yourself first, your support of the people around you naturally extends from that joy and fulfillment. Only once you've attended to your own wants and needs can you contribute fully, genuinely, and unconditionally to the welfare of others and the world. Your own proverbial cup must be full before you can give to others from it.

Only once you've attended to  your own wants and needs can you contribute fully, genuinely, and unconditionally to the welfare of others and the world.

For five to ten minutes, ask yourself this question, and answer it in writing or simply thinking.

Who are the most selfish people I know?

Name them and bring to mind all the behaviors they show that make you feel they are selfish.

Next, take a few minutes to consider the possibility that perhaps some of their behaviors are not actually selfish, but self-focused, and that these behaviors allow them to nurture themselves first so that they can go out into the world and contribute from an authentic place of giving.

Then go back to each behavior you thought of and reframe your description of selfishness to "self-focusedness". Allow yourself to reinterpret their behavior in a more positive light. This may be difficult to do at first, but will get easier with practice, and soon will change how you feel and relate to not only this person, but to yourself in the context of this relationship.

Now that you've reinterpreted what it means to be "self-focused", it's time for *you* to be self-focused and to give to yourself first, before anyone else. So take a few minutes and think of a few things you could do now to fill your cup and nurture yourself. Is it to simply have a cup of green or black tea in silence each morning before everyone gets up? Is it to create an exercise routine for yourself, make time for daily writing or reflection, or just to get more sleep? Decide what actions support your body and mind to feel nourished and make the choice to start doing them now. Do them every day and notice the difference that being self-focused, not selfish, makes to your life.



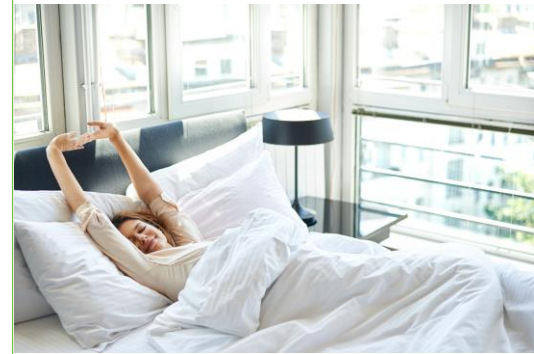
Creating an Incredible Start to Your Day


What is your protocol in the morning? Do you wake up and immediately grab your phone to check for messages? Are you on Facebook before your feet hit the ground? Do you wake up and instantly begin all the necessary tasks required to prepare for the next working day, silently praying for the weekend so you can sleep in, finally? Are you standing in front of a coffee machine in a mostly catatonic state waiting for your pick-me-up to finish brewing? Whatever the case may be, you are setting a tone for the day. What tone do you want to set for the day? What kind of day are you creating?

Each new day is a gift of life to be lived. Regardless of your responsibilities and duties of daily life, there is beauty and peace to be had in each moment if you begin to create a day mindfully, with intention and conscious focus. We would liken this process to going to a new restaurant to eat and making one of two choices. On one hand, you assess what you desire to eat, go to a restaurant that serves that type of food and choose something enticing from the menu that fits with what you want. You receive your food, maybe not exactly in the presentation you expected, but it is delicious and filling nonetheless. Or, you drive around without any idea as to what you want to eat, go into a restaurant and tell the waiter to bring you something to eat without specifying anything in particular to be included in your meal.

Now, what scenario do you think will yield you the most satisfying results? Mostly likely, you will be more satisfied in the first situation, right? And not just because you decided what you were going to order, but also, and we would say more importantly, you knew what you wanted. Consciously creating your day each morning is like placing an order with the Cosmic Mind. The same applies to going to the restaurant expecting to receive that which you requested. Again, it may not be exactly the way your grandma made it, and it may not come in the presentation you expected, but that is what makes it so much fun.

Each day is a new day. You can choose to anticipate the same old routine and experiences of the day before this one and the day before that. Or you can consciously, and with purpose, interact with the Infinite Intelligence that is in a constant feedback loop with you in every moment. Beginning the day with a mindful practice such as conscious creation will bring focused awareness to those things you wish to create more of, lead you into activities and circumstances that are in harmony with your creations, and enhance your sense of partnership with the creative power of the Universe. The first 15 minutes of the day can be harmoniously anchored in the power of your intention or absentmindedly squandered away with the mundane habits of an unconscious approach to living. The power of choice is yours each and every day.



Consciously 
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each morning is
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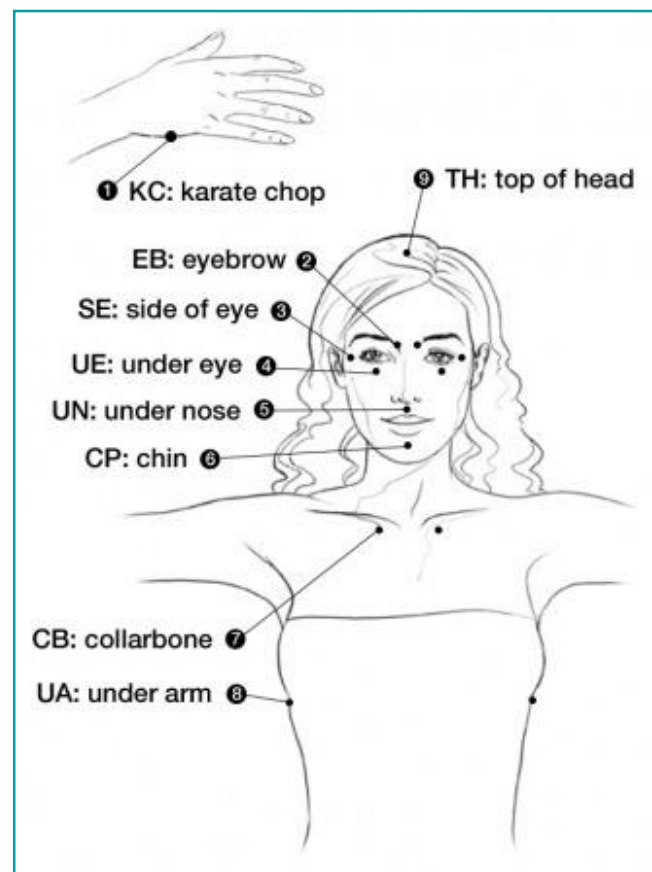
Establishing Healthy Energy Flow Within Your Body

We all have moments of stress where challenging thoughts and feelings arise. It can seem unproductive at times to acknowledge these negative beliefs and emotions, especially if you have a belief that giving attention to these things will manifest more of it in your life. As important as it may be to focus on the positive aspects of any given situation, these thoughts, feelings, sensations, hurts, discomforts, pain or suffering exist and they want to be acknowledged.

EFT, also known as Emotional Freedom Technique or Tapping, is a great way to give a voice to those less than optimal thoughts and experiences, while deconstructing their influence and impact on your nervous system and perspective. It is a modern twist on an ancient technique, combining ancient Chinese acupressure and modern psychology to calm the nervous system and implement desired improvements based on the subject matter you are addressing during the tapping sequence.

During a tapping session, you tap on certain meridian points (please see the image below) while making statements about an imbalance or discomfort to tap into the healing intelligence of the body and relieve stress on this topic in your body, mind and emotions. Meridians are the energy pathways of the body and meridian points are places on the body considered optimal entry points to balance or improve energy flow in relation to that area of the system. In Chinese medicine, the meridian system is considered a dynamic and ever-changing process of energy flow.

EFT has proven to be very powerful for a number of different concerns one may have in their life including physical pain, emotional trauma, and mental distress. In fact, it can be useful for issues as simple as travel anxiety and those as complicated as chronic back pain. It is easy to do and can be done alone or with an EFT practitioner. To learn more about the process of EFT or Tapping, please refer to the Resources section of this e-book.



Cultivating Self Care as a Way of Life

The term 'self care' has become a hot topic over the past few decades as people begin to see the importance of maintaining regular uplifting, relaxing, or balancing practices to combat stress, relieve tension, and integrate experiences and insights. Self care, in general, is an activity that you engage in that supports your ability to thrive and flourish in mind, body, and spirit. The value of a consistent self care practice should not be underestimated. Developing routines and activities that tell your subconscious and conscious mind that you are valuable and worthy of receiving support, relaxation, pampering healing, and/or peace bring more and more opportunities into your life for similar to experiences. And as you anchor in this practice long term, the benefits can be nothing short of life changing. Each area or topic you choose to focus your energy and attention on gains momentum in your life. Why not make self care one of them? It is, after all, an area that undoubtedly serves your personal growth and wellness as a human being.

So what practices and activities are considered self care?

Self care can be as simple as taking an epsom salt or sea salt bath or making a healthy meal for yourself, or it can be as complex as participating in a spiritual retreat or personal development seminar. At the end of the day, it is really about giving something to yourself, focusing your energy and attention on loving and supporting your well-being, alleviating mental and emotional distress through mindful activities, and participating in things that fulfill your desires, express your creativity, and bring you into harmony with yourself. After all, you are the most important person in your life. You are the one that you have been waiting for to heal your every wound and fulfill your every desire. Investing in yourself is the best way to grow your resources and empower yourself.



Even something as simple as giving another person a compliment, when done with the understanding that it creates positive feelings in you, through uplifting someone else, can be an act of self care. Self care can also be those tasks and practices that alleviate stress, worry, concern, fear, or self-judgment. For example, say you have a lump in your armpit. You have researched it and found out it is most likely a cyst, which is harmless and common. However, every day as you dry off from showering you see it, you touch it, you feel it, and it causes distressful feelings and thoughts. You have had it for 2, 3, 5, 10 years and every day, you have had this experience and felt these feelings. Are you going to carry on day after day beginning your morning routine with these challenging and negative thoughts? Are you going to work to change these thoughts and alleviate their impact? Or are you going to implement a self care practice and make an appointment to have it removed? Even things like this can be considered self care when you associate mental, emotional, or physical relief and healing with them.

Our ability to create change in our lives exists only in the present moment. So putting off self care practices until you have more time, more money, or more resources only creates an additional stress and discomfort in your life as you make promises to yourself – that you will care for yourself in the future – that you maybe cannot keep. The future never comes. When this elusive concept (the future) arrives, it is already the present. What can you do right now that will increase your sense of self care and loving actions towards yourself? Can you stretch for five minutes with the morning sun? Can you make time to sit down before bed with a mindfully

created cup of tea and recount the many blessings you have in your life? Can you pick flowers as you walk along a path near your neighborhood and create a beautiful center piece on your dining room table to enjoy while you eat a healthy meal? Many of these things require little to no resources, and can easily fit into your day. If you are challenged to implement and maintain new habits of self care and mindful living, reread the section about “Creating Healthy Habits” and follow the exercise described there.

Regardless of whether you begin one or ten activities that uplift your spirits and honor your value as a human being, know that each time you create self care actions you are connecting with the highest aspects of yourself. You are connecting with the part of you that loves you unconditionally, honors and appreciates you every moment of every day, knows the infinite potential and power you have to create and manifest that which serves you, and encourages you at all times to be gentle, accepting, and loving to yourself. This part of you is fed each time you practice self care and as it is nourished, it grows more dominant and present in your personal experiences. The art of self care creates the masterpiece of a soul-directed life.

Here are some questions to ask yourself to direct your self care practices:

- What aspects of my life create stress or discomfort? Can I create a self care habit associated with these areas to diffuse that energy and shift my awareness into alignment with my highest and best expression?
- What health concerns do I have or do I think about regularly? What steps can I take with love and enthusiasm to bring joy and relief to these areas? For example, perhaps you wish to lose weight. Because you associate this desire mainly with your dietary habits, every time you eat, you feel stress, worry, and confusion. Even during so called “healthy” meals, you worry that you may not be eating what your body needs, in the right proportions, at the proper time, in the best combinations, and so on. What is a self care practice you can implement to alleviate this persistent stress? Perhaps you begin a personalized health & wellness program (like the one mentioned in the Resources section of this e-book) and learn about your specific dietary needs. Maybe you do a deep breathing exercise before each meal to relax your body and mind before you begin the delicate process of digesting your food. Maybe you create an atmosphere during your meal preparation that fills your kitchen with joy, fun, and excitement, so that by the time you eat, you are celebrating the meal you prepared as opposed to fretting about what it will or won’t do for and to your body. All of these actions are considered self care.
- What topics and areas of my life do I feel I can let go of because they do not serve me or support a life of self care and self love? Once you identify areas or habits that contradict your commitment to self care, create a new self care habit to replace these behaviors. Start small and practice the exercise described in the “Creating Healthy Habits” section to get started.
- Am I being loving and compassionate during this practice, or am I being critical and judgmental? Self care can quickly turn into self-judgment when we focus on the things that we don’t want instead of the things we are harmonizing with and feeling empowered by. Always be mindful of how you are thinking or feeling during your acts of self care. Doing these activities from a place of “less than”, where you must do these things to be better than you are now, only creates more discord in your life experience. Bring your awareness constantly to the intention you have for developing self care practices. Say, “I am doing _____ to express and demonstrate the love, gratitude, and care I feel for my entire being. I am worthy of receiving this now.”



Our ability to create change in our lives exists only in the present moment.

Connecting with Like-Minded People

Oftentimes, when we embark on a process of self-improvement, we worry about how the changes we seek to make will impact our lives, our relationships, and our image. What if I am no longer able to relate to my friends? What will happen if I change into someone my spouse doesn't like anymore? How will these changes impact my position at work, my role in my family, or my image in my community? These are all worthy concerns during a process of transformation. However, the question "Am I expressing my authentic self?" becomes an even more powerful inquiry when we truly commit to a life of inner knowing and true self-expression.

Connecting with like-minded people can offer you a new opportunity to relate to people from the perspective you are offering *now*. As adults, we understand the value and importance for children to connect and interact with their peers, but as adults we seem to dismiss the importance of these platonic relationships as our lives become busier and dominated by adult responsibilities. Understanding the value of cultivating friendships with individuals you feel comfortable to be yourself around, who don't know you as the person you were 5, 10 or even 20 years ago can free you to be who you are now and to strengthen the qualities you wish to develop more in yourself and your life. With social media and websites like meetup.com, there are numerous ways to connect with people based on shared interests and hobbies. It is also a great training ground for trying new things and seeing what you would like to create more of in your life.

For example, say you have decided that you lack time in nature in your current lifestyle routine. You decide to go on meetup.com and join a hiking group for the next four weeks, to see if hiking is a harmonious activity for you to enjoy nature and meet new people. After the completion of the four week commitment you made, you realize that hiking is too intense for you to enjoy the scenery, but you have made a wonderful new friend in the group who also attends a poetry reading event once a week in the park. This is much more your speed and you begin to participate in this activity while deepening your bond with a new person who is in vibrational resonance with the person you are becoming. *This* is the power of social bonds. Social bonds can anchor in and support changes we are making in our lives, while also allowing us to focus on the things we wish to manifest as opposed to fearing the loss of the relationships we are already engaging in from the past. This is not to insinuate that you will not have relationships that grow and expand with you. But for your friends of a season, these bonds bring a new energy into your social circle during the transition period of some relationships coming to a close.



Engaging in Healthy Communication

If there was to be only one thing we could do to sustain inner happiness and peace and harmony in our outer world it would be to learn healthy forms of relating - to approach each interaction from our heart.

When we speak and listen with anything but our hearts, it creates the potential for unhealthy patterns of communication and even conflict. If we continue to operate from our mind, rather than our heart, our emotions will likely run wild and destructive communication patterns may arise.


Here are some behaviors to be aware of and try to consciously avoid if your goal is to maintain healthy friendships and relationships through positive communication patterns. If you catch yourself in one of these behaviors, pause and acknowledge that you are falling into an unhealthy, perhaps old, pattern of behavior and invite yourself to choose a new one instead.

- “You always do this...” “you never do that...” “why are you so...?” are clear signs that there is some criticism taking place. Rather than commenting on something specific a person did or said that led you to feel [insert emotion], you attack their entire character and who they are as a human being using negative and generalizing statements. This sort of communication, if we can call it that, really leaves no “place” for the person to go emotionally or psychologically because you just constrained them to being one certain way. And, when generalized in this way, your judgment of them is undoubtedly inaccurate. As human beings, we are multidimensional, often behaving in a number of different ways. In fact, it is quite rare that we are limited to only negative, or only positive, behavior.
- Whether expressed verbally by name calling or making fun of someone or nonverbally by rolling your eyes or using a harsh tone of voice, contempt is a way of showing deep disapproval of another person. Unsurprisingly, it is an ineffective way to attempt to reach resolution given that the room it leaves for true communication is nil. And from an energetic perspective, criticism and contempt, either given or received, deplete our energy centers.
- “Because [insert excuse here] happened, the outcome of this situation is “outside of my control” and therefore also “not my fault.” This is defensiveness at its prime and it happens any time you perceive yourself as the victim and take no responsibility for what has transpired between you and another person. Maybe the other person complains and you immediately, without truly listening, refute what they say and follow with a complaint of your own. “That’s not true, *you’re* the one who...” Like criticism and contempt, defensiveness too makes healthy communication and intimacy practically impossible.
- When you resort to stonewalling, you shut down and become a stone wall. It is exactly what it sounds like... Maybe you’re not keen on how poorly the communication is going and you stop verbally responding, physically walk away during the interaction, or disengage and withdraw in some other way. Whatever the form, stonewalling is not as neutral as it appears on the surface. Albeit in a passive-aggressive fashion, what it does is make a statement of disapproval and dis-connection.

Ok. It is pretty clear what sorts of behaviors do not render communication “healthy”. But what does?

Positive, healthy communication begins from the heart, proceeds with responsibility, openness, and genuineness, and ends in the heart of another. As you acknowledge that what another says or does may be a catalyst for, but is never the root of how you feel, what before would have been a criticism about the wrongness of another becomes, with gentle word choice, a targeted expression of how *you* feel (“when that happened, I felt this, and I want this...”). As you focus on your own values, needs, and wants and how them not being fulfilled makes you feel, you get in touch with your own soul and let the other person ‘off the hook’. When you express your needs and wishes, and connect them to how you are feeling (“I need or want... that’s why I feel...”), judgments and criticisms of another person no longer feel necessary. The other person is never responsible for how you feel, just as you are not responsible for how anyone else feels.

Naturally, the real issues (usually fears) that underlie the details of who said what and why they said it may surface and create an opportunity for open, genuine, true communication where you and the other can both dig deep, be vulnerable, and touch in on what’s *really* being shaken up within them. What was contempt becomes appreciation as you listen to what your partner in

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communication is trying to express about what they really want, acknowledge that you understand what they are sharing, and focus on what’s going right, rather than what’s going wrong, in the interaction.

Defensiveness becomes an opportunity for personal growth and learning as you take ownership for how you feel, what you say and what you do and focus on changing aspects of *yourself* rather than them. Stonewalling turns to an ability to stay emotionally present to and connected with yourself and with them. If you need time away to self-reflect and get back to a loving, intentional space, you are able to gently and respectfully express and pursue these needs.

When it comes to communication, the biggest thing to understand is that nothing the other person says or does is *ever* personal. The next time you feel yourself at the edge of what might become an unpleasant interaction, pause for a moment and tell yourself “Nothing they say or do is ever about me. They are different than I am. They see the world as they see the world and I see the world as I see the world. S/he is right. And I am also right. There are a myriad of right ways to see the world. I want to accept them and their interests, opinions, and preferences and give them the space to accept me and mine. I can do this, first and foremost, by getting in touch with my own heart, by listening and communicating compassionately and attentively, and by expressing myself genuinely and openly.”



Preparing Your Personal Sanctuary

Do you feel at peace in your home, your work environment, your personal space? Can you relax and enjoy your space when you return home from the activities of the day? Or do you sit down and think of the dozens of things you should or need to be doing, but haven't got the energy or motivation to accomplish? Creating your personal space with the intention of expressing peace and tranquility can seem like a luxury to many people but it can be an essential component of living a happy and healthy life.

Oftentimes, we feel that we lack the financial or artistic resources to create the space we desire or we just don't have the extra time to devote to such an endeavor. But preparing your personal space to be a sanctuary, an oasis, a retreat into your inner world of self-expression and unique sense of beauty can have a profound effect on the joy and openness you have access to in your free time.

When we spend the better part of our day going from here to there, working in a professional environment, or traveling through the outside world and its many expressions, we can lose connection to the things that bring us fulfillment. Perhaps you like large colorful pillows on the floor so you can lay about like a child.

Maybe you enjoy having a beautiful altar to meditate, pray, or give blessings and gratitude for your life. Maybe you feel relaxed only after everything is neatly organized and put away in its proper place. Whatever the case may be, your home or personal space can be the area in your life where these preferences come to life.

All of the personal insights you gain from the above activity can help you define how to best thrive in your personal environment. Once you find the qualities of a space that resonate with you and the motif that expresses your personal style, you can create a space that feels good to be in and that enhances your feelings of peace, fulfillment, and creative expression.

We are creative beings. One of the core purposes for each of our lives is to share and express our unique version of creativity in the world. To create a space that expresses your tastes, preferences, and style is to offer a glimpse, to yourself and those around you, of the magical architect that lives in all of us. To give yourself permission to share your special eye for beauty and artfulness is to give yourself permission to tap into the infinite energy of potentiality and self-expression. Life is full of beauty. What do you find beautiful? How are you going to bring that beauty into your space to create a life reflective of the magnificence that is *you*?

Imagine a home or place you have been that inspired you.

- What was it about this place that you liked? Did it have many rich colors and patterns, was it sparsely decorated or lush with trinkets from all around the world?
- Was the place you enjoyed more of an eastern style of decor or western?
- What pieces of décor did you fall in love with and want to have for yourself?

Now think generally about spaces and places that you've been and enjoyed.

- Do you like spaces that feel full of nature with plants and flowers or do you prefer to have the vibrancy in a space expressed with colorful artwork?
- Do you feel drawn to abstract painting, black and white photos, textured tapestries hanging on the walls, or clean lines and symmetrical furniture? Perhaps it is a bit of all of those things combined.
- Do you have a difficult time concentrating with a lot of stuff around the house?
- Do you feel uncomfortable in homes or spaces that are very simple and minimally furnished?

Giving

Time and time again, scientific research shows us the value of community and of social support, the glue that binds it, to create a health- and joy-ful life experience. When we feel supported by the people in our lives, there is no limit to the joy and deep meaning we can feel as we go about our daily lives. Similarly, when we are able to support the people in our lives with ease and an open heart, the sense of contentment we feel is unbounded. After all, we are born to give to one another, to receive from one another, and to co-create the life experiences we so very much desire.

Whether you find yourself the giver or the receiver of support, there is no doubt that you also find yourself increasingly happy. It feels wonderful to receive, and it feels just as, if not more, wonderful to give. When you give to others, you are contributing to the very fabric that creates our universal life experience. That fabric is unity. It is community. It is sharing. It is love.

Giving is how we transpose the universal life force energy that is within, around, and between us. It is how we direct energy to where it is needed and create space for more energy to flow from, to, and through us. When we give, we naturally and instantaneously receive. Nothing is ever lost, and much is gained, by giving. After all, we are giving someone something that has always belonged to them and continues to belong to us long after it is shared, and in likeness we are receiving something that has always been ours - a connection to and feeling of love.

Giving comes in various shapes and sizes. Our gifts of giving can be tangible (a gift of dinner), informational (offering advice or ideas), emotional (a hug or expression of empathy), or esteem-based (encouraging and validating the other's strengths). No matter where in our personal life journey we are, there is always something we can give to and share with the people in our lives to help them feel supported.

For the next ten minutes... imagine you just won the lottery!

Create a list of people who you want to share your winnings with- people who, by virtue of who they are and what they do, help you live a more joyful life. Who are these people? Why would you gift them with something? What would you gift them with?

Then, imagine that you still want to support and give to these people, but haven't (yet) won the lotto jackpot. How can you support them now? What can you do *now* that would help them? Can you perhaps give a gift of your time? Your attention? A listening ear? Advice to help them resolve an issue they're concerned about? A kind gesture to let them know that you care? A deed to help make their life just a little bit easier?

Then go ahead and support them in these ways. The gifts you have to give, when sincere and meaningful, can mean the world of a difference to someone no matter how inconsequential they may seem to you. Experiencing the power of giving will likewise make a world of a difference for you.



Whether you find yourself the giver or the receiver of support, there is no doubt that you also find yourself increasingly happy.



Closing Thoughts

Dear friends,

Living a fulfilled and harmonious life does not eliminate the challenges, obstacles, and opportunities for growth you may experience along the way. However, with the tools and methods we have described here, ones we've found most helpful and sincere on our journeys of personal alignment and expression, you can truly transform your relationship to those experiences and to yourself. Once you develop a practice of non-resistance and fully accept how you show up in any given moment, each moment becomes an opportunity to open up to your inner truth and authentic expression.

Your journey is your own. Through your unique experiences and current lens of perception, you know exactly what you need to be happy and healthy each day of your life. Go forward in the direction of your personal wants, wishes, passions and desires. Do so in the ways that work well for you, and know that fulfillment and harmony will be the inevitable result. If there is one thing the world wants and needs you to be, it is yourself. It is by being who you truly are and following the desires that burn within you so deep that you propel your own evolution and that of the world into one of pure love, self expression and conscious connection.

We are so blessed that you have joined us on this journey of self-growth and self-exploration. It is in collaboration with all that IS, and with each other, that we co-create a joyous, healthy, loving humanity and world. We are deeply grateful to have the continuous opportunity to co-create with *you*. Be well and enjoy the now.

With love,

sophia & jen

Resources

It's Playtime

Experience: [The Mindfulness Coloring Book: Anti-Stress Art Therapy for Busy People](#) by Emma Farrarons

Visit: <https://www.meetup.com/> to find interest groups you can join today

Accepting Yourself

Read: [Madly in Love with ME: The Daring Adventure of Becoming Your Own Best Friend](#) by Christine Arylo

Surrendering to Your Authentic Self

Read: [Loving What Is](#) by Byron Katie

Read: [Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead](#) by Brené Brown

Watch: [The power of vulnerability](#) by Brené Brown

Wisely Applying the Law of Compensation

Read: [Compensation Essay](#) by Ralph Waldo Emerson

Integrating Your Shadow Self

Read: [Sacred Contracts: Awakening Your Divine Potential](#) by Caroline Myss

Experience: [The Work](#) of Byron Katie

Changing Limiting Beliefs

Read: [The Biology of Belief: Unleashing the Power of Consciousness, Matter & Miracles](#) by Bruce Lipton

Experience: [BruceLipton.com Resources](#)

Cultivating Self-Compassion

Watch: [The Space Between Self-Esteem and Self Compassion](#) by Kristin Neff

Read: [Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself](#) by Kristin Neff

Connecting with Your Authentic Needs

Experience: [Inner Pilot Light](#) by Lissa Rankin

Visit: [The Desire Map](#) by Danielle LaPorte

Developing a Growth Mindset

Read: [Mindset: The New Psychology of Success](#) by Carol Dweck

Watch: [The power of believing that you can improve](#) by Carol Dweck

Cultivating the Power of Preference

Read: [The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are](#) by Brené Brown

Watch: [The power of vulnerability](#) by Brené Brown

Being Present With Yourself and Your Emotions

Read: [Focusing](#) by Eugene Gendlin

Read: [Whatever Arises, Love That: A Love Revolution That Begins with You](#) by Matt Kahn

Read: [Discovering Your Soul Signature](#) by Panache Desai

Grounding Yourself into the Here and NOW

Listen: [Le Semilla \(Be in the Now\)](#) by Shimshai

Read: [How To Live In The Now: Achieve Awareness, Growth and Inner Peace in Your Life](#) by Neville Berkowitz

Read: [The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment](#) by Eckhart Tolle

Awakening Your Life Force Energy

Visit: [The Reiki Directory](#)

Listen: [Awaken the Force](#)

Living with Embodied Awareness

Read: [The Mandala of Being: Discovering the Power of Awareness](#) by Richard Moss

Experience: [Yoga Nidra Meditation & Guided Relaxation](#)

Expressing Self-Love Through Movement

Experience: [Yoga Trance Dance](#) with Shiva Rea

Visit: [PilatesAnytime.com](#)

Finding the Positive in Any Situation

Read: [Be Brilliant Every Day](#) by Andy Cope and Andy Whittaker

Watch: [Feel Good Now](#) by Matt Kahn

Practicing Gratitude

Experience: [Gratitude Works!: A 21-Day Program for Creating Emotional Prosperity](#) by Robert Emmons

Read: [You Can Heal Your Life](#) by Louise Hay

Healing Through Forgiveness

Experience: [Ancestral Clearing](#) by John Newton

Read: [Radical Forgiveness](#) by Colin Tipping

Read: [A Course in Miracles](#) by Foundation for Inner Peace

Living in Integrity

Read: [The Four Agreements](#) by Don Miguel Ruiz

Watch: [Telling Lies](#) by Abraham Hicks

Watch: [When People Lie to Themselves and Others](#) by Abraham Hicks

Becoming a Purposeful Creator

Read: [Ask and It Is Given: Learning to Manifest Your Desires](#) by Esther Hicks

Read: [A New Earth](#) by Eckhart Tolle

Experience: [Notes from the Universe](#) by Mike Dooley

Being Present With Others

Read: [The Art of Communicating](#) by Thich Nhat Hanh

Listen: [I Am Who I Am](#) by Guru Singh, Seal, and Friends

Breathing for Health

Experience: [Breathing Meditation](#)

Prioritizing Rest and Rejuvenation

Read: [You Can Create an Exceptional Life](#) by Louise Hay and Cheryl Richardson

Read: [Zen and the Art of Sleep](#) by Eric Chiles

Living in Hormonal Harmony

Experience: [Shae Virtual Health Assistant](#) by ph360.me

Read: [Personal Health for Beginners Guidebook](#) by Matt Riemann and Rebekah Morrison

Read: [A Course in Weight Loss: 21 Spiritual Lessons for Surrendering Your Weight Forever](#) by Marianne Williamson

Creating Healthy Habits

Experience: [Tiny Habits](#) by BJ Fogg

Watch: [What The Bleep Do We Know](#)

Being Self-Focused, Not Selfish

Watch: [Oprah's Lifeclass](#)

Creating an Incredible Start to Your Day

Read: [Evolve Your Brain: The Science of Changing Your Mind](#) by Joe Dispenza

Watch: [Create Your Day](#) by Ramtha

Establishing Healthy Energy Flow Within Your Body

Read: [The Tapping Solution](#)

Experience: [Tapping Videos](#) with Brad Yates

Cultivating Self Care as a Way of Life

Read: [The Art of Extreme Self-Care](#) by Cheryl Richardson

Experience: A [Personal Health Retreat](#) by ph360.me

Connecting with Like-Minded People

Visit: <https://www.meetup.com/> to find interest groups you can join today

Read: [How to Win Friends and Influence People](#) by Dale Carnegie

Engaging in Healthy Communication

Visit: [HarmoniousEarth.org](#)

Watch: [Non Violent Communication](#) with Marshall Rosenberg

Preparing Your Personal Sanctuary

Read: [The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing](#) by Marie Kondo

Experience: [Feng Shui Principles](#) from Architecture Ideas Info

Watch: [Feng Shui Tips - Introduction and How it Works](#)

Giving

Experience: [Loving Kindness Meditation](#)

Visit: [RandomActsofKindness.com](#)

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With Gratitude and Love, We Honor You.