Living Loving Being:



Finding Connection Through Expressive Arts

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Welcome and Blessings!

I am so grateful this book has made it into your hands. I believe that there was a gentle pull from your internal compass to seek this as a new chapter of self-exploration in your life.

I believe everything happens to further support your bringing your gifts onto this Earth. A more times than not, it is the pure simplicity of being human that brings us wisdom. You know: the joy of love; the fear and excitement of diving into something new; the ache with heartbreak; the feeling we feel when in utter awe of life's twists and turns. This is why I titled this "Living Loving Being," after my first blog. It is an ode to the very existence of human life. How full we can make it if we allow ourselves to slow down, look deeply and try to dance with the unknown.

It was a time in my life, just after the storm, just after I graduated my undergrad at Brown. I had experienced a lot of loss in my family and decided to take a year to slow things down. I took a humble position at a farm to table restaurant, practiced yoga and read loads of books. I focused on nourishing my body with natural food, and tried to enjoy the humble daily life of a person in a small town in New Hampshire. I also re-discovered what it meant to create.

Expressive Arts changed my life. Not because it taught me how to create- it taught me that creating is our birthright! I always knew how to scribble on a piece of paper and I bet you do too! Its that I learned how to allow this process to scribbling to evolve into meaningful practice that invites in playfulness, joy and freedom!

Expression is our inherent human capacity. From the way you dress, to how you wear your hair, your funky groovy goofy dance moves, to how you prefer to introduce yourself. This is all self-expression.

Through a series of foundations I learned an internal process that brings magic to my life, it brings a bit of illumination to my inner workings and it pleases me to see my inner landscape expressed, honored, and empowered. I hope to share these skills with you, starting right from the beginning and together we will build your very own internal language and heart compass to infuse your own life with magic and meaning.

Many exercises will invite you to share your truth with another. These are the parts that I call "Deepening." The invitation is to try things on, allow yourself to take a chance and most importantly; only go as deep as you want. I am passionate about the healing and empowerment that can come through a relationship that is based on mutual empathy, mutual empowerment, and mutual respect. However, you have to feel safe first.

As a relational cultural therapist, I believe that healing happens within relationship. As mammals we are wired to connect. Many exercises we start to develop a relationship with ourselves and we can further solidify our new developing powerful present creative self through sharing it with another. I will aid in helping you develop language to authentically and empathically share your true self with others. All I ask is that you show up, practice kindness with yourself and have fun!

Part One: Living

So what is the *living* of Living Loving Being? I see this as the part of our experience that is our daily life. The things that we fill our days with, the way we walk from point A to point B. We could shuffle; we could skip; we could do the funky chicken. Metaphorically that is. Or not! I'd fall in love with a person that decides to cross the cross-walk doing the funky chicken! What fun!

All jokes aside: The following exercises are daily practices that have helped me along my way to find what really inspires me what really makes me feel like me. These end up being medicine in a way that is unique to you.

It all starts with slowing down, trusting the process, and allowing your truth to be known. If these sound vague now, don't worry I be here with you through this ☺

Here's a little poem to help emit the energy of "Living"

A sound of sipping tea

A feeling of flight

The frightening fall of life

Downward spins and sideways

Song of songs.

We are falling, we are flying.

A breath of all indigenous beings

Together creates the winds upon

Which the bird slings

Her wings

And she realizes

She is free.

Chapter 1: Intentions

What is something/event that has changed your life for the better?

Let's reflect back on that moment…

Let's use hindsight to see how you felt in the moment versus how you feel now.

Was it the same?

Did you know it was going to be so big in that moment*?*

How amazing that a <u>single</u> event had the power to change the course of your life.

What two qualities do you have? Or what two qualities from this life changing experience do you want to carry with through our explorations?

This is known as an *Intention*: a commitment, a touchstone to come back to when we feel like we lost our way. It's like the needle of the compass, gentle ushering us along our journey with faith that we are going the right route.

Some examples: May this journey guide me to my truth; may I develop a better relationship with my body; may I learn to enjoy creating; may I find meaning in my life.

The Four Rivers: Tribute to Angeles Arrien

Angeles Arrien was an inspirational cultural anthropologist who has developed four questions that may deepen your experience. Throughout the workbook I will prompt you to answer these questions.

-What inspires you…
-What Challenges you…
-What deeply touches you…
-What surprises you…

Let's give it a try now regarding your new intention:

Supplies Needed:
Visual Journal
Pastels
Hands

1) Have your journal open to a fresh page and bring your intention into your awareness

2) When you think of the word i*nspiration*; what color would it be?

3) Allow the first color that comes to mind… there are no wrong answers.

4) Reach for it with your non-dominant hand and start to spell out the world inspiration in the air. Are the letters *curly* or BIG or **bold?** Are they little or straight?

5) Have fun with it!
Write *inspiration* three more times in the air noticing the movements your whole arm is making.

6) Now bring your pastel to the paper and make one or two marks that reflect this kind of arm movement.

Let the arm guide the hand and then the color just magically comes from the pastel ☺

Take a moment; in this moment; inspiration is captured by this color and form.

****

1) Now think of the word 'Challenge'; what color could this be?

2) Allow the first color to come to mind; if its hard to choose close your eyes and reach for a color. Let the color choose you!

3) Start to write out challenge with your non-dominant hand in the air.

4) Notice the font you use for "Challenge"

5) Try writing it QUICKLY, Try writing it S L O W L Y.

6) Write it the way that feels best.

7) Bring the pastel down and allow two marks to come from this

This is word Challenge captured in color and form

****

1) What about the word, 'Touch'

2) Allow the first color that comes to mind

3) Write it out with your non-dominate hand.

4) Notice what feelings or body sensations come up when you write it out in the air.

5) Now translate it into a line on the paper.

This is word 'Touch' captured in color and form

****

1) Finally, what about the word, 'Surprise'

2) What is the first color?

3) Write it out with your non-dominate hand

---

4) Now translate it into a line on the paper.

This is word 'Surprise' captured in color and form

****

Take a step back. This is your first Creative Arts Expression!
Look at it notice all the facets of the experience
Notice how all these lines interact.

1) Start to sway your body to the 'Inspiration' lines, then to the 'Challenge' lines, then to the 'touch' lines, then to the 'Surprise' lines.

2) Eventually just flow back and forth between the lines and colors.

3) What lines do you enjoy most?

4) What color wants to join these others? Allow this color to come in and fill and scribble into places where the lines intersect.

5) Let this color be representative of your intention. How does your intention be affected be all these colors?

6) Now take a moment to reflect on your intention, this process, and this journey you are about to take and answer the questions below.

Remember this is for you. Answer in a way that feels good.

What inspires you…

What challenges you…

What deeply touches you….

What surprises you…

You did beautifully!

Take a moment to acknowledge this new experience and give yourself a pat on the back or a little hug. Cheers to new beginnings!

Chapter 2: The Inherent Imperfection



Supplies Needed:
Pastels (markers or pencils)
2 8.5 x11 pieces of paper
gluestick or tape

Gaze at the symbol above. This is the sign for Living Loving Being: it is an Enso.
In Zen, Ensō (円相, "circle") is a circle that is hand-drawn in one or two uninhibited brushstrokes to express a moment when the mind is free to let the body create.

In Japanese meditation practice, practitioners would take deep breath in and then with the exhale allow the paintbrush make a circle. It is impossible to paint the same enso ever again. There is no chance for perfect replication. You will never be the same as you are exactly now! Pretty amazing, right?

This concept touches on Japanese, Wabi Sabi: the beauty of imperfection. The second part of the symbol is the Tree of Life. Surrounding life is inherent imperfection. Life is imperfectly perfect.

Think about a friend you love dearly, perhaps a family member or even a pet. Think about their quirks. Think about how these qualities aren't necessarily a perfect way of being, but its one of the reasons you love this person/animal.

Doing this, I think about my dog Louie, how he has flurry little feet so he slips and slides when he runs around the house. By sure, no show dog, no gracefulness but I love him just as he is!

Imperfection is how we allow ourselves to be touched by another or even touched by life.

Allow yourself to draw a few Ensos allowing each stroke to represent your energy in at this moment in time.

Try it out here:



1) Now that your warmed up, allow yourself to layer a few Ensos over each other on a 8.5 X 11 sheet of paper

2) Decide what overlapping parts want to get filled in. Don't be worried about doing this right, have fun, make a mess! Bring in more colors that represent your relationship to imperfection and perfection.

3) Take a few steps back. What do you see? Is there a particular part of the piece that you enjoy?
4) Now rip out that piece carefully

5) Then the rip rest of the piece in child-likeplayful joy! Check out the sounds it makes, do you want to crumple it up? Do it!

6) Find the second piece of paper.

7) Start to arrange the pieces, allowing yourself to favor your favorite piece.
Start to stick and glue a few different pieces.
When it feels complete it is complete. ☺

If this piece had something to say to you, what would it say?

Throughout this journey you will begin to explore what feels right and not, you will begin to shift value in how your creations look to how things feel.

Perhaps you will allow this inherent imperfection to inspire your freedom to try new things!

After all, isn't beginners mind/luck a good thing?

Chapter 3: Slowing Down

Materials Needed:
Pastels
Heart
Visual Journal

Slowing down- List 3 things- people don't slow down to see. Or three things you wish you slowed down to see and notice.

1.

2.

3.

If you think of the words: *Slow* and P*eaceful* what color comes to mind?

1) Take that color in your non-dominant hand, and close your eyes, imagine the color could transmit this peacefulness up your arm and into your heart-space and up to the top of your head and down through your legs.

> *Take a deep breath in.*
> Breath in slowly and peacefully envisioning this peaceful color of light flowing through you Do this for 8 breaths.

2) Now with this pastel in your hand imagine you were conducting an orchestra!

> Standing with you feet on the Earth, every instrument awaiting your guidance. Let your hand move up and down and side to side in a calming slow way.

3) Once you feel this experience, turn towards your journal and make a mark. Go as slowly and sweetly as you can and notice the transition of the color to the paper.

4) Take a deep breath and let that mark inform another mark: and then one more.

5) Take a step back- allow these marks to inform a new conductor movement with your hands or even your full body. Enjoy the process of dancing with the lines, allowing them to speak to you and you honoring their edges and swirls with your body movement response.

6) Finish this sentence….

When I move slowly my heart _____

*When I move slowly my eyes*_____

*When I move slowly I notice*_____

When I move slowly I am _____

Take a deep breath in and notice the wisdom that has come out of you!

Deepening: this is the First exercise we will explore deepening our process with a partner. Remember this is new to you and there will be moments of feeling connected and moments where you're not quite sure what to do.
Use your first intention as a touchstone. What is your intention for this first experience with a partner.

Write it here:

Before this exercise: *review appendix A: feedback guidelines for Expressive Creative arts and remember if you aren't sure what to do. Speak from your heart about your experience.*

1) Sit in front of each other

-Close your eyes, and feel your bum on the Earth.
-Take a deep breath in and notice what sensations are alive.
-With a soft gaze allow yourself to take the person in and be taken in.
-Person A will be the leader and Person B will follow. You both get a chance in each role. ☺

Person A
Start to slowly create the conductor movements with your hand.

Person B
Witness and watch and then when it feels right, start to mirror person A.
Simply allow yourself to move in a way that is similar
It does not have to be exact, let it be your body's wise interpretation.

2) Continue breathing and after 5 breaths or when it feels right continue moving and *Person A* choose your favorite statement to speak outloud.

When I move slowly my heart…
When I move slowly my eyes…
When I move slowly I notice…
When I move slowly I am…

Person B will take a deep breath then repeat back the statement. Gaze into each others' eyes for a moment and then close your eyes.

Notice how you feel and stay connected with the Earth.

3) Repeat this process.

After the Process

Journal about what it was like to be witnessed

What was it like to hear your statement back?

What felt good?

What inspires you

What challenges you

What deeply touches you

What surprises you

Now what was it like to witness?

What inspires you

What challenges you

What deeply touches you

What surprises you

Take a moment to thank your partner and start to feel how you feel toward firstly, yourself, and then this person.

Part Two: Loving-What Brings You Joy?!

Part two's exercises encourage your heart to be your compass. Many times we interpret our body as a transport for our brain. Yet, what if our body was a carrier for our heart song?

Think about the last time you were truly happy.

When did you feel full and free?
What were you doing?
Who were you surrounded by?
What was your environment like?

These are all factors we need to consider to bring our heart into a space where it feels safe and can find joy. We may not be able to recreate that memory but we can put important factors in place to create a fertile platform for happiness to happen. Think of the heart as a seed and where we place it the soil. We want to make that soil the most fertile and inviting it can be. It may not always be easy, but its totally worth it.

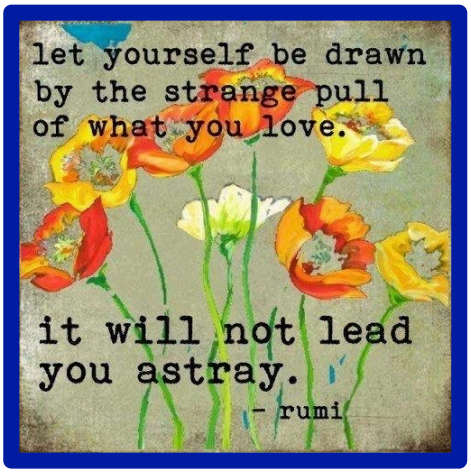
Let's start out with what you love. Read my little poem below and then recreate your own

I love:

tea, dragonflies, dancing,
bass drops, kale,
kisses, trees, chocolate,
insects, smiles,
hugs, coffee, sand,
graffiti, sprouts, thrift stores,
naps, rain, eyes
hammocks, spices, ocean,
breathing, clouds, chai,
sunshine, shadows, music
imperfection, flow,
LIFE

It's your turn: try this out in your journal. What do you love? Let it just come out and don't worry about repeating yourself. Maybe you love that extra special! Like me: I listed dragonflies and insects, and many different forms of water. These are clues to what I really love: Nature.

Chapter 4: What Pulls Your Heart



Let yourself be drawn to the strange pull of what you love.
It will not lead you astray. – Rumi

Supplies Needed:
Pastels
Visual journal

It is said that our hearts have a divine wisdom sometimes beyond what our mind tells us. We live in a world that requires a lot of analytical and rational thought. So much, that sometimes we get stuck in this reliance on one way of thinking. Did you know that the logical is just one of **nine** types of intelligence?!

For too long we have denied our Heartsong, our heart intelligence, and this practice may allow you to start to listen.

1) Begin to wander around your house seeking out little trinkets that call to you. They can be little toys, shells, pieces of jewelry. Perhaps you can't find anything like this at home- go to your local thrift store. Let the smells and colors and textures call to you. *What is it that catches your eye?*

2) You can purchase and bring home or simply reflect there.

3) Take a moment. Imagine you are from another planet and you have not encountered this thing before. Do not name it. First gaze at it, notice its colors, its textures.

-Is there a smell?
-Does it make a sound?
-What is the weigh in your hand?
-Close your eyes. Do you feel any part of your body?

4) Now open your eyes and gaze at this object. Focus on a tiny little part of the whole. Notice how this piece interacts with the others.

-What color is it compared to others?
-Does it stick out?
-Does it blend in?
-What drew you to it?

If this part had something to stay to the others what would it say?

Write that down here:

What is an emotion that you feel right now in this moment?

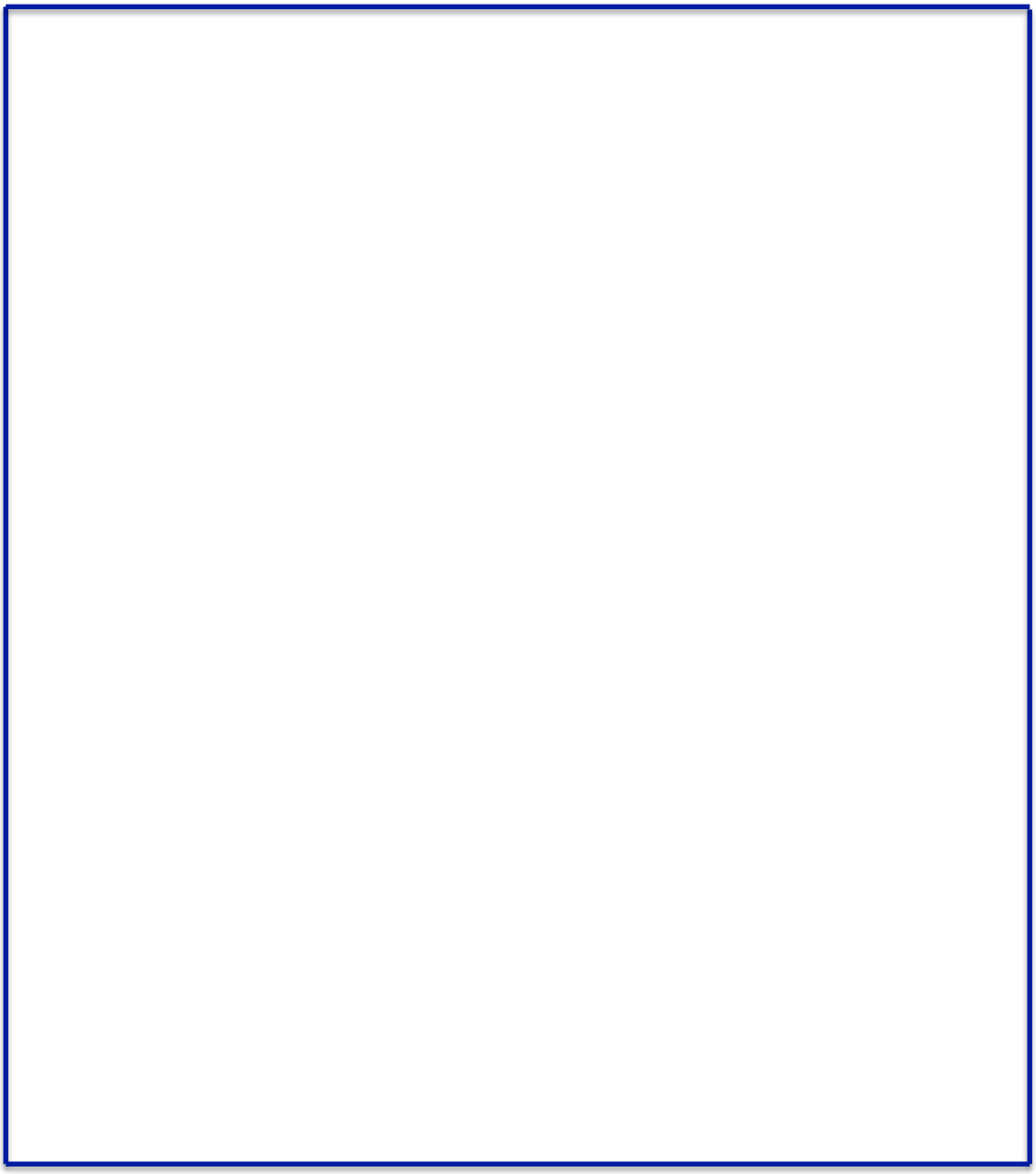
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5) If this emotion had a color what would it be?

Start to take this color and create a mark on the next page:

Let the texture and shape of the line reflect the emotion:
is it PRICKLY, *flowy*, <u>sharp</u> or **thick**?

Simply allow.



5) Allow space in your heart for this emotion.

When we allow ourselves to feel, we open ourselves up to our truth.

If it is a pleasant emotion take a moment to feel it in your body.

Notice what color might solidify this experience for you.

What color does your first color yearn for? Bring that in and let them interact somehow. Any line, mark, scribble will do.

6) If this emotion needs some support and is harder to experience:
Ask yourself what color can support this emotion.

What color can love this emotion exactly how it is?

Take that color and create a way that lines and form can encapsulate or hold this emotion.

Notice we are not getting rid of the emotion, just bringing some support in.

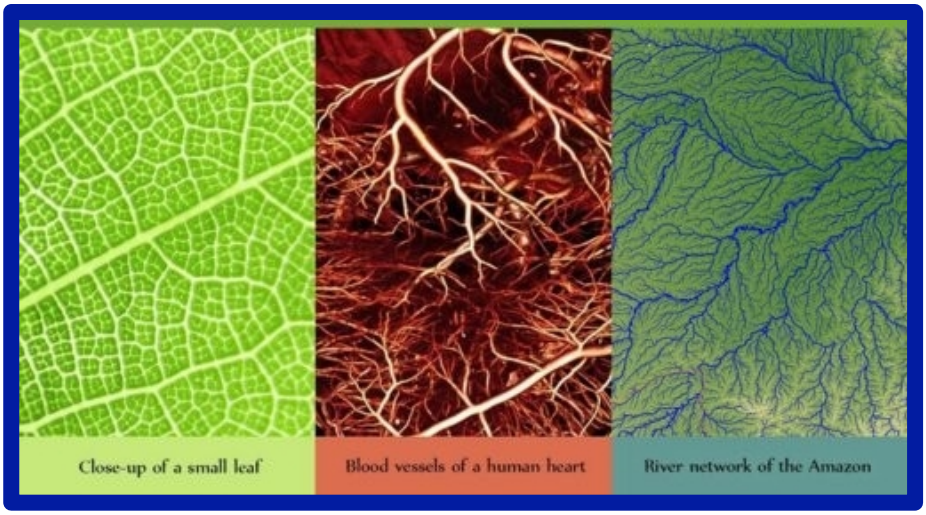
Start to write about what it was like for you to either solidify your truth or give yourself some support

7) Let's return to the object. Thank the object for allowing itself to be known to you. Thank it for sharing and helping you find out a little bit about your experience. Ask the object if it has anything else, any kind wisdom it has before you close

Write it here:

Chapter 5: Connect with your inner Landscape.

We are humans of this Earth. In fact, much of our body is a replication of much of Earth, Check out the picture below:



What's another thing that reminds you of your body? Ever notice someone's eyes look like deep pools of the ocean? Or perhaps your see faces in the clouds. These are not by mistake. They are reminders that we are nature!

What else? _____

_____

There is something wildly undeniable about our belonging here in nature on Earth. I have found that the easiest way for me to allow myself to experience my wild inner landscape is to utilize the elements of nature to honor this complex human experience.

When I feel saddened by a loss it helps me to think about a forest fire, after the fire it takes about a year for the Earth to utilize the nitrogen and extra minerals created by the fire, from there the ground begins to utilize the minerals to create fresh brush and then from there a new fully replenished habitat is born. The plants grow, the animals return and the system thrives.

It even reminds me of the cycle of the seasons. Here in New England, we have the blessing of deeply moving seasonal shifts. Think about the dark night of winter to the balmy restoration of spring: a new life and quite the BOLD transition.

Sometimes when I am angry I visualize an inner sea of emotion and winds and roaring waves. Something about the process reminds me it is natural and that emotions need to be expressed; just like it much pour rain for the flowers to bloom.

Let's Try It

Materials Needed:
Pastels
Open mind
Patience
Visual Journal

1) Start by closing your eyes. Feel your feet on the earth, in fact wiggle your toes a few times. And say to your body, *please show me how I feel*. Start to get verryyy curious about little sensations. Is there a particular body part that has this sensation? If so zoom in, if not keep breathing and watching and waiting.

The best part of this is you don't have to do anything but simply stay open and wait.

2) Start to repeat these words, *I honor and welcome my inner experience*.
While repeating this, continue to breath and feel your belly expand in and out

3) What is the texture of the sensation?
Is there a color?
Is there a sounds?

4) Using your non dominant hand reach for a color, the first one that catches your eye or feels reflective of this sensation.

5) Breathe deeply and then turn towards your visual journal and put a mark down that starts to capture this experience….

How would you reflect this inner experience?
Is it simple?
Does it need a lot of lines?
Does this experience take up the whole page?
Or does it only take up a little bit?

6) Continue marking with this one color until it feels complete.

7) Notice how you feel. Has the emotion/sensation stayed the same or has it changed.

What was it like to express your inner experience on an outer platform: your journal?

What inspires you

What challenges you

What deeply touches you

What surprises you

I have done this daily as a little check-in to see how I feel. Anytime you want to know, you can simply come to this practice and this saying: *I honor and welcome my inner experience* and see what happens.

The more we check in with our body, the more it can become a trustworthy compass to navigate our daily lives!

Deepening Truth with Partners:

This process can be used to also inform how we will interact with others during our day. If I start my day happy, 'I will certainly allow myself to operate differently then if I was sad.

The intention of this activity is to allow you to be in your own experience and learn how to make space for your inner landscape and navigate an interaction with another person.

Please be gentle with yourself.

Whenever we practice something new, it is important to remember, well it's new!

<u>Materials needed:</u>
Attention to your body
Pastels
Partner

1) Allow yourself to sit across from your partner. Take a deep breath in and allow both of your to decide on a proper distance from one another.

Either shift forward or backward until you both feel relatively comfortable.

2) If feeling safe, close your eyes, or simply shift gaze downward.
Feel what its like to be in the same space as someone else.
Turn attention to your internal landscape.

What is alive inside you right now?

3) Start to repeat the mantra: "I honor and welcome my inner experience."

Notice if there is a space in your body where this sensation lives, otherwise just breath relax feel watch and allow.

4) Pick a color that could be fitting, If you cant decide let whatever color is calling you to just be chosen.

5) Start to mark on your own 8.5 x 11 piece lines, marks, form that allow this inner landscape to be expressed. Continue this for a few moments. When you feel complete place your pastel down. Wait for the other.

6) When both of you are complete take a moment and hold up your piece. Without using words allow yourselves to take in the piece and take in eye contact for a few breaths.

7) Person A will be the leader and Person B will follow. You both get a chance in each role. ☺

Person A- Will place piece down on the floor and say this is how I feel right now and allow a sound to come out.

Person B will simply take in and focus on sensations in her body. Pay close attention to what is most alive.

> Then after a few moments say: *Thank you for sharing your truth it is well received and I feel it in my (name body part).*

8) Switch Roles

9) Which role was easiest for you? Utilize the four rivers to explore your comfort and familiarity either in sharing or witnessing.

What inspires you

_____

_____

_____

What challenges you

_____

_____

_____

What deeply touches you

_____

_____

_____

What surprises you

10) Now look at the challenging role. What was it like to be met with such accepting words?

What inspires you

What challenges you

What deeply touches you

What surprises you

Chapter 6: My body, My Compass:



Mandalas to Wholeness

It is my personal belief that our bodies can act as compasses to help us navigate our way through our days. Did you know that neuroscience has found a second brain in our bodies and it's in our gut! Ever heard of gut instinct? It's literally the brain in your stomach area that is trying to guide you to your greatest good. So why not try to listen right?

I believe that the more I can listen to my body, the more it becomes a compass to navigate my life. We will first use our body to check in and then we will use our body to navigate interacting with others.

<u>Materials Needed:</u>
Pastels
8.5 x11
Scissors
Large paper 40 x 60 (provided by facilitator)

1) Using your accessing skill start to feel into your body especially your heart and your belly and see what comes up and presents itself. Breathe and relax and watch what wants to be known.

Use the following mantra:

I honor and welcome my inner experience.

Is there a color or a sound that comes up? Notice this and allow it.

2) Start to mark on your own 8.5 x 11 piece lines, marks, form that allow this inner landscape to be expressed. Continue this for a few moments allowing other colors to be involved.

When you feel complete place your pastel down.
Once your done stand up and gaze at the images created, notice how your body takes them in.

3) Pick a part that really calls your attention. Start to allow your hands to move to the lines in the shapes, as if you were conducting an orchestra of color and sound.

4) Notice how the hand reflects the textures, swirls, dips, and ridges. Enjoy this process and shift focus from the sight of your hand moving to the internal experience of movement. Closing your eyes from time to time help ☺

6) Now place your palm on the spot that really catches your attention and trace your hand and cut it out.

7) This is your truth in this moment. Your body helped you find it! Take a moment to feel your fullness and thank your body.

In Chinese Medicine, the hand is deeply connected to the heart. The Heart Meridian, an energetic line that represents Compassion, extends from the heart out towards the pinky. In this way, our hands are an extension of our heart. Our hands can physically create what our heart envisions. Let our hands do what our heart yearns!

Deepening: Integrating Your Truth With Others.

For this exercise we will be using the concept of a mandala. We will bring our whole selves to create a new whole of a group.

The mandala represents wholeness, transformation, integration, and balance. The mandala is seen as a universal image found over and over again in nature itself and, in some form, in all cultures. It is a circle that does not exclude, but contains. It does not separate, but protects and holds opposing forces in such a way that is can be transmuted and transformed.- The Mandala Center.

This Mandala has space for everyone. We each hold our space around the rim and can see each person equally as if sitting in a circle. We are all equally responsible for the creating this circle and showing up.

1) Now we will see what it's like to allow yourself to come into relationship with your heart as your compass.

2) Allow yourself to bring your hand, your representation of your heart to the edge of the mandala.

3) How we interact with the world and even the universe is our choice and a good way to practice is right here, right now.

4) Considering your internal experience and your hand as an extension of your heart start to decorate just the edge around your hand.

5) Now take a color that represents your heart line.
   Let this heart line dance around the circle making sure to intersect with each other person.
   Eventually you will end at the center.

6) Take a step back and notice the places of connection.

7) Without using words, allow yourselves to pair up and decorate around these places of interaction. Take turns adding a line and a form.
   This can be considered the imagistic handshake, or gentle hug that happens as a group forms. In a way, you are introducing yourself ☺

It is important to stay open, move slowly and keep listening to the heart in this experience.

8) Let your body tell you when it feels complete. When it does, thank that partner with some gesture or nod and then move to the next.

9) Repeat this and let everyone get a chance to work together.

10) Once complete take a few moments to share out loud the four rivers with your group. Take turns and share time of speaking.

What inspires you

What challenges you

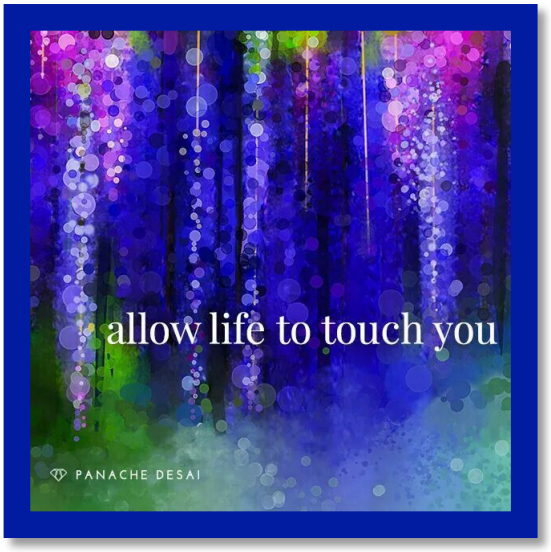
What deeply touches you

What surprises you

Part Three: Being: Allow Life to Touch You

Part Three is all about simply breathing, watching, relaxing and allowing. It is not about doing, it is about being. It is allowing yourself to notice the growth that you have made so far, and the deep processing you have started.

Part Three encourages you to be gentle in this processing and try to release the effort of creating and see what comes up. You have learned enough skills to start to lean into the unknown and bit more. Remember: if things feel intense, breathe into your feet. *Feel yourself on the Earth*. Mother Earth is holding you.



This part we explore what its like to be seen, really seen, by another person. We will see what animal spirit medicine is calling us most. Finally we will explore what its like to mark the end of a chapter and carry wisdom from it with us as we journey ahead.

You have done some deep work! Take a moment her to tune into some gratitude and notice three things that you are grateful for in this journey.

Chapter 7
Letting the Light Shine in.



I personally believe the more hardship I experience, the more my heart cracks open to the realness of the human experience. Something about being able to empathize with others makes my challenges all worth it. However, I could never get through it alone.

I remember when I lost my family member to cancer. It was such an isolating experience. I was in college and everyone was excited to make new friends, explore new studies, and explore their identity. Meanwhile, I was just trying to tread water in the emotional downpour of a cancer diagnosis. I don't think I would have survived the loss of my brother without my best friend, Monica. And you know what the best thing was that she did? *She just was with me*. I don't remember anything in particular. She didn't really even have to do anything, except just accept me as I was and be with me.

Counselors have learned that this is some potent and rare medicine. In a world that favors action, we forget the deep power of simply being; of witnessing and joining in. There's something amazing about feeling seen in suffering. There's some kind of shift out of isolation into the truth that we all suffer and in that we can find peace.

Materials Needed:
Black 18 x 22 piece provided by facilitator
Chalk Pastels
Your Body

This exercise we will explore the link between posture and emotion and our experience with those emotions.

Little Taste:

First take a moment seated down and hold your arms above your head, tilt your head back and smile!

Take five deep breaths here. How do you feel? Scientific studies have shown this feedback of movement and feeling. Sometimes your emotions can inform your posture and sometimes your posture can inform your emotions.

Positive psychology states if you need a dose of feeling good and bright, take up space! Allow yourself to spread your wings.

Experience

Allow yourself to stand up and connect your feet with the ground.

1) Start to mill around the room.
   Walk quickly, walk slowly, crouch down low, stand up straight, skip a little, move your arms high, start to stamp your feet.

2) Now, start to walk around the room and imagine you just scored your favorite job! You just found out and you have to tell everyone! Prance around and say "I feel happy!" "I just got the thing I needed!"

   Pause- Notice how you feel. Take a deep breath in accepting and deep breath out releasing. Allow yourself to shake it out and take off that emotion.

3) Allow yourself to walk around again and this time, start to stamp your feet, put your hands on your hips and start to grimace your face. Learn Forward. You are angry! Someone just did something and you feel rage flowing through your body. Breathe into this, feel your feet on the Earth. Start to let out angry yell or loud words. Look at someone and say "I feel angry!"

   Pause- Notice how you feel. Take a deep breath in accepting and deep breath out releasing. Allow yourself to shake it out and take off that emotion.

4) Allow yourself to walk around making a little bit of eye contact. Then start to slow down, cave your chest, allow your head to drip forward and shoulders to slouch. Some of you will even crouch down, allow your hands to come to your face. Look and around and say "I feel sad." "I feel like I lost something."

Pause- Notice how you feel. Take a deep breath in accepting and deep breath out releasing. Allow yourself to shake it out and take off that emotion.

5) Allow yourself to walk around making a bit of eye contact. Start to puff your chest and take up space. Start to state, "Wow, I am the best." "Did you know how awesome I am?" " I feel proud" Make sure to share this with others.

Pause- Notice how you feel. Take a deep breath in accepting and deep breath out releasing. Allow yourself to shake it out and take off that emotion.

6) Allow yourself to walk around. Gazing at the floor and then up to the others. Start to crouch down at random moments and reach your hand out. State: "I need help! Would you help me?" Do this a few times. Sometimes making eye contact, sometimes staring into space.

Pause- Notice how you feel. Take a deep breath in accepting and deep breath out releasing. Allow yourself to shake it out and take off that emotion.

7) Come back to your journal and close your eyes. Feel your feet on the Earth. Think about an experience that was challenging for you. Remember:
Take care of yourself, you only have to go as deep as you want.

8) Pick a color that represents this experience and start to create a few marks.
Are they little?
Are they loud?
Vibrant?
Prickly?

9) Allow yourself to step back and let a simple gesture/body posture start to reflect these marks.

What is it like to translate this big emotional experience into a simple gesture/ body posture?

10) Find a partner and bring your journal.

Person A: Feel your feet on the ground and stand across from another. Allow your eyes to meet for a moment and then close your eyes. You are about to give another some insight into your inner world. Come back to your intention and let it help guide you.

Person B: Feel your feet on the ground and stand across from another. Allow your eyes to meet and start to cultivate a sense of warm understanding for the person in front of you.

Person A: State "I feel…." And then make your gesture. Start with your eyes closed and simply repeat the gesture or body posture. After a few breaths make some eye contact.

Person B: After eye contact start to join Person A in the gesture and posture. This is called mirroring.

State: "You are allowed to feel…"

11) Switch Roles.

12) What was it like to be unified through the common body expression?

Answer the Four Rivers

What was it like to be joined and not alone?

What inspires you

_____

_____

_____

What challenges you

_____

_____

_____

What deeply touches you

What surprises you

Did you know that we mammals are wired to connect? We have something called mirror neurons. When we see someone suffering, we too feel pain. When we see someone joyful and bright we also feel that.

We are wired to share the vast spectrum of emotions in this experience we call life.

What was it like to join your partner?

What inspires you

What challenges you

What deeply touches you

What surprises you

Chapter 8

Find your Guide: Wisdom from the World

Since the beginning of human existence we have honored animals for their wisdom and their direct expression of their emotions. When a dog is happy he/she wags his/her tail, when a fish is scared it "runs" away. We connect with the pride of the mama bears and the power of the lion.

This guided visualization meditation will reveal an animal that may have a message of wisdom for you. It is a mysterious process that takes some trust to allow it to unfold. I will walk you each step of the way.

1) Find a comfortable seat or lay down.
   Start to greet your body with your breath.
   Take care, and let a deep breath fill your lungs

2) In your minds eye, envision yourself gazing through a window into open space surrounded by wisps of gentle white light.
   Notice the texture of the light and the gentle peaceful safe quality

3) Start to fill this space with the sky, trees of any kind, a mountain or perhaps a waterfall or a valley. Let this natural environment morph and mold until it feels right.

4) Allow yourself to step through the window into this environment.
   You are taking in the pure beauty of the space, you can feel the air on your skin:
   Is it humid, or dry?
   Cold or hot?
   What colors are most present?

5) You know you are here to discover something amazing. You can feel the excitement building.
   You decide to rest where you are before entering your adventure.

6) Gradually you start to notice you are being accompanied by a creature. You remain calm, still and receiving. It approaches you to connect and collaborate,
   Study how it moves on towards you.
   What body parts are noticing most?
   How does it sound, feel and act?
   Does it have an age?

7) You become so connected with this animal that you start to merge with it.

You are now this amazing animal.
You are fully embodying its power, what does this power look like, what noises do you make?
How do you move through space?

8) Start to move around the room interacting with things and other animals.
What is alive inside as you move, and interact?
When you feel the wisdom come through you can start to return to your human form.

Now~ Stay with the energy of this amazing animal and its message

1) Go to your visual journal and start to represent this animal with various lines and forms.
It does not need to be a realistic drawing. Focus on the energy behind the image.

2) On another piece of paper collect movement, feeling, action and sound words about your animal.
If your animal shared some characteristics with you what would they be?

3) Continue this process until it feels complete

4) Circle four words
Use these four words for a poem or tell a story about the powerful wisdom of this animal.

Deepening in Group.

1) Find a group of three. Bring your journal and your words.
Person A will be witnessed and *Person B* and *Person Cv* will support.

2) *Person A:* stay in contact with this animal wisdom and start to move allowing the shapes and forms and colors to inform your movements. Eyes can be closed. Trust this process.

3) *Person B* and *Person C* will support by first witnessing then joining in sounds or movements they feel are particularly important to *Person A*.

4) Take a few breaths when you feel complete and bow and acknowledge one another before switching roles until everyone has had a chance.

5) Ask your guide: How will you be able to help me in bringing my truth forward, what signs will you give me, and what is my best attribute that I already have?

Allow yourself a moment to process the experience of either witness or witnessed. How does this tie into your original intention.

What inspires you

What challenges you

What deeply touches you

What surprises you

Chapter 9: A New, Whole You



You did it! We did it: Together. There comes a time for reflection and integration. This time is now.

Take a moment to reflect on the many journeys, exploring your inner terrain, being brave and allowing that terrain to be witnessed. Allowing yourself to navigate your life with your heart as your compass. Start to let this questions percolate…

> *What was your greatest lesson with respect to your unique personal expression?*
>
> *What was your greatest challenge with respect to your connecting with another human?*
>
> *What are you hopeful for in the near future?*

This closing exercise will allow us to take a bit of our group as we travel ahead. It will allow us to plant the seeds for a new self that incorporates all the experiences we had in here.

Materials Needed:
Group mandala
Scissors
14 x 14 paper provided by facilitator.

1) Bring forward your mandala. Take a moment to stand around the circle all four of you facing inwards. Take a moment to look at each intersection.

2) Gaze at the hand you created. Notice the color you chose for your Heartsong.
Is this color the one you would choose now?
What has changed?
What has stayed the same?

3) We will be decompiling this mandala, we all have forever been changed by one another and although we will be taking our hand we will be taking a part of the whole and the whole energy of the whole.

4) Take turns around the circle. Imagine your mandala is a fire and the words you speak into the center is like casting paper into a fire, for it to transform and to take new energy.

5) Allow yourself to breathe deeply

6) Finish these sentences:

With the witness of the group I release my:

With the support of the group I reclaim/take my:

7) As you say this, look each person in the eye and when it feels right, cut your hand and a bit of the surrounding area from the Mandala.

8) allow each person to go and leave the center mandala for use later.

Transforming with Self

1) Find your 14 x14 piece of paper

2) It is time to create your own new whole mandala with your transformed hand.

3) Allow yourself to adorn your new mandala

4) Have full faith that you have taken your group with you. You are forever intertwined.

5) Allow yourself to integrate representations of color and shape of one thing each group member reminded you of or taught you.

6) Once you are done come back to the center.

Final Full Group Integration.

1) Allow all the centers of the mandalas to come to the center.

2) Stand around the rim.

3) Take a moment to look around allowing yourself to be taken in and taking others in.

4) Just like the Heartlines, we will walk spiraling around the center and intersect. At each intersection allow yourself to acknowledge the other. Let this be organic and natural: eye contact, a bow, a hug, a shake, a high five.

5) Eventually we all end up around the center circle.

6) Hold Hands, gaze around.

7) Each person shares:
   What I wish for the group:
   What I wish for myself:

8) One final Bow to the wisdom within.

About the Author



My passion is to help people rediscover their Heart-song to find a way to back to wholeness.

Much of my healing journey was catalyzed by the loss of a family member and the resultant surrender into the inherent imperfection of life. My heart cracked open, and with that, the light entered and I was changed forever.

My hope for you is that you can become your own healer, redefine your personhood, and rewrite your story and feel at home within yourself.

I have my masters in Holistic Counseling with Specialty in Expressive Arts. I am a relational cultural counselor who believes in the power of relational alchemy, which is healing within relationship.

I am trained by the Pranotthan Yoga School in my 200 hour and specialize in Yin Yoga. My offerings integrate the ancient wisdom of Traditional Chinese Medicine, which honors the Five Elements. This system gives us an annual cycle to attune to; it reminds us we are part of nature. It grounds us in the flow of the universe. It teaches us the balance between effort and ease. It allows us an inner intuitive language that will unlock your heart-song.

Appendix A:

Creative Feedback Model for Expressive and Creative Arts

Guidelines for responding and being preset to your own work and that of other participants. Focus on the here and now.

Presence through deep listening, observing and attention on the breath
Taking care of yourself- dance of holding intensity and allowing someone to have their own experience

Curiosity through somatic Awareness

Non-judgmental Inquiry or Writing Responses

Appropriateness of questions and self-awareness

Feedback Steps to contribute to the on-going unfolding of knowing and unknowing presented in each piece. (adapted by John Daido Loori)

1. Relax into the body, feel the ground, feel the breath
2. Notice places of tension and ease
3. Quiet the mind- practice stillness by embodying a still tree or still lake
4. Bring energy to solar plexus, tan-den power center, stomach, core
5. Look at art image and close eyes, see in minds eye
6. Notice what you feel. Stay with impression. Notice judgments, stay with body sensations and placement of sensation
7. Speak the feeling experience of self, ask questions about places that intrigue you. Try not to name things, ask questions. Allow the creator to find answers through answering.