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GUIDE TO SELF HEALING

Your Complex Human Body

Your body is a complex, highly attuned vehicle for learning. Your physical body interacts with the world around you through your senses, and through its assimilation and elimination processes. You can touch the rough bark of a tree, gently caress the hand of an infant, breathe in the scent of a rose, hear the call of a crow, taste a crisp apple. Your physical body offers you the gift of experience in this physical world. With your physical body, you can see, smell and taste life. You can digest the experiences that come your way, holding onto what you need or want, and letting go of what you don't.

As amazing as your physical body is, your body is much more than the physical form you can see with your eyes. Your body is actually composed of many, invisible "subtle bodies" that are capable of sensing on many levels of experience. These subtle bodies include your emotional body, your mental body, your relational body and your higher spiritual bodies. Like the senses of your physical body, these more subtle bodies help you understand more about yourself by helping you interpret your experiences. With your emotional body, you can feel anger at the sting of a bee, joy at the sight of a

loved one returning home, fear when the sky gets dark or you're feeling lost, and grief when you're asked to let go of someone before you're ready. With your mental body, you can think about the things you see, interpret what they mean to you, and form a belief system about how the world works. With your relational or astral body, you can feel the pull of attraction to another, sense the energy of a space when you walk into it, or feel when someone is looking at you from across the room. Within your higher spiritual bodies, you can connect with your own spiritual nature and with your personal guides or ancestors, make soul level choices regarding what you want to experience, align with a higher order, and even comprehend the oneness of all things.

Altogether, this complex human vehicle is exquisitely attuned to your soul growth. Each experience you have, each feeling you feel, each thought that crosses your mind, *reveals you to yourself*. Pleasurable experiences offer a window into your own unique nature as a creative being. Challenging experiences encourage you to grow, sometimes by asking you to look at a false belief or face a difficult feeling. In doing so, your understanding of who you are evolves and expands. Even when you're not aware of them, your higher spiritual bodies guide and direct the course of your life, attracting the relationships and experiences that are most conducive to your soul growth. Like an extremely advanced computer processor, your human body is sending and receiving countless vibrational messages every moment.

The Role of Illness

Have you ever felt nervous about something and gotten a sick feeling in your stomach? Or given yourself a headache from worrying? Conversely, have you ever felt physically stronger, happier or even healthier after a positive experience such as listening to a beautiful piece of music, watching the sunrise or going to church?

What you're feeling is the interaction between your physical body and your more subtle bodies. Every thought and feeling you have effects your physical body in some way. One of the main functions of your physical body is to *offer feedback*. This feedback lets you know whether the thoughts or feelings you're having are in alignment with the truth of who you are. This messaging function of the body is quite simple...discomfort indicates that something is out of alignment. Small discomforts like a headache, a strained muscle, a sick feeling in your stomach or an earache are your body trying to bring your attention to something. Something you're doing, thinking or feeling isn't in alignment with the truth of your divine nature.

Pausing when you receive a message of discomfort from your body allows you to access more information about the specific nature of the discomfort and what it's reflecting back to you. Perhaps a headache is an early indication that you're driving yourself in a way that's harmful, rather than in alignment with a deeper, soul purpose. Or that you're spending too much time "in your head" and not listening to your deeper feelings about something. Pausing and listening to your body's cues gives you an opportunity to make a different choice. Will you continue down this path of pain? Or will you love yourself enough to sit with your uncomfortable feelings? Will you do the hard work necessary to come into greater alignment? Will you allow the small, ego understanding of who you are to die, change or expand to come into greater alignment with your highest truth?

As a messaging system, the body responds to the way you're running your life force energy, and reflects back the effects your thoughts, feelings and relationships are having upon it. Chronic illness occurs when you repeatedly ignore the more subtle messages of the body. Over time, if you refuse

to look at the cause of your small, physical discomforts, the distorted thoughts and blocked emotions causing them become habits. Eventually, individual distorted thoughts become a set way of thinking. Destructive ways of relating invite co-dependent, controlling or abusive relationships. Unprocessed feelings get pushed further down and disowned. Like a wound in your subconscious, they hide just beneath the surface waiting for some, small thing to trigger their release.

Your life force wants to flow smoothly and freely, so holding these distorted or imbalanced patterns in place requires a lot of energy. Both the distorted pattern and the energy you're expending holding it in place put greater and more consistent tension on specific parts of your body. What started as a headache may eventually become near-sightedness when you refuse to look at something you don't want to see. A chronic, sick feeling in your stomach may eventually become an ulcer when you keep forcing yourself to stomach something that isn't good for you. In this way, illness is the natural consequence of going against the greater truth of who you are.

Most of us identify very strongly with our small egos, and we've been running our energy in these distorted patterns for so long, we're not even aware we're doing it. In fact, the patterns usually become part of our sense of self. We believe this is just *who we are*. We move through life believing we're defined by our jobs, our relationships, our physical bodies, our material possessions, or our belief systems. This very limited understanding discounts the magnitude of your soul. There's an emptiness to life when it's directed by the ego. And on some level, you know it. You *feel* it. Your subtle body senses it. Your body "knows" the truth of who you are and what you're capable of. Anything out of alignment with that highest truth will be reflected back through discomfort, illness or pain.

As a child, you were likely closer to the truth of your divine nature. As a child, you knew your own immortality. You listened to the whispering of your soul. As a child, you trusted and embraced life. Unfortunately, most of the adults around you probably didn't. They'd forgotten their soul truths and had learned long ago to identify with their small egos. They couldn't reflect back to you your greater truth, and so they didn't teach you how to attune to your subtle feelings or how to honor your body when it was speaking these greater truths to you.

As adults, most people aren't even aware they're out of alignment until illness strikes. When it does, they're forced to slow down and listen, to get support and to feel things they don't want to feel. In this way, illness can be a gift. There may be years, even decades, of unprocessed experiences and distorted understanding about who you are underlying an illness. Even here, though, the body remains a perfect learning tool for your soul. It will carry you into the precise experiences you need to help you understand yourself differently. As you work to heal your body, you'll also be healing your mind, heart and soul. A stomach ulcer will remind you to pay attention to what you take in. It'll draw your attention again and again to "what's eating at you," offering you daily practice in "listening to your gut." Over time, it'll teach you how to care for yourself better. As you put on your glasses each morning, you'll be grateful for the ability to see what's in front of you. Perhaps you'll look more closely at things, or appreciate more of what you do see. Your body, in illness or in health, remains your greatest tool for deep, soul learning.

What is healing?

Most of us live in very fragmented ways. Our small egos are constantly looking for ways to separate, to prove we're good, right, better or enough. We try to separate the different aspects of our whole

nature, viewing all our subtle bodies, and even all the systems in our physical bodies as if they were discrete and separate entities. We may talk about mental health or about physical health, as if they're unrelated. When we experience troubling or negative events, we tend to see them as discrete occurrences. If we seek help, it's oftentimes with the goal of removing the troubling or negative experience, while leaving the larger system unchanged.

This way of thinking causes us to view illness as an isolated event that can be treated without looking at the thoughts, feelings, actions or relationships that contributed to the illness. This focus on separate, fragmented aspects of the whole encourages us to think of physical health as something that can exist outside of mental, emotional, relational or spiritual health. Dysfunction is then seen as something that can simply be removed, oftentimes through medical intervention. Although medical intervention is useful and sometimes necessary, the interrelated nature of the system must also be taken into consideration. Treatment for a heart condition should include consideration of the quality of the relationships the person has. The removal of a tumor is more successful when addressing what may have led to its growth. Otherwise, though these medical treatments may remove an immediate symptom, they will fail to treat the underlying causes. Without shifting the emotional, mental, relational and spiritual aspects that contributed to the illness, the body will be forced to repeat its distress call in another way.

All true healing is a movement towards wholeness. The body is designed to maintain and restore health. There's a wisdom and intelligence to the body. It knows how to heal. Healing occurs quite naturally as we integrate the fragments of who we are, so they function in a more balanced way. When we remove the chronically held blocks to physical health by feeling our uncomfortable feelings, changing how we think about things, and aligning more closely with our highest truth, the body naturally heals. When you look at physical dysfunction as a message from the larger system, you begin to understand the interrelated nature of human experience. You come in contact with the level of your soul, where all things are possible. You draw closer to the source and to the truth of who you are. All movement towards wholeness is movement towards health.

Restoring or Maintaining Health

Health is a natural outcome of a balanced system. Unfortunately, most of us live out of balance. Our families, our societies, our economic systems, our religious institutions, and many of our social systems are based on the idea of fragmentation and competition. To be healthy in the modern world requires some effort to counteract these messages and stay in touch with our innate wholeness. Whether you're seeking to maintain your current state of health, recover from an illness, or increase your overall health, the goal is always the same - restore a sense of wholeness within the system.

The Three Lower Bodies - Physical, Emotional and Mental

Your physical body, with its systems, organs and cells is one aspect of your greater system. It is the densest, and most easily visible. Your emotions vibrate at a higher rate. Although they are not as visible, they can still be sensed, oftentimes quite forcefully. Your thoughts vibrate at a higher rate than your emotions, and are a little harder to hold onto. They come and go more quickly, moving in and out of your awareness. Together, these three make up the lower, three bodies of your system. Here the term "lower" refers to the vibrational makeup of these systems, not their location.

Although fragmentation can occur anywhere within these three lower bodies, I find most people heavily fragment at the level of the emotional body. The expression of emotion can be inconvenient, frightening and uncomfortable. It's likely you learned early on how to stop the flow of energy in your emotional body, perhaps to the point where emotions are either hard to access at all, or arise in completely unpredictable ways, sometimes even overwhelming your rational mind. Unless you were encouraged as a child to explore all your emotions as they were arising, you likely have painful experiences and unprocessed trauma held as blocks in your emotional body. As the emotional body is the mediator between your thoughts and your physical body, blocks held in your emotional body highly impact both your mental and physical health.

Drawing connections between these three lower bodies can do wonders towards restoring health. Following are some exercises to help you start exploring these connections. You can start by picking one or two of these exercises and doing them for a few minutes each day over a two-week period. The more patient and persistent you are, the more you'll discover about yourself. Think of each practice as an exercise in gathering more of the pieces of who you are as a whole human.

- **Mindful Eating/Exercising.** The physical body is deeply affected by the way you eat and the amount of exercise you get. Any effort toward improving the way you eat and creating healthy exercise routines is helpful, but it's important to remember that the body is only one aspect of the whole of who you are. It's not enough to pick a diet or exercise plan and follow it...this is actually a way of fragmenting at the level of the physical body. In order to create wholeness and thus health, it's important to draw connections. One way to do this is to practice mindful eating and mindful exercise.
 - Spend some time each day listening to your body. Ask it what kinds of food it needs and how much water it needs to thrive that day. Check in often throughout the day, and adjust accordingly. After eating something, take note of how your body feels. Do you feel tired? Energized? Bloating? Clean? Use this feedback to help improve your ability to hear what your body is actually asking for. Take note also of how your mood is affected. Do certain foods remind you of anything? What emotional associations do you have? Pay close attention to your cravings. What experiences might you be trying to replace by eating something sweet? Salty? Spicy?
 - Before sitting down to eat, spend a few moments feeling appreciation for all the people, plants and animals that came together to create your meal. Think of the farmer, the truck driver, the chef, and the grocery store clerk who gave their time. Appreciate the soil, sun and rain that grew your food. Appreciate the animals and plants that are cycling their lifeforce to you, so that you may live and grow. Feel how everything is connected, and allow the meal to feed your soul as well as your body.
 - While exercising, be mindful of your movements and take note of any thoughts or feelings that arise. The body is a record-keeper of your history. Movement, done mindfully, can take you into forgotten experience. If something arises when you're exercising, stay with it. Allow the feelings to arise, even if you don't understand where they're coming from.
 - If you think you have a lot of repressed feelings, try using repetitive movement exercises (like running or weight lifting) to release them. Let yourself feel your anger, for example, and channel it into the movement. Allow your anger to discharge into the ground with each step or release in an explosion of strength as you lift each weight.

- Yoga or slow, deep stretching are wonderful practices for connecting the body, emotions and higher spiritual aspects through mindful breathing aligned with physical movement. If feelings arise while stretching, stay in the pose and allow yourself to feel whatever arises. Laugh, cry, rage or be present with your fear, even if you don't understand why or where it's coming from. Keep breathing into places of tension and allow yourself to feel. Ask you body what the place of tension is holding. If this part of your body could speak, what might it say?
- **Journaling.** Regular journaling is a powerful way to make connections between your experiences, your history, your thoughts and your emotions. Spend a few minutes journaling each day. Write about what happened, how you feel about it, if it reminds you of something else, how your body felt when it was happening, etc. Be sure to also write down one or two things that you're grateful for. If you're not sure how to start, tell yourself your life story, beginning with your earliest memory. This is a great tool for gathering all of your experiences so you can see the connections and the themes of your life.
- **Meditation and Compassionate Self-Observation.**
 - Daily meditation is another very powerful way to draw connections between your feelings, your experiences and your spiritual nature by quieting the mind. Begin in a comfortable, seated position. Take a slow inhale, counting to four. Pause at the top of your inhale for a count of four. Breathe out counting to four, and pause at the bottom of your exhale for a count of four. Notice any feelings that arise. Notice how your body feels. If thoughts arise, take note and then bring your attention back to your breath. Begin with a 5 minute practice and build up slowly.
 - During the day, practice compassionate self-observation whenever you can. Imagine you're a kind observer of yourself. See if you can observe what you're thinking or feeling in any given moment without going into judgement or trying to make it go away. Allow whatever it is to exist. Work to stay in compassion and non-judgement, especially when you observe something you don't like.
- **Explore the four primary emotions and how they express in your body.** There are four primary emotions - fear, joy, grief and anger. Play with how each of the four primary emotions feels in *your body*. You can do this by either moving your body into a position that expresses a particular emotion, or imagining a situation where you felt or would likely feel that emotion. For example, if you're trying to feel joy, throw your arms out wide, raise your chest, look up at the sky and smile. Notice what happens in your mind and your emotions as you shift your body. Does this feel easy and comfortable? Can you allow joy to move through you? Or do you feel some hesitation? Does a thought immediately come into your mind that squashes the feeling? Take your time and be curious. If you're imagining a situation that might evoke the emotion you're exploring, see if you can allow the feeling to be felt rather than *thinking about* the feeling. The mind is very good at remembering or imagining and thinking "I was afraid" or "I would be afraid." This is a very different experience than having an *emotional or physical experience of fear*. Fear is uncomfortable in the body. It makes the body shake, quiver, freeze, withdraw or turn away. The thoughts that accompany a felt sense of fear might be, "it's not safe," "I'm in danger here," or "I don't trust this." You'll likely feel resistance to feeling any of the more difficult emotions. Remember, this is simply an exploration exercise. As you play with allowing a feeling to move through you, you'll realize that feelings don't need to get stuck or overwhelm you. Feelings are meant to arise, be felt and fade away. It's only by pushing them down or stopping them mid-expression that they get stuck.

- Mirror work/body scanning.** Spend a few minutes compassionately observing your body in a mirror. Alternatively, you can connect to each part of your body with your breath, starting with either your head or your feet and working your way up or down (i.e., imagine you're breathing into your feet, and then your shins, and then your knees, etc.). As you breathe into or look at each part of your body, notice how it looks or feels, without judgement. Your body has recorded not only all of your experiences, but your responses to them and the defenses you creatively employed to survive. You can think of your body as the sacred record-keeper of your life. Notice where your body feels or looks open. Where does it feel or look tight or constricted? Be curious about what it's holding. Move each of your joints. Do some move more easily than others? Consider what the places of physical tightness or constriction might reflect with regard to your thoughts and emotions. For example, if you feel tightness in your shoulders, consider whether you might be "shouldering" too heavy of a burden in life. Does life feel heavy? What emotion would you attribute to that body part? What thoughts do you have about responsibility, in general? Do you hold rigid beliefs around this topic? Are you pushing too hard? What might that body part say if it could speak? See if you can begin to see the connections between how you think and feel about life with what's reflected in your physical body. If you're not sure what a body part might represent, think about its function and how that function might be unbalanced. Joints help us move freely, for example. Tightness or pain there can indicate you're being too rigid or too flexible in your thinking, or perhaps not allowing your emotions to flow. Your hips help you move through life, take steps towards your future, run towards someone, etc. Are you afraid of the future? Are you afraid to take the next step? To stand on your own? Your eyes help you clearly see what's in front of you. Is there something you don't want to look at? Your stomach digests the day-to-day experiences of life. Is your daily life feeling hard to digest? Be curious and kind in your exploration. Pose questions to yourself, knowing there's no right answer. This is an exploration of *your* body and what it's reflecting to *you*. Trust what you sense. Write down whatever you notice.
- Mindful breathing.** For the first part of this exercise, spend a few minutes in quiet contemplation of your breath. Without trying to change anything, notice how freely your chest expands. Is your breath full or shallow? Does it flow all the way down to your belly and up to your collar bones? If it's constricted, do you breathe more into your belly or your chest? Do your ribs move freely, on both sides and in the front and back? Just notice whatever you notice. What might this way of breathing indicate on an emotional level? Does your breath feel caught in fear? Does it feel pushed down in defiance or weighed down with grief? For the second part of this exercise, bring your attention to any area of constriction you've observed and experiment with breathing more deeply into this area. As you do, notice any feelings or thoughts that arise. For example, if you notice that your lower ribcage is compressed and you typically breathe high in your chest, experiment with expanding the lower ribcage and breathing way down deep into your belly. Allow your belly and ribs to rise and fall, and notice what you feel. Does it feel good? Scary? Awkward? Is there physical restriction? What thoughts arise? Continue breathing in this deeper way for at least several minutes, just being a curious observer of yourself. Write down whatever you experience.

The Energy Body

You can think of your energy body as a system of energetic connections. There are 7 main energy centers (known as major chakras) that lie along the center line of your body, as well as many, smaller energy centers (or minor chakras) scattered throughout your body. Much like your heart, lungs or

spleen, you can think of these energy centers like the major and minor "organs" of your energy body. Each of these chakras vibrates at a specific rate and with a specific purpose. Your energy body is also comprised of meridians or energy channels. Similar to the veins and arteries of your circulatory system or nerves in your nervous system, these meridians connect and allow for energy flow and communication between all the different parts of your body. Altogether, your energy body acts like a bridge between what's happening in your physical body and what's happening in your mind, emotions, and spirit or soul.

Trauma, negative experiences and unprocessed emotion disrupt the healthy flow of your energy body, because they limit the way you think and feel about life and about yourself. When challenging experiences occur in early childhood, we're oftentimes unable to fully process or integrate these experiences in healthy ways. Instead, we create "images" about what life is like based on the unprocessed experience. These images are created with the logic of a child, so they're usually very dualistic and absolute (such as "all men are dangerous"). As an adult, although you know all men are *not* dangerous, the image may be lodged so deeply in your subconscious, it subtly effects how you feel every time a man walks into the room. These distorted understandings become crystallized in your energetic body, as patterns of energetic displacement, collapse, withdrawal, compression or stiffening. These chronic patterns and ways of running energy prevent the free and balanced flow of energy that keeps your physical body healthy. Over time, discomfort, fatigue, pain, depression, anxiety or illness can occur as a result.

Understanding your energy body and how and where your energy is flowing freely (or not) is helpful for maintaining and restoring health. Illness oftentimes manifests in the energy body before the physical body, so working with your energy body is also good preventative medicine. Following are some exercises to help you start exploring your energy body.

- **Rainbow meditation.** Playing with color is an easy way to start exploring your chakra system. Each chakra resonates with a specific frequency or color, so you can start getting a sense of what's happening in each of your chakras by working with the color that matches the healthy vibration rate for that chakra. Begin with your root chakra, which is located at the base of your spine. Imagine you're breathing the color red into your root chakra. You may find it helpful to look at something red. Notice what you feel when you breathe the color red into your root chakra. Does it feel good? Scary? Warm? Compressed? Scattered? Breathe out and notice if the outbreath feels different than the inbreath. When you breathe out, is it still red, or does a different color come out? Just take note of whatever you notice, without trying to change or make sense of it. After a few breaths, move onto the next chakra, breathing in the next color and noticing whatever you notice. Spend as much time as you like with each chakra. When you're done, write down what you noticed. Not only is this a great way to get to know your chakra system, it's also a wonderful, daily cleansing and charging practice. Following is a list of the chakra locations and their corresponding colors:
 - Root Chakra (base of spine) - Red
 - Sacral Chakra (pelvis) - Orange
 - Solar Plexus Chakra (just below ribcage) - Yellow
 - Heart Chakra (center of the chest) - Green
 - Throat Chakra (throat) - Blue
 - Third Eye Chakra (center of forehead or center of your head) - Indigo
 - Crown Chakra (top of head) - Purple or White

- **Expanding and Contracting Your Energetic Field.** Your energy field typically extends about three feet or an arm's length in every direction all around you, like a bubble. Get a sense of where you typically hold the edge of your field. You may find it helpful to extend your arms out and use your hands or fingertips to feel where the edge of your field is. Is it pulled in close to your body? Is it filling the entire room? Trust what you sense. Even if you've never tried to sense energy before, you will intuitively know the answer to this question. Is the size of your field the same in every direction? Does it extend evenly above your head and below your feet into the earth? How about in front and behind you? If the edge of your field feels larger than an arms length, try pulling it in by imagining drawing it back toward the center of your body using your breath. Notice how it feels to do this. Do you feel constricted? Contained? If you naturally hold the edge of your field very close to your body, try pushing it out by taking deep breaths and imagining it expanding a little bit with each outbreath. Be sure to expand it in all directions evenly - above and below you, in front of and behind you. Does it feel safer to have it pulled in close? Does pushing it out feel scary? Freeing? Take your time. After you've adjusted your field to about an arms length in every direction, play with expanding and contracting it, using your breath. With a big outbreath, imagine it rushing out and filling the room. Take a few breaths with your field expanded wide and notice what you feel. Next, try pulling it in really close to your body, so that it extends only a few inches in every direction. Take a few breaths and notice how it feels to contract your field.
- **Grounding Your Energy Body.** Being grounded simply means being fully present in your body in the present moment (not in your head). When your energy body is grounded, you will naturally feel safe and connected to Mother Earth and her rhythms. Following are a few techniques for grounding. You may find that a combination of different techniques works for you, or you may use these as starting points for developing your own grounding technique. Remember, your energy system is your own, and no one knows it better than you.
 - **Jumping.** Begin by taking a few deep breaths. Shake out your arms and start to gently bounce on your heels. Pay attention to where your feet are contacting the ground. Keep your eyes open. Let your arms hang loose. If this feels good, continue bouncing or start to jump a little, so that your feet come off the ground and then land. Keep your arms, head, neck and shoulders loose as you jump. Bounce or jump for at least one minute, paying attention to your feet (the longer you bounce, the greater the charge you'll be able to build). When you're ready, stop jumping and bend over at the waist with your knees slightly bent. Let your head hang down and your fingertips graze or rest on the floor. Remain here for at least one minute, slowly bending and straightening your knees slightly and noticing what's happening in your legs. You may feel shaking, vibration or heat. Allow the energy to move and deepen your breath. When this feels complete, very slowly roll up, keeping your knees bent, stacking your spine, one vertebra at a time, with your head coming up last. Shake your arms and shoulders out, roll your neck or shake your legs, if you like. Take another deep breath and take a moment to notice how different your body and mind feel.
 - **Using Gravity.** Begin by taking a few deep breaths, bending your knees. Feel the gravitational pull of the earth upon your body. Imagine that this force is gently reaching up to surround and hold you. Feel how it holds you firmly on the ground, where you're safe. If you like, imagine opening the top of your head so that energy can flow in from the sky, the stars and the heavens. With one big out-breath, allow gravity to pull this beautiful, golden-white energy all the way through your body, from

the top of your head to your feet. There is no force required – just a surrendering to the pull and power of the Earth. This technique works well if you need to quickly get back to a centered, grounded state. You can do it almost anytime, anywhere, in just a few moments.

- **Cord and Root Connecting.** Take a few deep breaths, softening into your heart. Allow your heart to open and feel love for Mother Earth. Spend a moment just appreciating how beautiful and complex this planet is. The Earth provides you with food and water, with natural beauty and the friendship of plants, insects, birds and other animals. By allowing yourself to feel love and appreciation, you connect energetically with the object of your love. Now imagine a cord of white light dropping down from the center of your chest, along your spine, out the base of your body and straight down into the magnetic, iron core of the Earth, as if you're plugging a cord into an electric outlet. Feel how slowly the Earth moves. See if you can match your speed to hers. Feel her slow, steady, unconditional love radiating back up to you through your root and into your heart, like a steady, pulsing current. If you like, you can deepen this visualization by imagining roots spreading down and out from the bottom of your feet into the Earth. Imagine how the soil feels. Perhaps you can feel minerals, sand, clay or rock. Allow your roots to spread wide and deep. Imagine your roots wrapping around large boulders that will hold you steady. Feel them travelling along underground streams that will sustain you. Feel the stability of the Earth and of your roots.
- **Stepping Your Energy Down.** This technique is helpful for when your energy is primarily in your head, or you feel very disconnected from your body. This may feel like an inability to concentrate, a feeling of fear or anxiety not related to what's happening in the current moment, a feeling of being overwhelmed, like you're overthinking or like you can't stop your brain from racing. This usually indicates a highly ungrounded state.
 - Begin by taking a few deep breaths, bringing your attention to your physical body. Bend your knees. Feel where your feet are contacting the floor. Take a deep breath and see if you can locate where your energy is. Is it primarily in your head? Is it above your head? Have you gone somewhere out into the stratosphere? Wherever your energy may be, breathe slowly, and with each out breathe, imagine your energy sinking down. Keep breathing, drawing your energy back into your body, through the top of your head.
 - Once your energy is in your head, see if you can feel this part of your body. Imagine sitting inside your own head. What does the inside of your head look or feel like? You may get a sense of motion, of color, of tension or even emptiness. There is no right feeling. You may feel nothing at all. Just take note, trying to be as physically present as possible with this part of your body.
 - After spending a few moments here, take another deep breath and bring your attention downward, drawing more of yourself and your energy into your skull, your brain, your eyes and ears. Again, simply feel into each part of your body. Does it feel open? Is it quiet or active? Can you see the inside of your eyelids? Can you feel the inside of your skull? How does it feel to be present with your ears?
 - After a few breaths, continue this process of slowly bringing your attention lower and lower....from your head to your neck and your shoulders. Stop at

each point and breathe and feel. Keep imagining that your energy is moving downward. Breathe and feel your chest, arms, back and hands. Don't rush. Feel each part individually. If it seems difficult to feel a particular area, move that part of your body slowly, paying attention to the sensation of muscle movement (for example, roll your shoulders or clench your fingers and then release them, feeling each muscle bend and flex). How does it feel to be present with each part of your body?

- Keep your attention slowly descending....into your abdomen, your waist, buttocks and hips, upper legs, knees, lower legs, ankles and eventually feet. Be sure to take at least a few breaths with each part of your body. If you feel tension anywhere, stay with the tension, but don't try to make it go away. Just breathe and be present with whatever is there. Imagine this is a part of yourself you haven't met yet, like a friend you're meeting for the first time. Be curious. As your energy is being drawn further and further into your body, you may notice a point that seems impossible to get past (for many people, the hips or knees are challenging). It's OK. Again, just notice what's happening in your body. Breathe into it and allow it to be just as it is. The next time you practice, you may notice you get a little further, or the spot feels more expanded and open. Take as much time with this process as you need. There is no rush.
- Use the affirmation "I am safe. It is safe for me to be here now. It is safe for me to live my life and to be fully present."
- Once you've breathed into every part of your body and can feel your feet, take another deep breath and see if you can feel your whole body at once. Take note of what's changed since you started this process. Do you feel calmer? Warmer? Colder? Less scattered or fearful? Again, just take note. There is no correct feeling. Just be present with yourself, wherever you are, in this particular moment.

Healing as a Natural Process

Healing is a natural process of your soul, the way breathing is a natural process of your human body. We're all held in a powerful, creative, loving, energetic matrix. Life is always moving towards greater complexity and greater unity. You're a part of life, and a part of this greater wisdom. Your life, with all its ups and downs, defeats and triumphs, joys and sorrows, is the perfect path of healing for you to walk. There's reason to trust.

I would like to leave you with three, powerful practices I've discovered on my personal path of healing. With these three tools, it's possible to navigate almost any experience. If you choose to use them, I know you'll not only learn more about yourself and experience more wholeness in your life, you'll also touch deep levels of your soul experience and gather profound wisdom in the process.

1. **Exercise Your Power of Choice** - Life offers an endless variety of experiences for you to choose from. *Choose wisely.* If a choice you're making is causing you pain, choose something different. Self-sacrifice as a habit is not noble. Claim your sovereignty. Your life is yours to create. Even if it seems you cannot change outside circumstances, you can always choose how you want to interpret what's happening, and thus how you feel about it. This is true self-empowerment. (When it feels particularly difficult to align your inner space, use the question,

"If I knew in my bones that life was on my side, how might I interpret this differently?"). When in doubt, choose love over fear. Unity over separation.

2. **Trust.** Life is on your side. Trust it. No matter what it's bringing you. Trust it can bring you good things, too.
3. **Surrender.** Surrender to each moment. Be fully present with whoever is there with you, including the Earth. Be fully present with what's arising in your inner experience in response to whatever is happening. When something is uncomfortable, choose to stay present anyway. Feel all the inconvenient feelings - fear, shame, frustration, anger. Allow them to teach you. Feel the good ones, too. Sometimes that's harder. Surrender to your experiences in trust. This is your unique lifepath. Life, in its wisdom, is holding and guiding you. *Allow it to.* Know that challenging experiences are there to teach you something. Surrender to the wisdom that has brought you any particular challenging experience. It's perfectly tailored for you and whoever else is present. If it's not aligned with a conscious choice you've made for your life, trust that there's a very good reason you're experiencing it. Then, choose to love yourself through it. Positive experiences can be challenging, too. Surrender whatever is keeping you from expanding into them.
4. **Be Kind.** Most importantly, be kind whenever you can. Life can be hard. You're not going to "get it right" (however you define that) all the time, and neither is anyone else. There's always more happening than any of us is fully aware of, so judging yourself or anyone else doesn't even make sense. When you mess up, be kind to yourself. Even when you realize you're failing at being kind to yourself, be kind to yourself. It's all part of the human experience.



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