

“This book will show you a new way to look at yourself and your world.”

—DON MIGUEL RUIZ, author of *The Four Agreements*



# AWAKEN YOUR INNER FIRE

Ignite Your Passion, Find Your Purpose,  
and Create the Life That You Love

HEATHERASH AMARA

Author of *Warrior Goddess Training*

# AWAKEN YOUR INNER FIRE

Hier  phant publishing

HEATHERASH AMARA



## Praise for *Awaken Your Inner Fire*

Now more than ever it is important for all of us to step up to the plate and awaken our Inner Fire. Within these pages you will be gently and safely guided to discovering your true purpose. I can't think of a better teacher to take this journey with than HeatherAsh Amara.

—Madisyn Taylor, DailyOM

HeatherAsh Amara's *Awaken Your Inner Fire* is a gorgeous reminder that we must feed ourselves completely in order to stay connected to that vital spark within—that core part of us that makes us uniquely who we are. As HeatherAsh shows her readers, tending your inner fire is all about finding stillness right in the middle of the chaos. This book is required reading for anyone who wants crystal clarity on the big questions of their lives.

—Kelly McNelis, Founder of Women for One

In *Awaken Your Inner Fire*, HeatherAsh provides solid guidance to help you tune into your passion for life and express it in many different ways. Read this book slowly, absorb these ideas, and you'll find greater peace and joy in your life.

—Dr. Steven Farmer, author of *Healing Ancestral Karma* and *Animal Spirit Guides*.

HeatherAsh Amara is brilliant, insightful, and committed to helping you find your deepest truth.

—Pedram Shojai, New York Times bestselling author of *The Urban Monk*



Awaken  
Your  
Inner  
Fire



HEATHERASH AMARA

Hier⊕phant publishing

Copyright © 2017 by HeatherAsh Amara

All rights reserved, including the right to reproduce this work in any form whatsoever, without permission in writing from the publisher, except for brief passages in connection with a review.

Cover design by Emma Smith

Cover art by Olga Nikonova | Shutterstock

Interior Design by Howie Severson / Fortuitous

Hierophant Publishing

8301 Broadway, Suite 219

San Antonio, TX 78209

210-305-5027

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

If you are unable to order this book from your local bookseller, you may order directly from the publisher.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2017940129

ISBN 978-1-938289-64-4

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed on acid-free paper in United States

# Table of Contents

Introduction – vii

LESSON 1

What Is Your Inner Fire? – 1

LESSON 2

Discover Your True Work – 15

LESSON 3

Clear Your Mind – 31

LESSON 4

Find Your Faith – 53

LESSON 5

Embrace Your Emotions – 67

LESSON 6

Make the Bodily Connection – 89

LESSON 7

Gratitude: The Energy Igniter – 109

LESSON 8

The Inner Fire Prayer:  
A Daily Practice for Bringing It All Together – 129

Afterword – 149

Acknowledgments – 157

Resources – 159





# Introduction

This book was actually born out of desperation and curiosity.

The year was 2004. Having left most everything familiar in my life behind, I was living in an RV and traveling with my partner at the time, Raven.

In a way, our choice to leave our comfortable stationary home and go on the road was a self-intervention. My life felt overwhelming, out of control, and filled with busyness. The result was inner and outer chaos. As a couple, we were looking for a sense of freedom and ease, but for myself, I was first and foremost seeking sanity. I understood that my life had become unmanageable: while I loved what I was creating in the world, I also felt that the business of keeping it running was eating me alive.

You see, a few years before this I had founded a spiritual center in Berkeley, California. What began as a small group of people wanting to make a difference in the world soon blossomed into numerous apprenticeship programs, a teaching program, ten

satellite circles across the country, a staff, payroll, board meetings, and outreach programs. It was a joy to make my dream come true, but over time what had started as a spiritual blessing drained my inner energy, dissolved my enthusiasm, and left our entire staff exhausted and frustrated. My small, happy dream of everything humming right along had turned into a frustrating struggle of interpersonal resentment and mismanaged energy for me and my burned-out team.

And I was largely to blame.

At first I resisted that idea. I told myself that the team was simply not applying themselves, my teachers were being overly emotional, and my office staff was dropping the ball. I was doing everything I could to hold it all together, but it was fragmenting from discontent, missed deadlines, irritation, upset, and other emotional issues. So while my first reaction was to blame the busy schedule, or the staff, or the amount of work in front of us, when I looked deeper I realized it was my own unconscious beliefs and habits that had woven themselves through our organization and were draining our energy. Although this realization was humbling, in that I knew I had created this chaos, it was also freeing because if I had brought it together, I was also the one who could do something about it.

You may not have experienced the same level of turmoil and chaos in your life. But we've all had to deal with the same unwelcome "volunteers" in our emotional garden at various points: fear, anxiety, becoming overwhelmed. These seedlings can manifest as thoughts and feelings about not having enough time, enough resources, enough creativity, enough intelligence, or not getting to do what you really want to in your life. Any of these sound familiar?

If you look deeper, you'll find that underneath all of these "not enough" manifestations is the underlying ground of "There is not enough of this or that because I am not smart enough or pretty enough or \_\_\_\_\_ enough." You can fill in the blank with whatever worries you here, but at the bottom of it all is the false belief that "I am not enough." I was initially resistant to examining the idea of "I am not enough." But when I looked closely, I found this internal sense of lack was at the bottom of every instance when I felt stressed, overwhelmed, or fearful. What I have learned since then is that until you deal with these "not enough" gremlins, you will inevitably go through periods when you become fearful, feel overwhelmed, beat yourself up, drop your self-care, and put everyone else's needs ahead of your own. And that is a potent cocktail for frustration and, ultimately, burnout.

By the end of my time in Berkeley, the “not enough” gremlins had manifested themselves everywhere in my life from dawn to dusk. I noticed when I woke up, I often felt anxious about my day. Sometimes even before I opened my eyes I felt defeated by the amount of work that needed to be done. At the end of the day I rarely felt at peace with what I had accomplished, but rather stretched too thin and wondering where the day had gone. As you can imagine, it was difficult for me to experience peace and happiness while simultaneously living in this constant state of uneasiness.

Even when I did identify a new path or action that made my heart sing, I suffered through procrastination and resistance to trying something new—both rooted in the fear of it not working out, which was at its core a feeling that I was not enough.

When I stopped resisting this revelation and saw how the “not enough” mind-set was operating within my life, I decided to go on the road. I was heading out on a heroine’s quest to discover how to shift my relationship with myself. For two years after closing the center and leaving Berkeley, I curiously studied my actions, my thoughts, my failures, and my successes. I captured all of my ups and downs on paper, and I consciously tracked my own habits. On this journey I learned about the concept of our inner energy (I’ll explain this more fully in lesson 1), and let me say that

what I discovered was a revelation. I began to see my interactions with the world in a whole new way—one that is based on energy. I found that by shifting my perspective to account for my inner energy throughout the day, my experience in the world changed dramatically. I've taken what I discovered on my own journey and fleshed these principles out so that you too can learn how to nourish, protect, and direct the most precious resource you have: what I call your inner fire.

## **What to Expect from This Book**

I must warn you, *Awaken Your Inner Fire* goes deeper than anything I have previously written. In the pages that follow, we will look at how the major aspects of our being—the mental, spiritual, emotional, and physical parts of ourselves—all interact with our inner energy.

This book explains how you can create a foundational shift in how you see and interact with the world, one that invites you to make choices from your essence rather than old programming, fears, or egocentric strategies. It invites you to live from your energetic center instead of your periphery. Living from your periphery means following unconscious habits and patterns that are simply models of what everyone else is doing. When you live from your

energetic center instead, you start bringing awareness to your existing behaviors. Once you are conscious of these behaviors and have pulled them into the light, you can begin to make intentional choices about what you want to change and how you want to live your life.

The deep transformational work of shifting our perspective and clearing out old ways of being is a process. And it's not for the faint of heart. The good news is that there are tools in this book that will yield immediate results. In each lesson I blend big-picture, long-term focus with easy-to-do, bite-size tasks. At the end of each lesson you'll find practices, meditations, and explorations to put the concepts to work in your life.

Tending your inner fire is a daily practice of coming back to your center, avoiding overwhelm, showing up with an open heart, and finding ease and flow. I don't believe we are ever done, but I do know without a doubt that our days unfold and flourish when we replace the old seeds of fear with the sparks of creativity-love-excitement-curiosity. Then our inner fire shines brightly and guides us forward with its light.

*Awaken Your Inner Fire* will show you how to consciously tend your inner energy in a crazy-busy world that is constantly trying to hook your attention. We'll explore the idea of how to use whatever work you are doing—whether it is something you love or

something to pay the rent—as a way to build more courage, strength, power, and peace within you. It’s not a rewiring of what you do, but rather of how you do it.

Remember to pace yourself! There is a lot of information packed in this little book. It is not something to read in a day or a weekend, or you will not experience the full impact of the exercises and, most importantly, you won’t notice the many opportunities each and every day to practice these tools and shift your relationship with the world. Personally, it has taken me years to unpack and integrate these teachings, and I am still learning. So stay steady and enjoy the journey. You are an adventurer in a new territory of intimacy with your inner fire and the world.

Now, the first step on this path is to begin understanding ourselves. So we’ll devote ourselves to answering a very important question: What is your inner fire?





- LESSON 1 -

# What Is Your Inner Fire?

*Energy cannot be created or destroyed, it can  
only be changed from one form to another.*

—Albert Einstein

Most of us are familiar with computers; they seem to run everything nowadays from our washing machines to the International Space Station. A computer is made up primarily of two things: *hardware* (the physical components such as the monitor, the keyboard, etc.), and the *software* (the nonphysical programs such as Microsoft Windows, Excel, etc.)

In a sense, a computer is roughly analogous to a human being: the hardware represents the body, and the software represents the mind. But there is something missing in this analogy, because until you plug your computer into the wall—that is, until you supply it with *energy*—both the hardware and the software are useless.

Similarly to the computer, neither your body nor mind would function without the energy that powers them.

This energy is what I affectionately refer to as your *inner fire*.

Your inner fire is the vital energy within you, the unseen force that gives life to your being. When you take a moment to stop, get quiet, and feel deep within yourself, on a level deeper than thought, you will find this energy waiting and powering you through every moment in your life.

Perhaps because our inner fire can't be measured in a lab, many people live without any idea of this inner energy or the importance of tending to it.

Because this inner energy isn't talked about much in the modern world, many of us don't give it too much thought, if we think of it at all.

The good news is that scientists are now proving what shamanic cultures have been teaching for centuries: that while we appear to be physical beings, it's more accurate to say that we are energetic beings interwoven through physical forms. Although we still have much to learn about this energy from both a scientific and shamanic perspective, we do know that at an atomic level, every single thing in the universe is made up of energy.

I find it interesting that there is so much discussion in our world about attuning to our mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being, but very few talk about tending to the energy that makes all of these things possible. This energy is the source of all forms of our well-being and needs to be solicitously cared for in order to give us a solid foundation for tending to all facets of our health.

One thing has become clear to me as I have studied my own inner energy over the past several years. I have found that our thoughts, feelings, and actions can all affect our inner energy, and other people's energy can also have an influence. It can be very difficult for us to keep our inner fire alight with so much pressure. One simple litmus test to see if what you're pursuing is helping or hindering your inner fire is to

evaluate how you feel when you're in the process of doing something, thinking, or on the receiving end of any particular action. What you will find is that when you are doing things that resonate with your inner energy, the result will be that you feel good. When you neglect your inner fire energy, or otherwise do something that doesn't resonate with it, you feel, well . . . *not so good*.

Some of the biggest drains on our energy are stress, fear, anxiety, and getting overwhelmed, as well as the underlying “not enough” monster. Conversely, through the experience of joy, faith, peace, love, passion, and, most importantly, the realization that you *are* enough, you raise your inner energy. The tools in this book are designed to guide you to experience the latter—and they will show you how to do so by seeing everything (yes, *everything!*) in your life as your teacher and guide.

Seeing life experiences as a teacher and guide isn't just reserved for the big world-altering moments, but also for the small obstacles that arise. One of the ways we learn to harness our energy to face all circumstances is by witnessing firsthand how raising our inner energy can help us to overcome whatever challenging situations might come up.

For example, I am a certified firewalk teacher. I have led thousands of people around the world through an empowering ceremony that culminates

in them walking over 1,300-degree hot coals. Firewalking is an ancient shamanic transformation ritual that Western science can't fully explain. But that's not the case for the !Kung people. This native southern African tribe offers a unique perspective on how the seemingly impossible is made possible.

The !Kung believe that to walk on the fire without being burned, we have to raise what they call our *num*. There is no direct English translation for *num*, but the closest word we have is "energy."

This ancient culture understands the concept of inner energy and teaches that harnessing its power is the key to stepping over hot coals without being burned. Shamanic cultures around the globe echo this teaching and go further to say that raising our energy to overcome obstacles doesn't end with firewalking. Instead, the firewalk is a chance to experience the impossible becoming possible simply by heightening our energy. This sets an important precedent in our lives by showing what we are capable of when our energy is carefully tended. After all, if we can walk on *fire* without being burned, what *else* can we do? The lessons learned at a firewalk become key concepts that apply to every other area in our life.

We are all very aware that obstacles often arise in life, but to me, they are an invitation to us to raise our energy to match them. They are our own private firewalk. Obstacles are valuable teachers, presenting

us with the chance to proverbially “rise to the occasion.” They help us become warriors of the heart and sacred cultivators of our central flame.

I think of obstacles and energy as a jug half full of water, half full of oil. The oil represents the obstacles, and since it rises to the top, when we look down into the jug that is all we see. When we can only see oil, we become discouraged and may want to give up. We don’t realize the life-giving energy of the water is just underneath it. In order to clear the oil, we need to add more water, or *energy*. As we pour fresh, clean water into the jug, the oil rises and spills out until all that is left is the clean water. Each time we find oil in our jug, in order to clear it we need to add more water. In the same way, when we find ourselves mired in obstacles, we can add more fresh energy into our lives until they are cleared. More obstacles will arise, without a doubt, but by knowing that we can add energy to transform those obstacles, we are already equipped with a powerful tool to create the lives we want to experience.

So from a shamanic perspective, if you want something in your life to change, you must have as much or more energy than the thing you want to transform. This raising of your inner energy is synonymous with what I call *awakening your inner fire*.

## Your Physical Energy Level

This brings me to another important point about our inner fire. Please don't mistake your inner energy with what we commonly think of as your physical energy level. Your inner fire is much more than your physical energy level, and while they certainly may be related in some cases, they are not the same and will not always be affected in the same ways.

Chris, a dear friend of mine, contacted me recently after his uncle died from ALS, or Lou Gehrig's disease. ALS is a terminal, debilitating condition that causes certain muscle groups of the body to atrophy.

Chris explained how he watched his uncle's physical body deteriorate rapidly over a two-year period. First he lost his ability to speak, and finally he was left completely paralyzed, as his muscles no longer responded to cues from his brain.

What my friend wanted to share with me was the profound impact his uncle had left on him. During his regular visits, Chris never heard his uncle complain about his medical condition. In fact, his uncle regularly expressed his gratitude for life. His uncle always stayed focused on what he could do rather than what he couldn't, and other family members had the same experience with him and were all amazed. Chris, who attunes well to other people's energy, said, "You never felt like you were visiting a dying person,



but instead someone who was truly alive.” Despite not having physical energy, Chris’s uncle is a wonderful example of someone whose inner energy burned brightly, even as his physical body deteriorated.

There are many other people who are living examples of a body that has low energy but with a vibrant inner fire, and it’s likely you have met some throughout your own life. Likewise, most of us have encountered people on the opposite extreme: those with high physical energy but low inner fire. They may be very healthy and have active physical bodies, but are often angry, resentful, or feel victimized, etc. We find ourselves not wanting to be around these people, and we may even say things like, “I don’t like their energy” or “I get bad vibes from them.”

I recently witnessed one case of this firsthand. While browsing at a retail store, I made light small talk with the few employees who were working that day. They were all very nice and helpful. As I continued to look around, suddenly the owner made a surprise appearance and started berating his employees. I watched the tension in his body and saw the impact his words had on the others as they scurried about in fear, bustling to follow his demands. It wasn’t just what he was saying that created the frenzy, it was his energy, which shifted the atmosphere and energy of his employees from calm and ease to high anxiety. I could see his unhappiness,

and I felt sorry for him, because we all know that acting the way he was never feels good.

My point here is that your inner fire is different from what is commonly referred to as your physical energy level, and we will return to this topic later in the book.

## **The Power of Imagination**

Since we can't actually see our inner fire, using our imagination can be helpful when we start consciously connecting with it.

I first learned about the power of imagination in working directly with my inner fire one summer when I lived in Hong Kong and was employed in the financial district. I was literally working twelve-hour days and commuting an hour both ways on the subway, packed shoulder to shoulder with other stressed-out people. I had previously lived in a small, quiet town in Northern California, so being thrown into this demanding environment was both invigorating and exhausting.

However, the exhaustion was beginning to get the better of me. On impulse one day I got quiet and gently asked myself, "What do you need to thrive here?" Suddenly I had a vision of myself wearing a floor-length cloak, and I intuitively realized that this was a

symbol for what I should do next. By putting on an invisible cloak before I left for work each morning, I created a barrier between myself and other people's chaotic thoughts, emotions, and, most importantly, energy. Every day on the subway I visualized my imaginary cloak, which was my membrane to keep out energy that didn't serve me, while holding my own energy in.

The result was that I thrived—by which I mean I stayed full energetically. While my physical body did get tired from the long hours and my mind was often blank at the end of the day from staring at numbers on the computer, my energy felt good. I was solid. Other people's energy didn't drain me, and my inner fire stayed bright.

I think it's important to point out that I envisioned a *cloak* and not a *suit of armor* around myself. To me, a suit of armor is impenetrable by any force, while a cloak represents a power to choose who and what I wanted to present myself to. This distinction is important because you don't actually want to block out all energy; you do want to allow energy that is beneficial to you, like love and compassion and sparkly inspiration, to come in and nourish you. With the cloak imagery, I had the power to pick which energies I allowed in. You too can use the power of your imagination to create a semipermeable energetic container

to filter out heavier energies from the environment around you (like fear, negativity, and stress) and let in refined, supportive energy (like a child's enthusiasm, love from a friend, or even the constant calm of trees.)

Using your imagination to create a container around you is a lot like protecting a fire from the wind or rain. When we first light a fire, we need to shield it from the outer elements in order for it to have a chance to kindle from the inside. Once the fire grows stronger, it burns brightly and very little affects it.

What I have found is that as you build your awareness of your inner fire, you'll start to be more sensitive to the tiniest messages arising from this field around you. If you notice negative energy coming into your space, you'll immediately be able to put up a barrier. And if you notice love or joy, you will have the awareness to open yourself up to more of that specific feeling rather than taking on *all* the energies around you. As you become more experienced with accessing your inner fire, you will learn to keep it balanced rather than allowing it to go into extreme states of stress or excitement. As a result, you will stay more balanced, connected, and peaceful in your daily life.

The power of our imagination doesn't stop here either! One of the first steps in our process of connecting with our inner fire uses our imagination as a tool for discovering our true purpose, or what I also call our true work. Your imagination is both a tool and guide, and it will keep you in tune with both your inner fire and your true work, as we will explore in the next lesson.



## INNER FIRE EXPLORATION

### Feel Your Own Inner Energy

Find a quiet place to sit and start by breathing into your belly. Really soften and expand your belly on the inhale, and draw your belly back toward your spine on the exhale.

Now let go of how you are breathing and let your focus rest softly on your entire being. Ask yourself: “How does my energy feel?” Keep scanning different parts of your body, lightly touching yourself with your awareness and presence. Be open to the tiniest expressions of your energy: subtle images, sensations of feelings, a sense of space or tightness, buzziness or stillness. How do you sense your energy? Don’t try to change anything; simply witness what is going on. At first you might not notice anything. But as you stay with this practice of sensing your energy, you’ll begin to feel how your energy ebbs and flows.



- LESSON 2 -

# Discover Your True Work

*There is a vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all of time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and it will be lost. The world will not have it. It is not your business to determine how good it is nor how valuable nor how it compares with other expressions. It is your business to keep it yours clearly and directly, to keep the channel open.*

—Martha Graham



My friend Day calls himself an impermanent earth artist. Each morning he goes out, basket in hand, to collect seedpods, flowers, leaves, and whatever other bits of beauty nature offers him that day. Then he goes down by the creek near his house and clears off the remains of yesterday's creation from the ground, using his hand to brush away the old art in order to create a new blank canvas of dirt. Painstakingly, lovingly, tenderly, he lays out a colorful design of hues and shapes and forms from his gathered items. The art he creates is very similar to the mandalas constructed by some Buddhist monks.

The results of his labor are so breathtaking, so beautifully crafted, that I often cry or exclaim out loud in awe when I see pictures of his Morning Altars.

Like my friend Day, who goes out every morning to create a new work of art, you too are an artist—whether you realize it or not. Your canvas is your life itself. Your art is how you choose to express yourself—purposefully and passionately—no matter what you are doing. When we live our life from this perspective, we make room for inspiration, flow, connection, synchronicity, and magic, and doing so raises the vibration of our inner energy like nothing else can.

Living your life as an artist is an idea contrary to the predominant paradigm of the Western world, which advocates using our logical minds and our

sheer will to “conquer” obstacles in our path, control the outcome of every situation, and achieve or “win” the game of life. The quest for “more” is the backdrop of this way of life. With our society becoming increasingly faster and more technologically based in this so-called information age, we drive ourselves into a frantic pace in order to keep up, often wanting more information at our fingertips, more Facebook friends or Instagram likes, and more ways to keep our minds busy.

Believing in and acting on this mind-set of always needing “more” is what leads us to feeling overwhelmed, left behind, anxious, and frustrated. Because we are always in a search for “more,” we are unconsciously telling ourselves that what we currently have is not enough, and we are not so subtly reinforcing the flawed idea that *we* are never enough. As a result, whatever we do in our daily life (whether that’s in the workforce or on the home front) can become mired in exhaustion, drama, or rote behavior, which is depleting and exhausting. Because we have unconsciously determined our lives to be lacking (why would we need “more” if what we have is enough?), our inner fire begins to dwindle from lack of nourishment and exhaustion. We never focus on the work that lies in our heart, perhaps because we have forgotten or don’t even know what type of work really makes our heart sing.

When we look at ourselves as artists rather than employees, homemakers, bosses, or owners, we see past the limited roles we play in the world. Our true work doesn't lie in those roles that we put on throughout our day, but rather just beyond them. It is only when we look past them that we can discover what our true work is. And doing this is the key to living your life as an artist. This connection to your true work and seeing yourself as an artist is what feeds your inner fire.

My point is that your *true* work isn't really about what you actually *do*, but more importantly, *how* you do it and what your intentions are as you do it. In other words, the outer "work" that you do—your activities such as your job, career, chores, and even your parenting—isn't your true work in this context, but rather each of these things is a role that you take on out of choice or necessity.

Suffering and unfulfillment spring from believing that the role you've taken on is *who you really are*. This is a mistake, and an easy one to make. Just because you are an accountant at work does not mean that accounting is your true work. "Accountant" is a role that you have adopted in the world. It is something you do, not who you are. Suffering enters the picture when you mistakenly identify accounting as your true work, because your inner peace will be tied to any perceived success or failure in that role.

Keeping with our accountant example, if you think that your true work is to be an accountant, that it's not simply a role you are playing, then if you mess up on an expense report, you will likely berate yourself, saying, "How could you mess up!? You're the accountant!" Whereas in the same situation, if you know that being an accountant is simply your role and not your true purpose for being, you will look at the situation in a different way. You can learn from the mistake and strive to do better, but you are no longer a "failure" in your own mind. By staying in your center and focusing on your true work in every situation, you engage life in a much deeper and healthier way, and simultaneously you typically perform better at your chosen role.

For many of you reading this, separating your true work from your outer role is a new idea, something you may not have ever considered. Students in my workshops often ask me, "HeatherAsh, how do I know what my true work is?"

This is the most important question. The answer is that your true work is a quality that acts as your *core guiding principle*. It is the focus of what you want to create or experience for yourself as the artist of your life. And it all starts within, from a deep desire in the center of your being. Whatever you do is just a vehicle for you to manifest these qualities. Your true work does not need to be action based—such as

“plant a hundred trees”—but rather an attitude or aspect you wish to bring into the world. For example, if my true work is “to love,” then every action that I take in the outer world will be an act of love. This could be anything from saying a loving thank-you to a waiter for refilling my water to tenderly watering the plants on my windowsill. All of these actions will come from the quality of love.

To find out what your true work is, the first step is to get still and silence any loud, judgmental voices that might be hounding you. Next, begin by asking yourself what you want more of in your life.

Do you want more peace? Compassion? Clarity? Love? Wisdom? Your true work is bringing out the qualities and experiences you are wanting into the world, and awakening your inner fire is a natural result of learning how to embody these qualities in all aspects of your daily life. Your true work is finding and nurturing those attributes to which your deepest self says, “Yes, this is what I am here to learn to do!”

When you remember that you are an artist, and life is your canvas, you focus on bringing the qualities of your true work into your outer work in the world. By focusing on the former, you are better able to stay centered, deeply present, and intimate with yourself in everything that you choose to undertake. When you reconnect to your true work, you can silence the voices of fear, being overwhelmed, and the

“not enough” gremlins and raise your inner fire in the process.

For example, my friend Linda’s true work is peace. She is deeply passionate about creating more peace on the planet. Her day job is as a sergeant in a correctional facility, which is not exactly a peaceful way to spend your days. But in every conversation she has with inmates, in every report she writes, and even in the occasional struggle with a coworker, she is conscious of how she can bring more peace into the interaction. When she and her coworkers disagree on something, she can choose to focus on peace and respond from a place of centeredness. She speaks from her heart, rather than feeling overwhelmed or defensive.

Or imagine a waitress going to work on her late-night shift. She may sometimes feel that her job isn’t fulfilling, but when our waitress friend gets clear on what her true work is, then serving customers becomes a playground for practicing what is at her core. If her true work is compassion, then every order she takes, every time she breaks a cup, every time someone leaves a messy table and no tip is an opportunity to bring in compassion: for herself and for others.

When you are focused on your true work, your inner fire burns brightly, and each moment is a precious gift. As you turn away from believing your

outer work is more important than your guiding true work, which comes from your inner voice, you begin to unweave the tangles and gunk that create heaviness, stress, and negativity.

So what is your true work? Don't worry about getting it "right," just pick a word that resonates with you the most. You can always change it later and add other qualities as you get more clarity

Here are some examples from myself and some of my students:

*Compassion. Love. Courage. Connection.*

*Adventure. Inspiration. Awakening.*

Each of these words is connected to a sense of expansion in the body. When you say these words out loud, you can actually feel your inner fire, your energy, being uplifted. So ask yourself, which word from our list or from your own heart gives you that feeling of vitality at the core of your being? You want the word or words that come up to represent your big-picture passion, something you want to bring through in everything you do.

Once you have identified that quality, I want you to say this out loud: "My true work is to bring \_\_\_\_\_ into everything I do."

Now, with that statement clear in your heart, ask yourself, "How can I bring this particular quality into

my activities and the situations I encounter throughout each day?” How will you practice this quality in traffic, at a board meeting, when your kids are fighting in the next room, when your dog throws up on your new carpet, at the office, at the grocery store, and at your grumpy in-laws’ dinner table? Feel free to write down any answers that come to you so that you can refer to them again later (maybe even when you’re *at* the grocery store and need a little reminder of how to reconnect with your inner work).

Next, let’s go the other way. Ask yourself what qualities or activities are standing in the way of you practicing your true work? Some common ones my students have shared include fear, gossip, self-criticism, greed, anger, anxiety, rushing things, trying to control others. Make a list of these things too, not to beat yourself up about them, but simply as a guide, so that when you notice yourself falling for any of these “traps,” you can bring your attention back to your true work.

Your true work is your gift to the world, but especially to yourself. Treat it with reverence, and don’t expect yourself to do it perfectly. Your goal here is to love the process and enjoy watching the bright blaze of your inner fire grow with every chance to practice your true work. As you continue to practice, this sacred quality shines brighter through all of your actions.



When you stay focused on bringing your true work to the world, *everything* can be an exploration, an adventure, or a learning moment. There is no place or situation that falls outside your true work. So whether you are cleaning the kitchen floor or giving a speech in front of a thousand people, you can always manifest your true work. This can seem like a tall order, but together we will explore many ways to bring your true work in every moment until it becomes your natural state of being.

As you begin to think about what your true work is and how you can embody it in every activity that you engage in, let yourself ponder the following questions, and journal your answers on a separate sheet of paper:

- What is stillness?
- What is faith?
- What is healing?
- What is sacred?
- What is gratitude?

Don't try and answer the question immediately, but instead take a few moments and let the answers bubble up from within you.

These questions present us with a chance to examine our relationship with our inner fire through

these lenses as we progress further in this process. By taking an inventory of how you relate to these words now, when you are just beginning this journey, you will have a baseline to start from as we move into deeper explorations. It will also be interesting to see if your answers to these questions change or expand by the time you reach the end of this book.



## YOUR TRUE WORK GIFTS

- Your true work is not what you are doing, it is how you are doing it.
- Each day is an opportunity to connect to the preciousness of now and begin again in a sacred way.
- When we balance our mind with our energy/ spirit, emotions, and physical body, we tune in to our inner wisdom.



## INNER FIRE EXPLORATIONS

### True Work Ceremony

Go find a place in nature to create an altar out of found objects: leaves, twigs, flowers, buds. Start by gathering your materials in silence, bringing all of your attention to the smells, sights, and sounds around you. Clear a circle of earth to sit in front of, and place a candle in the center to represent your true work.

You are invited to step into your circle, and let your true work ignite your inner fire. Visualize the relationship between the energy within you and your true work, and how, by consciously bringing your

true work into the world, the fire inside you burns more brightly.

Next, take four stones and place them in the four cardinal directions to represent your mind, energy, emotions, and physical body. Say any prayer you feel moved to voice.

*When you feel that your ceremony is complete, blow out the candle, but keep the fire burning within you!*

### Tracking Your Steps

For the next three or four days, track what thoughts and activities you put your energy into, include everything you do, from getting ready in the morning to preparing for work, from eating dessert to business meetings. Be curious and just notice what is happening, like a scientist gathering data.

You can use your current day planner/calendar to jot down what you do each day, or you can create a spreadsheet in increments of 15–30 minutes so you can explore your relationship to time and your inner fire throughout the day. Again, don't try and change anything, just gather data for yourself so you can learn more about your own habits and patterns.

Time	Activity	Energy Level	Feeling/ Experience
6:45 a.m.	woke up	low	sluggish
7 a.m.	breakfast	low	tired
7:15 a.m.	checked email	medium	overwhelmed
7:30 a.m.	drive to work	medium	lots of negative thoughts
7:45 a.m.	turned on music	high	better, more enthusiasm
8 a.m.	post office	medium	productive
8:15 a.m.	radio news	low	totally dampened my energy
8:30 a.m.	early to work	high	happy to have a half hour of quiet!
9 a.m.	phone calls	high	productive
9:15 a.m.	phone calls	high	productive
9:30 a.m.	meeting	low	really self-judgmental

It may feel tedious or tiresome to do this level of tracking, but it is a great way to get an overall map of what raises your energy level and what depletes it. Notice what excites you and what dampens you, where you feel bright and clear and where you feel smoky or sputtering. You'll also get a sense of what area of your life is the most challenging: your mind, emotions, or body.



- LESSON 3 -

# Clear Your Mind

*One's action ought to come out of an achieved stillness: not to be a mere rushing on.*

—D. H. Lawrence



I attended my first firewalk in 1990, on more of a whim than anything. My teacher at the time, Vicki Noble, mentioned to our circle that a friend of hers was hosting one and suggested we go. I was free that evening and the firewalk sounded interesting, so I signed myself up. I imagined it would be a unique experience, something to talk about and bring back to my circle, but I truly had no idea what I was getting myself into or how that first experience would change my life.

There were about forty women at the event, which was facilitated and led by the mama of the International Firewalking movement, Peggy Dylan. Peggy shared her life story and explained some of the science around firewalking, gifting us with many practical, spiritual stories and examples. Even though she went into great detail about what we should expect, it wasn't until Peggy invited us one at a time to rake out a large pile of soft, glowy, pumpkin-colored coals that I really began to grasp what was about to happen. I could feel the heat of the coals radiating from several feet away! They sparked and crackled—there was no denying it, these coals were *hot!* And she wanted us to put our bare feet on them, and walk on this stuff? Was she crazy?

We stood around the fire expectantly waiting. The first woman to walk the coals was the last person I

would have expected to lead the way. She was older (or at least seemed so to my twenty-four-year-old mind, when in reality she was probably only around fifty, which is my age now) with frizzy gray hair and a large brown poncho. She approached the fire, threw the poncho off her shoulders like a bullfighter, and crossed confidently, her bare feet crunching on the coals.

At first I couldn't believe it. She wasn't in pain, she wasn't burned, she didn't scream. She only marched resolutely to the other side of the bed of coals. My mind completely stopped. It became clear to me that I was witnessing the impossible becoming possible. Then others started walking, and our chanting and drumming grew louder and more celebratory. Suddenly I knew, without a doubt, that I could walk too. I found myself walking toward the coals. My mind was completely quiet, my body completely confident. Any doubts I held when we had first stood around the coals had dissipated, drifting away like smoke on a breeze. I knew I would walk across the coals and would not be burned. I stared at my bare feet as they pressed into the crunchy orange coals beneath me. I felt no heat or fear, only a sense of wonder. And then I was on the other side, laughing and crying and incredulous at what I had just done.

Peggy reminded us that one of the first things we learn as children is that fire *always* burns—so one

reason the firewalk is so powerful is because the first time you see someone stepping across 1,300-degree coals, whether you walk or not, that old belief suddenly breaks. The mind is baffled and every agreement you've made since then suddenly comes into question. If fire *doesn't* always burn, you begin to see all the other places in your life where you have allowed yourself to become limited by what you believed. To break free from one of the very first agreements that we make as children allows us the opportunity to examine and break with other agreements that no longer serve us.

And this brings me to the point of this story: the biggest block that stands between you and experiencing the life of your dreams, passionately pursuing your true work, and experiencing the flames of your own inner fire lies inside your own mind. Your mind is the only place where fear, anxiety, and being overwhelmed reside, and these are the biggest drains on our inner fire. It is the thoughts born from your mind that create these feelings of discomfort and unease, not any external source.

When I say this in my workshops, someone almost always challenges the assertion, saying something like, "Not in my case! It's my job, or my ex, or my past that is the cause of my stress, anxiety, and feeling overwhelmed, not my thoughts!" While we all have experienced traumatic moments in our lives

or are possibly in the midst of difficult life situations now, I would invite you to draw your attention even deeper. The events of the external world can give us something to rail against; however, it is not these events, but rather our internal reactions to them, that drain our energy. Put another way: it's the stories we tell ourselves about the events we experience that sap our strength rather than the events themselves.

That's why it's so important to understand the power of thoughts. They can either drain our vital energy or help to motivate us on the next step of our passionate journey toward our true work.

Take a moment to think about the last time someone said something and you got upset. Was it actually their words, the phonetic sounds coming out of their mouth, that triggered you? Or was it instead the thoughts generated as a result of these sounds? For example, assume someone on the street calls you fat. Your reaction may be to get upset. You begin to think, "That person thinks I'm fat. If I'm fat, I'm undesirable. If I'm undesirable, I'll never find love. If I don't have love, what's the point of living?" The more we fall prey to this cycle of negative thoughts, the more they embed in our beliefs and agreements. The word "fat" in and of itself is not a problem, but when we create negative thoughts or worse, beliefs, around the idea of "I'm fat," we become trapped within that negativity.

The truth is that thoughts are just thoughts, little flashes of activity inside the brain, and when we don't validate them, they are snuffed out just as quickly. As you get more practiced at paying attention to what is happening in your mind and clearing it, you get amazingly good at sorting out what is helpful from what is unhelpful. You can sift through your thoughts by identifying them as they arise: "This thought is not for me. Neither is this one. This is an old thought that I am letting go. This is a judgment. This is someone else's belief, not mine."

Another tool you can use, when you notice a thought, is to simply ask yourself, "Is this thought nourishing my inner fire or is it dampening it?" You take back your power and awaken your inner fire when you start to question your thoughts, rather than letting them drag you around like a puppy on a leash.

## **Finding the Stillness Within**

When our thoughts turn negative, they can quickly become our worst enemy instead of our best supporter, draining our internal energy in the process. Consequently, one of the most effective ways to revitalize our daily energy is to notice and clear our negative thought habits and tap into the *stillness* inside you.

For centuries wisdom holders, sages, gurus, and teachers from virtually all spiritual traditions

have been inviting humans to get still and listen to the silence within. In one form or another, the mystical element of spirituality asks us to turn off our thoughts, let silence permeate our minds, and be fully present in this moment.

But as anyone who has tried to do this can tell you, it isn't so easy—especially in today's fast-paced, dizzying digital-speed world.

The truth is that this stillness inside of you—or what is often called emptiness in other spiritual traditions and even by some scientists—is *the source* of your inner fire. This thesis may seem contradictory to those of us living in a Western society that often equates action with progress, but this has long been considered a core spiritual truth in shamanic teachings, Eastern religions, and Buddhist philosophy. For example, in the sacred Buddhist text the Heart Sutra, we are told, “Form itself is emptiness: emptiness itself is form.” In the Tao Te Ching, Lao Tzu writes that the Tao itself originated in emptiness. Returning to the Western world, the noted scientist and Nobel Prize-winner Albert Einstein agrees, writing “Everything is made of emptiness and form is condensed emptiness.”

What they refer to as emptiness, I am calling stillness. These words point to the same thing: the idea that there is an inexpressible still void inside all of us that is the core of our power, our energy.

In seeing that woman walk over fire, my mind stopped as I witnessed what I had previously believed impossible now become possible. What was left was stillness, and from this place of stillness I suddenly knew that I could walk across too. From this stillness came action, and the energy I found in this place of stillness came forward and propelled me to the fire and finally across it. It was this silencing of the mind, this communing with stillness or emptiness, that allowed me to touch the source of power and energy inside of me previously clouded by old agreements.

The good news is that you don't have to witness or experience a life-changing event like someone walking on fire in order to find your own inner stillness. It's always there, anytime you are willing to look for it. Like Glinda telling Dorothy that she always had the power to go home, we too have always had the power to find and return to this place of stillness. To begin, we must simply cultivate the skill of clearing our mind of thoughts.

In the Exploration section I have included some very specific exercises on ways to practice clearing your mind to find that inner stillness. This is a skill you will need to learn, and like any skill, it requires practice. Please remember that it is not enough to just read about finding the stillness within: you must put this book down and actually do it to receive

the benefits. That is how information can lead to transformation.

I recommend making time for these explorations every morning, as the benefits of starting your day by clearing your mind and tapping into your stillness are immense. Not only will you feel more grounded and focused, you will find that your mind actually performs better throughout the day. Through this practice, you are effectively raising your energy and consciously aligning with your highest good.

Although beginning the day this way is a good start, clearing your thoughts is not a once-a-day action, but a potent tool to reground and center yourself anytime you notice the negativity of anxiety, sadness, melancholy, etc., arising, not unlike washing your hands to clear them of dirt or germs. When you become adept at sweeping away negative thoughts, hidden doubts, and repetitive stories from your being, you create a wide-open channel for the brilliance within you.

An effective way to clear your thoughts in times of stress and anxiety is to take a moment (even one second can be enough) to get quiet and focus your attention on the question, “Where is the stillness here?” Clarity and stillness are always present, but can often get buried beneath the fear-based ramblings of your mind. Focusing your intent on finding



the stillness in any situation is a way to raise your energy and meet any perceived obstacle or challenge in the moment. For example, if I were having a disagreement or even an argument with my best friend and negative thoughts were beginning to cloud my mind and judgment, I would take a moment to ask myself, “Where is the stillness here?” From this place of stillness I am pausing my thoughts for a moment, and I will see clearly that this argument is not the end of our friendship (no matter what my fear-based thoughts may say), but rather a chance for us to grow in intimacy by being open and honest with each other about our feelings.

Believe me, I understand that this takes practice! I spent the first half of my life listening exclusively to my mind! So if you’re like me, the idea of finding the stillness within can feel unfamiliar, awkward, and confusing at first. This is why our intent is so important. The moment we focus our intent on finding stillness, our stress, anxiety, and sense of being overwhelmed begins to dissipate, and the flame of our inner fire burns brighter.

Even now, after years of practice, I have days when I have to redirect my mind over and over and over again, but I have learned to do so with patience and a smile on my face. “No, little mind, this way, toward the stillness,” I say. My mind protests, trying to tell me that it doesn’t even know what stillness is,

to which I sweetly remind it, “It’s the space between the thoughts, sweetheart. It’s the pause between each beat of your heart. It’s the calm in your bones. Keep listening.”

As you keep bringing your attention to the question “Where is the stillness here?” you will notice your breathing deepens. Your mind will start to quiet. You will feel more present in your body, and you will witness your emotions flow through you rather than activating anxiety and worry or leading you to experience unconscious reactions.

As you clear your mind of thoughts, you will literally be unplugging from fear, and as you direct your intent toward stillness, you will find you are opening yourself to a deeper sense of knowing, discernment, and awareness.

## **Child Mind, Elder Mind**

As children, our minds were often creative, curious, and exploratory. We looked at the world with wonder, and saw infinite threads of choice. We cranked out inventive ideas while oohing and ahing over newly discovered possibilities. This is why imagination and role-playing games were so fun for us as children; we weren’t tethered by thoughts that anything we played at had to be “realistic.”

If you observe a young child, you will notice that their thinking is often filled with vibrancy, fluidity, and wonder. They are not wasting energy worrying that they are not good enough, or feeling like they have to do something perfect in order to be accepted, or expressing any other manifestation of “not enough.” Instead, young children are just being themselves and enjoying each moment that is in front of them. They are playing, delighted, and utterly creative with whatever raw materials they find.

Next I'd like you to imagine the mind of a gentle, patient, and well-lived grandmother or grandfather. They see everything but say little. When they speak, their words are so wise that you wonder how they have come to be so perceptive. Their experience and lifelong training have carved away worry and doubt, and they have become as solid as deeply rooted oak trees. When in their presence, you feel completely seen through the prism of their huge and loving hearts.

Now, take a dash of playful child mind and a big scoop of wise elder mind. When you combine them, you have a mind that is innocent but well-lived, playful and wise, a mind that sees life through the eyes of curiosity and a connection with stillness. Imagine what it would feel like to have all of these qualities holding hands within you: childlike glee and excitement with grounded, loving, and patient vision.

When these two minds get mixed together, we can enjoy the best of both worlds. The *Child/Elder Mind* gives us the jubilation of a child with the patience of the elder, so when something happens that lights our inner fire, we find our child-self clapping her hands, exclaiming, “Yes, more of this!” By the same token, when something happens that dampens our fire with fear or confusion, our wise self can step in and say, “Don’t believe that fearful thought,” or “Pay attention, there is something deeper here to heal,” with all the patience and love you would expect from a gracious elder. The elder mind will remind you that fearful and judgmental thoughts alone are not the problem; *believing* those thoughts is what bogs us down.

By combining the curiosity of child mind and the wisdom and self-compassion of elder mind, you can pick out which thoughts are beneficial for you, the thoughts you want to expand on, and which thoughts you can simply let float on by.

The amazing thing is that as you connect more with your inner stillness, it will become easier to detach from *any* thoughts that arise in your mind. And you are left free to explore some of the underlying beliefs beneath the thoughts. As you witness the thoughts that dampen your fire as well as the thoughts that enliven it, you will begin to see these old beliefs

clearly. Once you shine the spotlight of awareness on each one, you will begin to release what is no longer true for you. I can tell you from personal experience that there is no greater freedom than divesting your mind of outdated beliefs, and your inner fire burns more brightly as a result.



## CLEAR MIND GIFTS

- Let the flame of your inner fire burn away any negative thoughts and fears.
- Keep turning your attention toward stillness.
- Tune in to child/elder mind to give you curiosity and compassion about your journey as you retrain your brain to overcome overwhelming thoughts.



## INNER FIRE EXPLORATIONS

### Starting Your Day with Still Mind

Take a few minutes every morning and consciously focus your intent on inner stillness—clearing your mind of what happened yesterday or what may be happening later today or tomorrow, etc. This is easier to do if you can find an environment that fosters outer stillness, so that you can feel the stillness both within and around you. Ask yourself, “Where is the stillness here?”

Taking a few minutes every morning to be consciously still can have an amazing impact on the rest of your day. As you move deeper into this practice, you will truly begin to feel the difference between the

days you start with a stillness practice and those you do not. By stepping into stillness, you will be focused and energized for the rest of your day as opposed to feeling sluggish or frazzled without it. Start with 2–3 minutes at first and work your way up to 8–10 minutes each morning.

### Finding Stillness in Moments of Stress

At some point, you are going to need to access stillness in moments of fear, being overwhelmed, and self-doubt. One way to prepare for this is to look for stillness in moments and places where we may not usually expect it, e.g., at a busy mall or restaurant, an amusement park, or in the car with the radio blasting. Find a noisy or busy spot, and ask yourself, “Where is the stillness here?” The stillness inside you exists even in those places where fear, doubt, or being overwhelmed seem to be blaring, but it takes a little more intentional focus to find it. No matter what is happening outside, you can always practice dropping deeper into the stillness that lies beneath the noise. Once you hone this skill, loud places can actually become a signal for you to call in the wisdom of elder mind in order to access the stillness within.

Another way to prepare to seek your stillness in moments of stress is to use the Tracking Exercise from lesson one.

Take an inventory of your thoughts over time, and notice when you were fearful, stressed-out, overwhelmed, or just plain beating yourself up. These were moments when finding your stillness could have helped you the most. Looking back over these past events, notice if there are any instances when you found your stillness and note how this benefited you. Get curious about where you lost your focus, or energy, or a sense of connection. Notice what happened with your inner fire in those moments, and then focus on what was going on in your mind.

By reviewing this information, the next time you find yourself in one of these unpleasant moments, you can use it to turn your awareness inward and find your stillness. In stressful situations it can be helpful to have your previous experiences as a guide and to look for the stillness where you may have found it in a similar situation. As you do this, you may notice that your mind is starting to race instead of dropping inward. When this happens, simply bring your intent back to stillness. Keep asking yourself, “Where is the stillness here?”

When you first begin this practice, it can be extremely difficult to bring your focus back to your stillness in moments of stress. But if you experience even a fraction of a second of stillness, celebrate it. Keep reminding yourself that you are building a new muscle—the muscle of bringing your awareness



toward stillness rather than fixating on the familiar noises that come with stress and worry.

Notice what answers or ideas come into your mind from this place of stillness. The beauty of this practice is that stillness connects you directly to your inner wisdom, which can often give you answers that were previously unavailable to your thinking mind.

If no answers come, then redirect your attention to curiosity about how your stillness can support you in getting comfortable being in the mystery of not knowing. It may be difficult, but sometimes no answer is the only answer we need, as it requires us to sit with the discomfort and frustration of not knowing. Being connected with your stillness provides peace and acceptance that everything is working out perfectly no matter how it looks on the outside.

### The Mind Purge

Along with learning to move toward stillness there are also physical actions you can take in order to de-clutter your mind. Your practice will be twofold: attending your inner stillness and physically clearing your mind through *mind purging*.

I learned about mind purging from the time management book *Getting Things Done* by David Allen. Allen explains that one of the mind's many jobs is to remind you about what you have to do, ad nauseam

if necessary. If you don't take action on what you have to do or write it down, the mind jumps into alarm mode, popping up every few minutes (or few seconds!) to try to keep you from forgetting by saying it over and over again.

What's worse is your mind doesn't have a sense of time appropriateness. So even if it's the middle of the night, the mind will still pipe up to remind you of that thing you have to do next week. The mind doesn't say, "Well, I won't give my body-self this thought because there's nothing she can do about it right now. Just sleep, dear one!" Instead, it says, "Oh my gosh, I remembered something! We have to do it right now! Wake up, wake up!"

You see, for our minds, when we have a thought about something we need to do, it's often connected to a sense of anxiety or a belief that we have to take action. And it has to happen right now, even if we are in a place where it is impossible to take action—such as the middle of the night, or in an important work meeting, or at our child's ballet recital.

So David suggested something called a mind purge. Here's how it goes: Gather every to-do item that is rolling about inside of your head and write it down. Do a huge brain dump and write down everything that you think you should be doing: all of the things you want to do, all of the things that should have been done yesterday, and all of the things you

dream of doing one day. Write them all down. Carry a pen with you, and if you think of something to add, write it down.

Everything that is in your head or scattered on your desk or around your house will become one big list. You can sort the list later—or think about how you’re going to take the actions. The first step of your brain dump is simply to get it all in one place. As soon as the to-do item is on paper, your brain is relieved of its pressing job of remembering to remember it. Instead of listening to its cries of, “Wake up, wake up, we have to do this!” you can simply reply, “Sweetie, we have it written down. It’ll be taken care of.”

I have found that this can be a really fun *and* a really uncomfortable process. The fun part is that you’re compiling everything; the difficult part is that you’re compiling *everything*. This most likely means your list is going to be *huge*. This list is going to include the mundane (like buy catfood) as well as your dreams and aspirations (like that fantasy you have of traveling to a foreign country and staying a year). Write out everything that is in your head, and add things that are written on a little corner of napkin that you stuck in your purse or you typed on your computer. Don’t edit or try to figure out how you’re going to handle each item, just add everything that arises into your list. This practice is just to release the mind of its duty to make you remember each of these items.

While it can be overwhelming at first, this is a really beautiful way to clear the mind because once the mind knows that these things have been captured on paper (or computer), it can let go of them. When your mind trusts you to have the item written down and knows that you will take action on it, your thoughts become quiet. So, in the process of keeping up-to-date lists we are really rewiring our relationship with our mind.

I sometimes envision the mind as this really nervous worried person constantly biting their fingernails, reminding and nagging me, because it worries that I'm not going to remember everything. To shift this we must rewire our relationship with our mind to say, "Okay sweetie, I've got it handled, and you don't have to worry about that."

As we start taking care of what needs to get done on our list, the mind begins to rely on this new way of being. The result is that the mind calms down, becoming less nervous and frantic about its internal to-do lists over time, making it much easier to clear our minds throughout the day.



- LESSON 4 -

## Find Your Faith

*The agreements that come from fear require us to expend a lot of energy, but the agreements that come from love help us to conserve energy and even gain extra energy.*

—don Miguel Ruiz

While there are many aspects of spirituality as it relates to your inner fire, one I have found very useful in raising energy is faith. I know that in today's society, the word *faith* often comes with baggage; for some of us faith is already a positive tool, while for others it has various negative connotations. We all know that some religious groups have used faith as a weapon, and some members of our scientific communities view it as childish nonsense.

So before we go any further, I'd like to ask that you set aside your current ideas about faith, whether positive or negative, because I am going to ask you to look at faith in a new way.

Webster's Dictionary defines faith as having "complete trust or confidence in someone or something." Looking at it from this perspective, the truth is that almost all of us have faith and put our faith in things or people every single day. For example, we flip the light switch with faith that the lights will turn on. We dial a phone number and have faith our loved one will answer. We rise in the morning, with faith the sun will rise too.

When viewed in this context, it seems we all have a relationship with faith already, even if we don't recognize it as such. In this lesson, we will use faith as a powerful tool to raise our inner fire, specifically when we consciously connect to its deepest aspect.

Unlike the many things we unconsciously put faith in each day, your *deepest faith* is a conscious choice. It's where you get to choose what you want to connect with. For me, I choose to connect with what I think of as a power greater, deeper, or broader than myself. This type of faith isn't about fostering hierarchy, or shunning responsibility, it's the simple admission that the world is bigger than I am, and that it is working for my benefit.

When I connect to my deepest faith, I *choose* to look to something larger than my narrowly focused day-to-day self, and I *choose* to believe that this power is engineering circumstances for my ultimate good. It can be difficult for many of us to believe that there is a greater power on our team and orchestrating events to lead us to our highest good. If you are feeling resistance to this idea, that's okay too. Your deepest faith doesn't have to be a divine presence; it can be as simple as having faith that that sun will rise tomorrow just as it did today. For the sake of experimentation, I invite you to momentarily set aside your resistance in order to explore the connection between your deepest faith and your inner fire.

Next, I'd like you to get quiet for a moment, take a deep breath, and ask yourself one simple question: "Where do I want to put my deepest faith today?" I've listed some examples below. See which of them, if any, resonate within your being:



- I have faith that everything is unfolding as it should.
- I have faith that the Universe is coordinating circumstances for my ultimate good.
- I have faith that I will find a way to overcome obstacles in my life.
- I have faith that my angels, ancestors, and spirit guides are watching over me.
- I have faith in the wisdom of my heart.
- I have faith in God.
- I have faith in Mother Earth.
- I have faith in Life.

As for me, sometimes in life's roughest moments, this is all I am capable of believing:

- I have faith that I'll recover my faith.

Now once you have answered the question of where you want to experiment with placing faith, here is what makes connecting to your deepest faith different than simply having faith as society has taught us. For most people in our society, faith is about belief—it's a mental activity only. But the faith I am talking about is more than just a mental process; it is also

about *feeling* your faith, rather than thinking through it or containing it only within your mind. It's a conscious decision to direct the energy in your body, your inner fire, to connect with a power greater than you.

I often say that the mind doesn't need to "believe in" faith for it to be effective because your mind may have all sorts of opinions, doubts, and negative beliefs about faith. But when you feel into your faith, you are making a deeper, stronger connection to it. This is a difficult concept to describe in words, because the act of feeling into your faith is not something we have a vernacular for in today's society. But it's a process of stepping beyond your thinking mind, moving into your body, and letting your body *feel* the connection. This can be a tricky thing to master, but two very helpful tools we all have for feeling into our deepest faith are *our breath* and *our imagination*. For example, take a deep breath in and feel the support of whatever you choose to put your faith into (Mother Earth, God, the belief that everything is happening as it should, etc.), and as you breathe out, imagine that you are consciously releasing any fear, anxiety, or worry about the future or regret of the past. As you do this, try and feel your inner energy. It may give you an electric or tingling sensation in your chest or core; it may feel like a loosening of your shoulders as you settle into your energy; or it may feel like something else entirely. Whatever the case, if you look deeply,

you'll find a sensation that is present in your physical body as well as in your mind. This is how you know that you're beginning to feel into it.

Taking a conscious breath here will stimulate your nervous system and slow all other systems down, which will help you be more fully present and better able to feel into the power of your deepest faith.

When we are overwhelmed, stressed, and anxious, we aren't connecting our inner fire to our deepest faith. Instead, we are putting our faith into the tasks in front of us, in our to-do list, and in the roles we play in the world rather than in our true work. We are putting our faith in transient things and trying to control their behavior.

I recommend connecting to your deepest faith every morning. I do this right along with clearing my mind to give me a solid, tranquil foundation for my day and to foster that connection with my clear mind and deepest faith no matter what tasks I take on. When I get caught up in feeling overwhelmed, stressed, or the desire to control things, it's particularly helpful for me to take a few moments to practice this exercise again and come back to my deepest faith. We will look at specific exercises to do this at the end of this chapter and later in the book.

## The Opposite of Faith: Control and Busyness

It's amazing to me that one of the most common habits that humans share gets so little attention, and that is our constant attempts to control things. This pattern is so prolific that most of us don't even recognize we are doing it, and society accepts it as normal. But upon closer examination, our desire to control things—or placing our internal and external demands on how the world should be—is in fact the opposite of faith. If faith is having total confidence in someone or something, then trying to control external events and circumstances says that we don't have confidence that these things are going to work out for the best and we need to intervene in an attempt to force the outcome we want.

To be clear, this doesn't mean that we don't try and create things that we want to see in the world, but there is a subtle line between expending effort to create what we want in a situation and attempting to control a situation and *force* the outcome we desire. And even though it may be an understated distinction on the outside, the difference we feel on the inside is amazing, because trying to control things is an energy drain and practicing our deepest faith is an energy enhancer.

The truth is that anytime you find yourself suffering, ninety-nine percent of the time it's because you are trying to control some person or situation, in a

subtle (or not so subtle) attempt to achieve a desired outcome.

When we say to ourselves things like, “I must get this,” or “he/she must do that,” or “this situation should happen like this,” then we create a tenseness inside ourselves that zaps our energy. Compare this to when you tell yourself, “I’m going to do my best in this situation, but I know that whatever outcome occurs is for my highest good.” The latter keeps our energy intact, as we have committed to pulling ourselves into alignment with the world rather than fighting to make the world align with us. This is the mind-set we have when we connect with our deepest faith.

Here’s the kicker: when we get engrossed in the daily activities of life, our attention can often shift away from our inner fire, and when we forget about our inner fire, we place our happiness in the outcome of external activities. This engrossment in things outside ourselves is what I call *busyness*, and it’s often the place where we shift away from our deepest faith and pick up the habit of trying to control things. This habit is a persistent one, even for those of us who have been on the path for many years, but if we can catch ourselves at the busyness stage, we can avoid the suffering caused by trying to control external forces.

For example, I had an experience earlier today that serves as a good reminder. I am currently in the process of launching my recently released book *The*

*Warrior Goddess Way* while simultaneously writing *Awaken Your Inner Fire*. So I'm getting to practice what I am writing about as I write it!

This morning I was checking social media every few minutes to see how the launch was going, replying to emails with questions about my teaching business, and also attempting to work on this chapter. As you can imagine, I was having a hard time focusing on any one task. I began to feel overwhelmed by it all, and then the following thoughts arose in my mind: "This launch better go well! I've got so many other things to do! I'm not going to get it all done, I'm not doing enough!" I also noticed that behind these thoughts was an old belief that I am not enough.

*Noticing these thoughts was my cue*, and I realized that I was becoming so busy trying to do too many things at one time that as a result I was beginning to want to control the outcome. I wasn't centered in myself and what my true work is; rather, I had all my focus on the outside. I knew from experience that this meant it was time for a reset, and so I took a deep breath and looked for a way to release my sense of busyness and desire to control.

I decided to go for a walk outside and ground myself in nature. As I walked the trail in the forest behind my house, I reviewed what I had been telling myself all morning and noticed how I had become focused on the outcome rather than trusting that all is

unfolding as it should. I stopped walking and found a place to nestle myself between some large rocks. I made a conscious decision to move out of this place of busyness and to connect with my deepest faith.

As I sat down among those rocks, I quieted down and began to feel into my deepest faith. I began to repeat these phrases over and over in my mind, focusing on the feelings they generated in me as I did so:

*“I have faith that everything is unfolding as it should.”*

*“I have faith that everything is perfect.”*

*“I have faith that I am enough.”*

After a few minutes of this I felt much more grounded. I went back to work, but my focus was restored, and I was no longer carrying the weight of the world on my shoulders.

As we all know, certain situations in life do call for deadlines and demands, and these things have the potential to drain our energy if we let them. So our goal is to become more centered rather than scattered as we encounter them. The trick is that when we keep our focus on our internal faith rather than the external things and outcomes beyond our control, we become far more effective and happier in the process.

An effective way to stay both present and out of busyness is similar to something we've already covered: asking questions of ourselves in moments of

unease. Previously, you were invited to ask yourself, “What is my true work here?” in times of stress or as you performed a role in the world, with the aim of bringing yourself back to the centeredness of your true work. In the last lesson we asked, “Where is the stillness here?” in situations where our minds were ready to spin out of control.

Questioning is also a quick way to consciously reconnect to your deepest faith. In times of high activity when you feel the buzz of busyness gaining momentum, ask yourself, “What is my deepest faith in this moment?” as I did when I took my nature walk. Doing so can calm your spirit and keep you grounded in the truth that everything will be okay.

Taken together, questions such as these act like mantras and pointers that show you the way back to yourself over and over again. Using them effectively can fan the flames of your inner fire as you face obstacles throughout your day.





## BEYOND BUSYNESS GIFTS

- Notice when you start to get busy and fall into the habit of trying to control things.
- Choose where you want to put your faith and feel into it.
- Repeat these two steps as often as you need to.



## INNER FIRE EXPLORATIONS

### Visualizing Ease

With this visualization we will explore the feeling of a world without busyness, where we turn to our faith, rather than control, in times of anxiety.

What would your days look like if you were not busy? Take a mini-retreat in your mind right now. Strip away all of the things in your world that cause a sense of busyness, like emails, work projects, your to-do lists at home, keeping up with your kids, cleaning your house, etc. Imagine you can shed any beliefs that cause you to stay busy in order to avoid your feelings or so that you appear a certain way to others. These beliefs can be anything from a lack of self-worth, fears of not being enough, or the classic “I

must work to be a good valuable human.” Can you let yourself relax into not doing?

Dream into living a full year without any sense of busyness. What would you do with your time? How would you interact with other people? How would you feel about yourself? Close your eyes and deeply explore this life beyond busyness.

Now, keeping this vision of life beyond busyness alive in your body, practice bringing this state of non-busyness that you are feeling into your present or current life situation. Imagine that you have the time and energy to accomplish what you want to accomplish. There is no need to rush or push yourself. There is space to have a cup of tea with a friend or work on a creative project you have been dreaming of starting. You take action in an unhurried, spacious way. Even if there are many different activities in your day, you are present with each one. And you are confident, relaxed, and flow gracefully from activity to activity.

Now let go of this fantasy completely and return to the present. Bring the sense of “non-busyness” back with you into this moment.

You want to use this visualization as a touchstone, not as something to compare to your current experiences. It isn’t a yardstick for you to measure yourself against or to make you feel frustrated that things are

not different in your life. The feeling state of releasing busyness that you tapped into is an opportunity for you to open to new ways of being in the world. Now you know what you are moving toward. Be excited about possibilities!

### Mantra Practice

Take a moment at lunch or midday every day for the next three to four days and repeat the sentences below. Say them quietly but out loud, perhaps sneaking into a bathroom stall if you're at work, and then notice how you feel the rest of your day when you do this.

*I have faith that everything is unfolding as it should.*

*I have faith that everything is perfect.*

*I have faith that I am enough.*

As you say the words, really practice feeling your faith. You might want to anchor the words into your body by touching your heart or putting a hand on your belly as you speak out loud. Keep bringing the feeling of faith into an experience by really finding the energy of faith in your body.

- LESSON 5 -

## Embrace Your Emotions

*As my sufferings mounted I soon realized that there were two ways in which I could respond to my situation—either to react with bitterness or seek to transform the suffering into a creative force. I decided to follow the latter course.*

—Martin Luther King Jr.

In the West, we are often taught to separate ourselves from our emotions, and we overuse our logical mind in order to be “efficient” and “effective.” Emotions are viewed as liabilities that reduce our productivity and get in the way of our work. Besides that, the difficult emotions, the ones we don’t like, make us uncomfortable. Isn’t that reason enough to avoid them altogether?

In our journey to awaken our inner fire, we need to understand the relationship between our inner energy and our emotions. This interplay of emotions and energy is something we have all experienced many times in our lives, but it isn’t something we are always aware of.

For instance, why is it that we can often feel so much better, even energized, after a good cry? Similarly, a belly-laugh attack can also leave us pumped up and ready to go. In both cases, our renewed energy is due to the connection between releasing emotions and our inner fire. I call this type of emotional release an instance of *allowing emotional flow*. We repress our emotions instead of letting ourselves feel them so often that the river of our emotions gets backed up, as though a dam had been set up in it. This doesn’t feel good, to start, and can easily lead to our getting overwhelmed or outbursts of stress or frustration. But when we allow our emotions to flow and feel them as they arise—even the negative ones—we unblock the

emotional dam, which in turn allows our inner fire to burn brightly as well.

This begs the question, what happens to our inner fire when we dam up our emotions? My sense is you already know the answer: we feel drained, because instead of employing this free-flowing energy to further our true work, we have been using it up with stuffing, containing, and carrying around these heavy emotions. Over time, we can collect a lifetime of heavy emotions without fully realizing the impact they are having on our inner fire.

Imagine wearing a big backpack filled with all of the unexpressed emotions you've collected over the course of your life. Some of these you may have consciously put in the backpack, like when you said to yourself, "I don't want to feel this," and pushed something down. Others were unconsciously added, perhaps because you didn't understand what you were feeling at the time or you simply didn't know how to express the emotion properly. Some of these emotions come from way back, and without realizing it you have been carrying them around for many years—like when your father walked out of your life when you were seven, or your refusal to shed tears after a classmate said you were ugly when you were a child, or even the immense love you felt for your high school classmate that you shut down because it was never requited.

These emotions haven't gone away, even though you may not think about them regularly. What I've found is that they can be reactivated in our daily life when new situations trigger them, even though we often aren't conscious of the connection.

For instance, I have a friend whose father died unexpectedly when she was just a child. She remembers not knowing what to do with the many emotions that she felt at the time, partly because she was raised in a family that didn't often talk about or express their feelings. Now, as an adult with children of her own, she noticed that when she watched children's movies where a parent dies (animated films like Disney's *The Lion King* or *Finding Nemo*), she would begin to sob uncontrollably. You don't have to be Sigmund Freud to see the connection. She carried these emotions with her for almost thirty years, but it wasn't until she was sitting down with her own children to watch these movies that they were triggered and caused this reaction in her. When we discussed it, she realized that she hadn't shared much of her pain when her father died, and instead had tried to be "the strong one" for other members of her family. Through our exploration together, she realized that she had been holding on to an old belief of "being strong means not crying or expressing feelings," and was able to consciously rewrite it into a new belief of "I am strong when I express my feelings." She could

cry if need be and understand that doing so was actually showing her strength and a much better use of her energy than trying to stuff those emotions down for another thirty years.

In a less obvious instance, another student of mine noticed how he always had an emotionally charged reaction when he felt “accused” of doing something that he didn’t do. (He also noticed how he had a tendency to interpret questions as accusations.) In addition, he felt a strong need to defend anyone he saw being wrongly accused and would get very upset and angry at news stories where people were released from jail after a prior erroneous conviction was overturned (as sometimes happens with DNA evidence).

At one of our meetings, he shared with me how as a child he was wrongly accused of disobedience by his parents and was severely punished and humiliated for it. Because he never felt heard and was told his feelings were wrong, he stuffed these emotions down and tried to forget it ever happened. As an adult, he initially didn’t think that this event had left an impact on him, but as we went back and discussed it in detail, he saw how these previously trapped emotions were impacting his current life.

While looking to our formative years is a useful place to start for any old emotions we are still carrying around, many of us have much more recent examples of this same type of stuffing.



For example, one of the women I work with, Anne, noticed herself getting irritated with one of her coworkers. She tried to be patient and clear with him, but some days she found herself being critical of him for no real reason. Then one day, she yelled at him for missing a low-priority deadline. His face fell, and she felt guilty and surprised by her outburst.

When Anne called me and asked for help, I invited her to look deeper. “What about your coworker is upsetting you? Could there be an emotion that you are avoiding or have buried inside of yourself?” She started to describe how she really disliked needy people and wanted everyone around her to be strong. She felt that her coworker was leaning on her too much. With that, she took in a sharp inhale and paused.

“My husband died last year,” she said, “and I made an agreement with myself to no longer need or miss him. I’ve just been forcing myself to be productive and strong.” And then, as she began to cry, she said, “I’ve never let myself really grieve, because I don’t want to feel needy.”

“Can you give yourself permission to grieve for your loss and to miss and need him?” I asked her. “It may be a scary and uncomfortable feeling now, but I promise it will move through you and on the other side you’ll have more peace and presence.”

Anne later reported that after this realization, she began to open the door, invite in her true emotions,

and let them flow. And even though this process was intense, she found more clarity and compassion once she had freed all the energy she was using to withhold her grief.

“I was so afraid I would not be able to stop crying if I let myself miss my husband. But the opposite has happened. Releasing the emotion made it so I am not crying on the inside all the time, and because of this I now feel I have an ally in my coworker rather than seeing him as a nuisance.”

As these examples demonstrate, when we stuff down or otherwise don't release our emotions fully, they will reemerge in situations where they don't belong, often provoking us to react unconsciously. In addition, this stuffing of our emotions takes a lot of energy, even if we don't realize it. Our inner fire can't burn brightly because our inner energy is already being used elsewhere in upholding this unconscious containing of our emotions. We don't often make the connection between the two, but as we learn to become aware of and notice our emotions, we can work to clear them, which in turn will free up our energy to take on new tasks in line with our true work.

## **Noticing and Releasing Emotions**

All of us have experienced painful and even traumatic events in our lives: the death of a loved one, a major

breakup or divorce, violence, illness, financial upheavals, etc. I'd like you to take a few moments to bring any events that have affected your life to your conscious attention, as we will now look back on them from the perspective of what unresolved feelings you might be holding on to around these circumstances and how they affect your inner fire. Many of my students' have an initial gut reaction to say that they "have fully dealt with these emotions," but on closer examination that's not always the case. It's my experience that even those past experiences that we have dealt with again and again can still arise from time to time, so knowing how to become more astute at spotting them and learning how to let those emotions flow through us appropriately are vitally important, even when it's an issue we feel we have already overcome.

What are some of your own traumatic life experiences? How did you feel at the time? Do you have any heavy emotional baggage you are carrying with you as a result of these past experiences? Do you ever notice them getting triggered by unrelated events in your present life? Also consider this, as you move through the world and experience events that provoke unwanted emotions inside you (things like sadness, fear, or shame), do you have a tendency to repress these emotions in an attempt to not feel them?

Take a few minutes to write out the answers to these questions and really feel the emotions,

reviewing what these instances bring up inside you. It's important to identify and write out words for the feelings, as this will help you to better release them. For instance, I feel "bad" is a good start, but it is also very general. Dig deeper and see what other feelings are there: guilt, shame, remorse, fear, betrayal, powerlessness, abused, attacked, sadness, and grief are all examples of words that can help you identify and express a feeling accurately, which is a big step toward releasing it. We will look further at ways to release these identified feelings in the exercises at the end of this lesson.

Many of us may not be able to pinpoint the origin of certain feelings as easily as the examples I have listed here, and that's okay. You don't need to know exactly what caused these feelings to accumulate in order to clear them. Being conscious of and releasing feelings as they arise in the present moment are what will, over time, lead to the unblocking of old, stagnant, or frozen emotions. Taking these emotions out of your proverbial backpack will free up your inner fire, and you will find yourself experiencing more joy in your life as a result.

The important point here is that as you start to *embrace* your emotions rather than stuff them down or ignore them, you keep your inner fire vibrant and free. Ignoring and otherwise squelching your emotions doesn't make them go away. The more you

load unwanted emotions into your backpack, the more inner energy you'll have to use to keep them at bay. Over time, the effects of doing this are feelings of heaviness, general melancholy, or dis-ease people don't realize are caused by their repressed emotions.

There are other fantastic benefits we experience when we learn to open ourselves with grace and embrace our emotional flow. Once you've created some inner space, you'll see how your emotional body becomes one of your best assets for creating magic in your outer world.

## **Freeing Your Emotions Creates Space for Intuition**

What I have discovered is that there is an amazing correlation between an emotional body in flow and intuition. This is one of the fabulous benefits of attending to your emotional body: not only will you become more adaptable and filled with more energy and strength, you will also be more attuned to the subtleties of your intuition. When we spend our energy stuffing down emotions, we aren't able to use those emotions as a guide and teacher, which is the essence of intuition. That's why when we experience our intuition, we often say, "I've got a *feeling* about this . . ."

Your emotions are a vital component of learning to

move into actions that are connected with the wisdom of your inner knowing.

In other words, when you shift from worry to your innate emotional intelligence, you tap into magic.

The term *magic* is used here to express the manifestation of the unexpected, or something that is beyond the mind's capacity to grasp: "It was just like magic!"

As a child you were probably intimate with magic. As children, we often have invisible "magical" friends, and our curious, open minds see possibility rather than limitations. A childlike sense of wonder enhances magical moments, while a rigid, logical focus separates us from magic.

I have experienced this type of magic many times throughout my life, but a recent example occurred while I was working on the book launch for *The Warrior Goddess Way*. I had a huge list of people to call about the book tour I was doing, and I wasn't sure where to start. Immediately I could feel anxiety and overwhelm starting to surface as I looked at this list.

My logical mind jumped in and said, "Time to buckle down! We have a lot to do here! Start at the beginning and work your way through the list." I could feel the overwhelming heaviness and the "not enough" gremlins: I won't have enough time, there is too much, and I am not enough. I noticed how this reminded me of my emotions during my time at

Berkeley. So I closed my eyes and centered myself, allowing my emotions to flow. When I opened my eyes and looked down at the list again, one of the names popped out at me, and I felt a deep knowing in my being.

*Call Kathy now.*

I opened my eyes and looked at the clock. Kathy was the editor of a magazine I wanted to have an article in, and our time zones were such that this meant it was only 7 a.m. for Kathy.

“I can’t call Kathy now: it is too early!” my logical mind said in response.

*Call Kathy now*, the knowing came again, from a place of calm, quiet presence.

“It’s 7 a.m. You are not supposed to call people before 9 a.m.,” my mind countered.

*Call Kathy now.*

My logical mind was strenuously objecting, because if I took the action my emotional body was telling me to take, I feared that Kathy would think I was being rude. I had already been trying to reach Kathy unsuccessfully for a full month. This suggestion also rankled the perfectionist in me, who wanted to start at the top of the list and work down in alphabetical order. However, my emotional body continued telling me to take this action through this sense of steady knowing. I picked up the phone and called Kathy.

To my logical mind's complete surprise, Kathy answered the phone, was delighted to hear from me, and within five minutes we had agreed to create both an article and an event. My inner being knew that this was the power of intuition at work.

To find ease and flow in your life requires listening to the nudges and insights of your cleared emotional body, which is your connection to magic.

## **Your Emotions and Your True Work**

When you free your emotions, they can become a wonderful tool for finding and staying in touch with your true work. When something just “feels right,” despite what the logical mind may say about it, then you have tapped into a wisdom that is bigger and more powerful than thought alone.

Tuning in to our emotions can stoke the flames of our inner fire by showing us what's really important. For example, let's say you are in a situation where you are in the process of choosing between two jobs or career paths. Your logical brain may tell you to “take the high-paying job with more security and long-term growth potential,” but your emotions are drawing you to the one that makes you feel good on the inside. A friend recently asked me what would make me feel totally abundant in my life. I started thinking about the



“normal” things most of us strive for: a house, a new car, and/or more money in the bank. Those felt good to imagine, but I intuitively sensed there was something more. I got quiet and asked myself again: “What would make you feel abundant?” And the answer came immediately as a feeling: I would feel abundant if I devoted more of my time to a nonprofit organization that gave back to others. My physical body relaxed and my emotional body did a happy dance, because I was aligning with my heart and my true work, and not the strictly logical thoughts in my head.

Aligning our emotional body with our true work has surprisingly wonderful outcomes, but the trick is to stay open to the answer, without pushing your own expectations of what you believe or want the answer to be. For example, a friend of mine really wanted to quit her government job and become a massage therapist. She felt her true work was service. But whenever she thought about leaving her job, she felt scared and overwhelmed. At first she judged herself for being afraid of taking a leap into a new career field. She decided she wanted just to push herself through her emotions.

We talked this decision over for a while, and as we did, I asked her, “What does your emotional body need in order to focus on your true work?”

Her immediate response was, “Stability.”

“Great. Does it feel stable for you to quit your job right now?”

“No,” she told me. “But shouldn’t I be fighting for my true work? Won’t I be letting myself down if I stay in my current job?”

“Listen to your body and emotions,” I urged her. “What is true here?”

As she let go of her thoughts about what she *should* do next, and settled into feeling her emotions, she reconnected with a sense of peace. “I need to be in service to myself first,” she said, “And get to a place where I feel more stable and secure inside of myself and have more money in my savings account, so that I can support myself as I transition into my true work when I feel ready. My current job is perfect for that. So by staying in my job for now, I *am* fulfilling my true work!”

It wasn’t the answer that she thought she would get, but remember there are no “right” answers for life’s many questions. The only true answers arise from a loving alliance with your emotional body and your true work.

As we open our emotional bodies and allow healing, magical flow stokes our inner fires to burn even more brightly. The bottom line here is emotions themselves are a form of energy, and when we dam them up, we trap these emotions inside of us, where they play havoc on the primal energy that is our inner fire.



## YOUR EMOTIONAL FLUIDITY GIFTS

- Reconnecting to our emotional body at work and play is vital to our inner fire.
- Stagnant, frozen, or flooding emotions keep us stuck; clearing the past opens us up to feel our emotional wisdom.
- A clear emotional body opens the door for magic and allows ease to flow through us.



## INNER FIRE EXPLORATIONS

### Emotional Healing

Here are some things you can do to get your emotional energy flowing. Take the list of feelings you made earlier in this lesson and try some of the techniques below to release them.

#### Talk out loud

Looking in a mirror, or talking to yourself in the car or on a walk, express what you want to let go of by saying it out loud. Pretend you are speaking to the other people involved, if applicable, or discuss with yourself the ways in which you have been holding

back. Set an intention to use your words to let go of the ways you aren't true to yourself and to embrace emotional honesty, inside and out.

### Sing

Crank up the radio in your car or download your favorite songs from high school. Put on headphones and go for a walk in nature. Belt it out! Practice singing as loudly as you can with the intent of clearing any blocks to expression. Have fun!

### Make animal noises

This is an unconventional way to move through old or stuck emotions, but it really works. Think about a feeling word you have written down and then make a sound that you feel corresponds to it. For example, if you are angry, hurt, ashamed, or feeling guilty, try growling, grunting, screeching . . . *grrrrrrr*. . . Exaggerate your facial movements, open your mouth wide, and let the animal out! Try other sounds for other feelings. There is no wrong way to do this.

### Acting out your emotions

Go for a long walk someplace private and make exaggerated facial expressions while you feel and express

different emotions. Scrunch up your face and throw your arms up in the air as you feel anger. Open your mouth in ecstatic surprise. Let the feeling of a broken heart move across your face and through your body. What does fear feel like when it is blown up into large gestures? Let your face and body show it. What about love? Jealousy? Frustration? Hopelessness? Excitement? Keep moving between different emotional states, intensifying your movements and expressions. At first it may feel awkward, but keep at it and soon you'll notice that it can bring you more fluency in the language of your own emotions.

### Be creative

It takes a creative spirit to release stagnant or stuck emotions and to lovingly take down the old dam that's causing the river of your emotions to overflow. Be open to colorful ways to unload the old backpack.

- A few creative ways to move anger: Find a safe place to break old plates. (Wear eye protection and take other reasonable safety measures!) Break glass at a recycling bin. (Just as above, be sure to put your safety first.)

- Fill paper milk cartons with water and freeze. Throw them down on the sidewalk! Breaking the ice on concrete is supersatisfying, and then it melts.
- Chop wood (be supermindful and safe with this one!). Tear up phone books.

*A few creative ways to move grief:*

- Watch a sad movie and let the feelings flow. Allow yourself to cry.
- Get a blanket, wrap yourself up tightly, and rock your body side to side.
- Have a friend hold you.
- Write out what you are missing/longing for until the tears come.

### Tune In to the Magic of Your Brain

Let's take a tiny tour of your brain. The left side is called the scientific, logical brain; the right side is your intuitive, emotional, and creative brain. The ability to methodically interpret and attend to data is within the realm of your left brain; the ability to make intuitive leaps and feel holistic connections is within the realm of your right brain.

For most of us the left, logical hemisphere of our brain runs the show and sometimes we allow the right brain to peek through. To “magic” your brain means to bring more emphasis on the right, feeling hemisphere. As we awaken our inner fire, we consciously engage our relationship with the right side of our brain, and then—*Magic* happens!

Do a quick, magical rewire of your brain right now. Take your left hand (which is connected to your right-brain hemisphere) and rest it in front of your belly, palm facing up. Take your right hand (which is connected to your left-brain hemisphere) and place it gently on top of your left, palm facing up. Close your eyes and talk to your brain. “Hey up there! We are making some changes. From now on logical thinking will rest within my intuitive feelings, just as my left-brain right hand is resting in my right-brain left hand. Scientific brain, thanks so much for your help. You can now relax and be held within the wisdom of my emotional body/brain. We will call upon you when we need you!”

Keep shifting your attention away from logic and aligning yourself with your creativity. Change the question “What one way is there to accomplish this?” to “How else can I do this?” You want to learn to balance the best of both hemispheres and open a pathway between them to allow for the miraculous to occur.

This magical approach teaches us how to live our lives spontaneously, creatively, and according to our own natural rhythms. It helps us to discover and tune in to our instinctive behavior and discover the highest expressions of our individual creativity.





- LESSON 6 -

# Make the Bodily Connection

*There is deep wisdom within our very flesh, if  
we can only come to our senses and feel it.*

—Elizabeth A. Behnke

In the beginning of this book, I pointed out that your inner energy, what I call your inner fire, is not to be confused with your physical energy level, because your inner fire is so much greater than that. However, this does not mean there isn't a correlation between the two. So far we have examined the mental, emotional, and spiritual sides of ourselves and how they relate to our inner fire, but now we will turn our attention to the physical. As you move through this book and understand the importance of attending to your inner fire, my hope is that you will experience a new awareness of the combined wisdom of your mind, spirit, emotions, *and* physical body. This new paradigm integrates all parts of you.

Shamans around the world have taught that your body contains deep knowledge, with valuable information threaded through every cell and organ. This is contrary to the opinion of most of Western society, which argues that the thinking mind is like the proverbial head of the table and everything else must take orders from it.

It may sound strange, but sometimes we may forget that we even *have* a body, especially when we spend so much of the day looking at a computer or smartphone. I've known people who feel that once they get to work they are only connected from the neck up and completely ignore what is going on from the neck down. Many of us have done this

to some degree or another. For instance, have you ever had the experience of getting up from your computer and realizing your shoulders are tight and hurting or your legs are burning from being in one position too long?

It's also important to note that many of us are trained to view our physical body only as a tool to get things done, and even in some spiritual traditions the body is seen as a block to be pushed past or disregarded altogether. But these beliefs deny an essential truth: our bodies are an important part of us, and when we don't view them as such, we aren't taking care of all of our being.

By increasing our awareness of how we treat our body, moment to moment, we can understand how it impacts our inner fire, as well as its effect on the mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of ourselves. Through grounded presence in your own skin and a commitment to joyful exploration, you can banish the thought that your body is an obstacle, that you need to change it, or that it's not good enough, and begin to see these ideas as what they are: ways in which you punish yourself by punishing your body.

Your body is your sacred temple, and the fire that burns inside it is linked to how you treat and relate to your body. When you do not properly care for your body or you berate unliked parts of your body in your mind, your physical temple begins to

weaken. When you neglect your body for prolonged periods, it's as if you are telling your body "you do not matter" and "you are not good enough." Often we have done this for so long we don't even notice we're doing it anymore. At the most basic level, this is a form of self-abuse.

My yoga mentor, Ana Forrest, calls all forms of self-abuse by a different name: self-mutilation. This is strong language, reflecting truly damaging actions that range from simple unconscious disregard to active self-hatred. It includes subtle shades of unconscious actions—like eating unhealthy foods or comparing yourself to others—to more overtly destructive symptoms, like anorexia or cutting.

Everyone I have ever met and worked with has some part of their body they don't like. Let me repeat that: *EVERYONE*. Think about this for a moment, because this means we are all self-mutilating to various degrees every time we berate, belittle, or otherwise attack our own body, and we dim our precious internal fire when we do so. The foundational principle of awakening your inner fire as it relates to your body is to *accept and love your body exactly as it is in this moment*.

I know from personal experience that this is a tall order. And the way to fix this is not by finding new ways to use your body to beat yourself up. So many people I have worked with have immediately

responded to this topic by saying, “I can’t believe I have been on the spiritual path for years and I still reject my body!” but this is simply using your body as a weapon against yourself in a different way. So rather than blaming yourself for not having overcome your difficulties with your body, simply notice how you treat your body. When you catch yourself internally berating your body or not treating it the way you would any other sacred possession, then take a moment to gently recenter your thoughts and bring them back to a state of kindness and acceptance.

Similar to how it felt to ease into emotional flow after stuffing down our feelings for many years, as you consciously connect with your body and begin to treat it as a sacred temple rather than an obstacle to overcome, you may encounter an enormous amount of pain and suffering that has been stowed there over the years—feelings we have buried in the muscles of our being. Paying attention to them now can make you feel uncomfortable, and you might be tempted to run away from this discomfort. But part of honoring your body is to actually go *toward* the pain, tightness, and stress that lie within, rather than moving away from them. Your body desperately needs your awareness, deep and controlled breathing, and conscious compassion. Give your body these gifts, and, in return, it will lead you to powerful insights and open new pathways to progress.

One of the women in a recent Inner Fire course shared that she would feel angry with her body when it had needs or was hurting. Colleen used to get so frustrated when her body ached or became exhausted. But after learning why it was important to befriend her body, Colleen started putting her hands on her body's "problem" areas to bring attention to them. With conscious compassion, she simply thanked the area and let it know she was listening. Colleen now has a much better relationship with her body. She says that she has learned to slow down and stay with her body rather than getting frustrated when it has needs.

It is a powerful act to lay our hands on a struggling area of our body—whether because of physical pain or because we have rejected that part of ourselves through judgment (too curvy, too bony, too wrinkly, too big, etc.). Putting our hands on our bodies requires us to bring awareness to the place we are touching, and once we have our awareness on that area, we can focus our compassion and healing on the parts that we think of as problems. When we remember that our bodies are sacred, we bring acceptance and gentleness to our form. We want our physical vessel to be as relaxed and open as possible so that our inner energy can flow freely through our being. This doesn't mean we have to be at peak physical strength; depending on our health, our age, and other factors, we will find ourselves in

different states at different times. But regardless of the strength or even health of our body at any given moment, we can choose to accept ourselves fully.

Laying our hands on our bodies to foster acceptance is an active way to make our bodies feel better, but sometimes *not doing anything* can be just as powerful. A friend who has been practicing the Inner Fire teachings for years now was recently set to speak at a women's conference. The second morning of the event, she woke up exhausted, realizing the cold she had been trying to keep at bay had settled into her throat and lungs. After her morning meditation, she let go of what her mind wanted her to do and instead listened to her body. The message she received was loud and clear: tend to your inner fire, gather your coals in close, and rest your body.

So in place of attending the conference, she went for a slow walk and then hung out in her hotel room, catching up on emails and drinking tea. "In the past I would have pushed myself to go to everything, no matter what my body was feeling," she shared with me. "But I'm learning to slow my pace and take downtime. I find that when I do this, I'm much more relaxed and creative. I'm learning to work with my body for the long term, rather than burning myself out in the short term."

Sometimes it is not possible to do what our body needs in the moment. There have been situations



where, despite feeling the need to rest my body, things came up that had to be handled, or couldn't be postponed or changed, and I had to take care of them when my body was ill, or exhausted, or when I would much rather have been in bed. There are times when you must keep going, like when you get up in the morning feeling awful and the report at work is due, or when you have to pick your daughter up from school, even as you are recovering from chemotherapy. How do you keep going and navigate the changes in your body or mental function as you age?

The answer is to be gentle. Move slowly. Love your body exactly the way it is. Don't push, invite. Don't force, inspire. Don't judge, guide. Listen, and you will know when it is time to pull your energy in close and revitalize, and when it's time to use your inner energy to feed your physical body. Experiment. Stay present with yourself.

When we treat ourselves as sacred beings, we embrace and enter into a loving partnership with our bodies. Rather than looking at them as something that will constantly disappoint us, we are open to a constantly evolving give-and-take that enriches our spiritual bodies and strengthens our physical form.

## Creating Physical “Emergencies”

In an earlier lesson we discussed the effects negative thoughts can have on our inner fire, but these same types of thoughts can also strongly affect our physical bodies as well.

Fearful, crisis-oriented thoughts create stress, and when stress reaches a certain level, it sends your body into a kind of mini-emergency mode that causes your body to produce extra adrenaline and cortisol, two hormones that elevate your blood pressure, raise your heart rate, and increase glucose levels in your body. Your body takes these steps for self-protection, so you can better deal with the perceived threat in front of you. This is commonly referred to as the fight-or-flight response. Such a physical reaction can be very useful and appropriate if you are, for instance, confronted by a large grizzly bear on a hike. But when this bodily reaction is produced by thoughts like “There is too much to do,” “I cannot handle this,” “I am not enough,” then the manifestations of overwhelming anxiety and crisis put your physical body through the ringer unnecessarily. Repeatedly jumping into this state, or living in it constantly, can have long-term negative effects on your physical body alone, to say nothing of your mental, emotional, and spiritual bodies. We have all heard about the consequences of stress on the physical body, and living in a constant emergency state is about as stressful as it gets.

When we enter this mini-emergency mode, our body gets quickly fatigued, and we become less present, less creative, and more apt to struggle with whatever is in front of us, sometimes without even realizing it. Then, in a snowball effect, fear becomes our motivation, and from this fearful motivation, we push ourselves harder than we would push anyone else, which is a form of self-flagellation or self-mutilation. In this mode our body is on high alert, and so we move into frantic action to “get it done.” As you already know, this state of being never feels good.

As an experiment, take a moment to think about the current list of projects and goals you might be carrying around in your head. Allow yourself to dive into the sense of confusion and overwhelm that can build so easily around this list. Before long, you may be saying to yourself over and over again, “How will I ever get this all done?” Take some time to *feel* how your body reacts to this question. Tune in as your muscles tense, your heart rate increases, and you stop breathing. Your physical response sends an internal message: “Something is wrong!” The body continues to gear up for flight or fight. All of these responses can easily become your default setting, and over time if you have trained your body to react as though missing a phone call or a deadline demands the same response as a major physical threat, the

stress of living this way can lead to exhaustion and chronic ailments.

In my own case, I clearly saw my ability to create a mini-emergency in my body a few years ago when I went on a silent retreat. I had decided to spend a week alone in my RV, parked just outside of the house I lived in, in order to write, slow down, and do some inner work. On the third day of my retreat, I ventured into the house to get a book and overheard my business partner talking on the phone about something that hadn't gotten done. My mind began to scream internally, "You have to take that phone call and straighten out the situation. You have to break your silence and help. This is your fault, and you have to fix it right now!"

In reality, the situation was not a big deal. It was a minor misunderstanding and was already being handled. But this logic had no effect on the strength of my internal reaction.

Being in retreat allowed me the space I needed to witness my mind, emotions, and body clearly. What I saw my mind doing to my body really shocked me. From just a tiny amount of incoming data (overhearing a phone call), I was creating a full-blown physical emergency. My body was then responding with an overwhelming need to take an action: *I am the only one who can do the task! I am going to have to come*

*out of my retreat to handle the problem; there is no way around it!*

The level of alarm in my physical body was hugely out of proportion to what had actually happened, but it all seemed very real. By taking a moment to sit with my experience and stay with the discomfort, I was able to laugh at what I was considering an emergency and put things into much-needed perspective. This allowed my body to relax and reidentify what was actually true versus what my mind shouted was true. Indeed, the world was not going to end if I did not take action immediately. Imagine that.

What would your life be like if you responded to “emergencies” with faith, calmness, and a relaxed body? Imagine if everyone did that! What would the world look like? Unfortunately, most of us unconsciously create unnecessary tension in our bodies through reactive patterns. Treating your body as sacred means rewiring yourself to physically relax through anything that arises—including tight deadlines, angry customers, or piles of work. You can accomplish this in spite of what anyone else around you might be doing. In fact, it is vital that you do.

While the energy from your inner fire is infinite, your physical body’s energy is finite. Treat your body with care and tend to your physical fire. Know that regardless of how well you take care of it, at some point that physical flame will sputter. Use this truth

as motivation to enjoy each day, to drink from the cup of life. Don't postpone your joy. Connect to the larger truth: your soul fire will burn on for a long time after your corporeal temple is ash or soil. Each time you choose love over fear, your soul fire burns even brighter. Let's make the angels smile and clap their hands in delight because we are shining so brightly!

Reconnecting with your body is vital to living in a sacred way as well as being more effective in your true work. There is nothing more powerful at work than a human whose mind, spirit, *and* body are in harmony. In the next lesson, we will explore how to have gratitude for what our mind, spirit, and body are bringing to our inner fire and learn new ways to reconnect with a sense of gratitude for all things.



## YOUR GROUNDED GIFTS

- Your physical body is an ally and friend, so treat it with love and kindness.
- Listen for what your body needs, not what your mind thinks it needs or what you wish it would need.
- Creating conscious structures around your physical body (such as giving yourself planned walking or stretching breaks or planning healthy meals) allows flow and ease so you can focus more on your true work.



## INNER FIRE EXPLORATIONS

### Using Your Breath to Calm the Mind

Most people start meditation to calm the mind and typically a tranquil breathing pattern follows, but it can also work with the body. You can use your breath to pull both the mind and body into a state of calmness.

To experience this, find a quiet place where you can be alone for a few minutes. Sit or lie down in a comfortable position, and then begin to take several deep breaths, consciously exaggerating the sound of your breath as you do. You may not notice it at first,

but if you keep your focus on your breathing, you will slip into a state of tranquility. With your attention on your steady breathing, your mind will fall in line quicker than you might imagine.

### Support for your temple

Explore basic body care for your individual needs. What are you eating? What is dragging your body down? What is really nourishing your body? Be patient: sometimes rewiring around the body takes some time because our habits are deeply engrained, particularly when it comes to using food not as a clean fuel source to restore and nourish our cells, but simply as a quick fix to keep our body running. In this latter mind-set we'll use whatever we have to, whether that's an excess of caffeine or sugar or something else entirely. Those two tend to be the most difficult for the body. If you know you have unhealthy habits with your physical body, again be gentle with yourself and begin to list the habits you would like to change one at a time. Pick one area to focus on. If there is something you do not have control over (perhaps you have a baby, so sleep is erratic), be creative in your solutions, or put your attention on really nourishing yourself in other areas.

You can support your body by changing just one thing at a time. You don't have to do everything this



week—take on just one habit, and be steady with yourself. If you hit a roadblock, let your body respond to the question, not your mind. When you have established a new pattern or regained a sense of connection to the rhythms of your body, you can tackle the next thing on your list with a sense of ease and presence.

Here are some concrete steps to take to nourish your body in a new way. Each of these exercises is designed to help you learn more about yourself and your true physical needs. They are also bite-size, which I find to be very useful. Instead of saying to yourself, “I will only eat foods that my body likes and get eight hours of sleep every day for the rest of my life,” say to yourself, “Let’s run this experiment for the next week as a way to support and learn about my body.” Holding an exercise in your mind as an experiment that has a beginning, middle, and end will give you more focus and allow you to set yourself up for success.

For added support, you may want to join a gym or a fitness group, or maybe just invite a friend to join you on your journey of honoring your body. You don’t have to do it by yourself. Again, be creative!

## Sleep

Plan one week where you get at least eight hours of sleep each night. Make sure you prep! Don’t plan late nights out for that week. Unplug your phone and

turn off your TV an hour before bed, and have your morning routine all set so that you can step into your day easily. At the end of the week, notice how your body feels.

## Food

Pick one thing you want to eliminate from your diet (start with just one thing you want to change, then you can add more the following week!). Again, do some prep beforehand. For example, if you are cutting out sugar, make sure to stock your house with apples or other low-sugar treats, and carry alternative snacks with you. If you are going to stop eating dairy, explore what you can replace it with. Know that the first few days may be uncomfortable, and stay steady with yourself.

## Exercise

Our bodies love and need exercise, especially as we get older or if we spend a lot of time in front of the computer. If you are not currently exercising, start small. Commit to moving in some way for at least fifteen minutes to an hour, every other day for a week. Go for a brisk walk, swim, dance to music, pump iron, run, do yoga—there's so much to try. At the end of the week, see how you feel. Repeat.

## Touch

I believe most of us are starved for touch; our bodies need present, loving touch. Start by putting a hand on your heart and a hand on your belly and saying *hello* to yourself. Be mindful as you take a shower or bath to bring your own present touch to yourself as you wash your body. Hug people more often. Cuddle with your animals or friends.

## Physical care

Are there any ways you have been avoiding basic body maintenance? I'm talking about things like taking good care of your teeth, drinking plenty of water, having checkups with a doctor—whatever self-care will best serve you. Pick one thing you've been avoiding and take action on it this week.

By trying these small steps, you will begin to nourish and honor your body through stressful situations. Eventually, your physical reaction to stress will shift, enabling a calm and centered response even when you are in crisis. Keep asking for support and guidance from your body, and it will come. Let your body's wisdom come forth.

## The Pomodoro Technique

When you have to spend long hours at work sitting or standing, make sure you take regular breaks, even if they are tiny. If you work on the computer, or in a similarly focused situation, I recommend the following body-friendly method, which has an app that I use when I am writing.

The Pomodoro Technique was created by Francesco Cirillo and is super simple. You use a timer to create periods of focus followed by short periods of rest. The Pomodoro Technique breaks down like this:

Round	Task	Timer
1	Work/Focus	25 minutes
	Rest/Break	5 minutes
2	Work/Focus	25 minutes
	Rest/Break	5 minutes
3	Work/Focus	25 minutes
	Rest/Break	5 minutes
4	Work/Focus	25 minutes
	Long Rest/Break	15–30 minutes

First you work for twenty-five minutes, then take a five-minute break. You repeat this step three times (or for three “rounds”). On the fourth round, you work for twenty-five minutes, then take a longer break, usually between fifteen and thirty minutes.

I love this method because twenty-five minutes is long enough to get into a flow but not so long that my body gets too stagnant. And five minutes is enough time to stretch, drink some water, do jumping jacks, or make a cup of tea without losing the thread of what I am doing.

In my break times I’ve started doing squats, jumping rope, and even literally running around the block. I find this method doubly beneficial as I get more work done, but also stay connected to the wisdom of my body.

- LESSON 7 -

# Gratitude: The Energy Igniter

*Gratitude, not understanding, is the secret to  
joy and equanimity.*

—Anne Lamott

Have you ever heard of the powder called Mystical Fire? It comes in a rectangular black plastic packet with rainbow letters. To use it, you get a campfire blazing strongly, then you simply sprinkle a little bit of the Mystical Fire powder into it, and boom—the familiar orange flames transform into a rainbow of colors. Green, blue, and purple flames dance before your eyes.

Tending your inner fire by adding gratitude is the equivalent of adding rainbows to the flames of your campfire: everything becomes richer and more beautiful. Having an attitude of gratitude allows us to see our lives as a precious, rare gem that is our blessed work to carve and polish throughout our lifetime. Like an artist, we can make that gem shine with rich colors by focusing our daily attention on our true work, and gratitude is a tool that makes our gem sparkle. It's no wonder that those few humans whom are described as "enlightened" often say that their lives are now a constant state of gratitude.

For the rest of us, when we are in a good place, gratitude comes naturally, and our inner fire burns brightly. It is as if you had happily tossed sweet perfumed oil and a bucketful of Mystical Fire powder on your inner bonfire. The sweetness of the scent and the richness of the colors light you up so brightly that your inspired glow spreads out to touch everyone around you.

When things aren't going as well, this gratitude is typically much harder to find. When students or friends come to me in the middle of difficult life situations and are having difficulty connecting with a sense of gratitude (or any sense of hope at all), I give them one simple assignment: each day, write down five things you are grateful for.

These five things can be teeny tiny: I am grateful for this inhale. I am grateful for this chair I am sitting on. I am grateful that both my arms work. I am grateful that I have five dollars in my bank account. I am grateful for the way my dog looks at me with his soft brown eyes.

During our worst times, we may not even feel grateful as we name these things, but each time we are willing to turn our attention to things to be thankful for, we feed our inner fire and move toward healing ourselves and the world around us. With a steady application of gratitude, even the weakest flame strengthens. As our inner fire grows brighter, as we remember our true work, and when we listen to the still wisdom within us, we can uncover whatever it is that we need to stoke our fire back to a good healthy blaze.

In this way, practicing gratitude is a form of exercise, and if you work it out regularly, then over time your gratitude muscle gets stronger. Gratitude is like push-ups for the heart and yoga for your mind:



it nourishes your spirit and lifts you up. Physically connecting to gratitude by *feeling into it* as we previously discussed is an excellent way to build your gratitude muscle. Again, feeling into gratitude, just like feeling into faith, is a matter of finding what gratitude feels like in your body, and using that physical sensation to anchor you to the emotion. Much like we did earlier in this book regarding faith, let's take the word *gratitude* out of a concept or belief and bring it into a *feeling*.

Here's a quick exercise so you can experience what I mean.

First, think of something you are grateful for—big or small, miraculous or mundane. Is it something that recently brought you to tears of joy or a heart-melting memory from forty years ago; your child smiling at you yesterday or that spectacular moonrise over the mountains when you were camping as a kid? Bring in all your senses and sharpen the focus of that memory. Breathe it in, fill up, feel it in every cell.

Now let go of the memory that stimulated the gratitude and just focus on the sensation gratitude brings in your body. Where do you experience gratitude? How does it feel in your chest area? How does it feel in your stomach? Does it make your skin tingle? Next, notice what these feelings do to your inner fire. Inhale, then exhale. Be with your gratitude and

imagine with each breath you can make the feeling grow inside your body.

One thing you realize when you feel into your gratitude is that it's not actually what's outside of you that produces these wonderful feelings (even though they can stimulate them); it's what's inside you that counts. Any event that happens outside of you can be a catalyst for feeling gratitude, but the feeling itself comes from inside of you instead of out there in the world. In this way, we can say gratitude can be a choice.

I'd like to share a story I found on the internet that expresses this idea quite clearly. It's one of those tales that no one is sure where it came from or if it is true or not, but regardless of all that, the message is one hundred percent true and something for all of us to take to heart.

*The 92-year-old, petite, well-poised and proud lady moved to a nursing home today. Her husband of 70 years recently passed away, making the move necessary. After many hours of waiting patiently in the lobby of the nursing home, she smiled sweetly when the nurse said her room was ready. As she maneuvered her walker to the elevator, the nurse gave her a description of her tiny room, pointing out every detail that she would see once they arrived at the room, including the eyelet curtains that had been hung on her window. Before the elevator even*

*reached her floor, she declared, "I love it," with the enthusiasm of an eight-year-old having just been presented with a new puppy.*

*"Mrs. Jones, you haven't seen the room . . . just wait," The nurse said.*

*"That doesn't have anything to do with it," Mrs. Jones replied. "Happiness is something you decide on ahead of time. Whether I like my room or not doesn't depend on how the furniture is arranged; it's how I arrange my mind. I already decided to love it. It's a decision I make every morning when I wake up. I have a choice; I can spend the day in bed recounting the difficulty I have with the parts of my body that no longer work, or get out of bed and be thankful for the ones that do."*

Like the heroine in this story, you too have a choice in how you see the world and in how you arrange things in your mind. As we explored earlier, it's not what happens in the world that we have power over, but rather our reactions and our perspective on these situations that affect our well-being. This also applies to gratitude. In my experience, wherever we put our attention—whether that is on pain or on gratitude—that is what will grow.

When you pull the heavy threads of anger, blame, shame, or defeat through the fabric of your being,

you keep weaving those qualities into everything you see, think, and do. When you lovingly acknowledge the challenges and hurts of the past while looking for the always-present threads of miracles and moments of love, you weave strong golden lines of gratitude into everything you see, think, and do.

The next time you find yourself in a situation full of stress, overwhelm, or suffering, take a moment to get still and ask yourself this simple question: “What one thing am I grateful for right now?” When you find that one thing, repeat it over and over in your mind. Stay present and notice if your internal energy begins to shift from suffering to surrender, even if it is only a very slight change. Allowing yourself to notice even the smallest shift acts as signal that it is okay to relax further. This is the first step toward releasing your suffering by placing your conscious attention on gratitude.

Please understand, I know firsthand that life can be challenging. Loved ones die. Finances collapse. Health issues arise. Relationships end. It’s in these moments when we must be incredibly courageous to choose to focus on gratitude rather than on the negativity we may be experiencing. Be gentle with yourself and remember that it’s possible to be grateful and experience sadness simultaneously; that’s the complexity and beauty of being human.

## The Power of Words

We've spent some time looking at the power of thought and words. Noticing the words we say out loud, as well as those we only utter in our heads, enables us to spot whenever we aren't in an attitude of gratitude.

Every time you think or speak the words *should*, *must*, or *have to* is an opportunity to explore whether you're operating from a place of gratitude or opposition and lack. The former is an energy booster, and the latter, an energy drain.

For instance, read the following statements out loud:

*"I should have more money."*

*"Helse must do this for me to be happy."*

*"I have to get this done by the deadline."*

How did it feel to say those sentences? The sentiment behind them is one of lack rather than gratitude. Take a moment to notice how your inner fire felt as you spoke those words.

Next, I'd like you to read these statements out loud:

*"I am grateful for the money I have."*

*“My happiness is my choice.”*

*“I do my best to get things done by the deadline, and if that doesn’t happen, the sun will still rise tomorrow.”*

Notice how you felt when you said these statements versus the previous ones. These accept the world as it is, yet are laced with gratitude for it all.

I’d also like to point out how words that impact us negatively can creep into our minds in a sneaky way. Look at the following:

*“I should be more grateful.”*

*“I must be more loving.”*

*“I have to be more spiritual.”*

Notice how these statements have disguised themselves as helpful, masquerading as empowerment tools, but in reality drag you down and give you a yardstick with which to judge yourself. Compare them to this list instead:

*“I am grateful that I am learning to be more loving.”*

*“I am grateful that I am exploring being kinder.”*

*“I am grateful to be learning to increase my spiritual awareness.”*

*“I am grateful that I am exactly where I am supposed to be at this moment.”*

There is so much to be grateful for, but if we force ourselves toward gratitude, we are only using our internal judge to make ourselves wrong. By paying attention to our words, which always start first as thoughts, we can begin to make small changes like this. These little adjustments might not feel like much at the time, but they can pay big dividends over the course of a single day, not to mention an entire life.

## **Gratitude and Your True Work**

Here is a good reminder for you throughout the day: gratitude flows naturally when you are focusing on your true work rather than the ups and downs of whatever other work you are doing in the world. We talked earlier about bringing your true work into everything that you do during the day, and the same principle is at play here. When you are in states of stress or turmoil, think back to your true work and see how you can invite it into the moment. For example, let's say that you missed a big deadline at work. You are afraid your boss is going to yell at you, and you are already yelling at yourself for not completing

your task. If your true work as you defined it before is compassion, now would be a good time to stop, take a deep breath, and feel into your true work of compassion. When you do so, you might see that this is an opportunity for you to practice compassion with yourself, by forgiving yourself for not getting things done on time. It may also be a chance for you to practice compassion toward your boss, who is under pressure as well, and therefore has been more demanding than usual.

When you take a moment to reconnect and feel into your true work again, you will also begin to see new opportunities for gratitude. In the same example from above, as you tap into your true work, you might be grateful for how much work you *did* get accomplished on the task, knowing that there's only a portion of it that is actually behind, or you may be grateful even for your boss, who is also human and sometimes makes mistakes when overwhelmed or stressed, just like you do.

In moments of overwhelm, it may be difficult to find things to be grateful for. But by reconnecting each moment to your true work, you create space between you and the turbulent emotions of the present moment so that you can take action from a place of conscious gratitude rather than reacting in ways that ultimately will not serve you and only make you feel crummy to boot.



Gratitude is the key to making your inner fire burn brightly. The following exercises will help with that, and in the next lesson we will look at a very special way to tie all of what we have covered in this book into one daily practice.



## YOUR GRATITUDE GIFTS

- Your gratitude is the antidote to getting stuck in the past.
- Your true work defines what is most important for you.
- Your words, even the ones you speak only to yourself, have power; be aware of how you use them.



## INNER FIRE EXPLORATIONS

### *The Royal Review*

I'd like to share with you something I do on a regular basis that I call the "Royal Review." Many spiritual traditions advocate reviewing the components of your life on a regular basis, but I've found that it's superimportant to do your review from a calm, centered, openly flexible, and grateful place. This is what the Royal Review is all about; it helps you remember that you are the one who rightfully wears the crown of wisdom and connection in your life. From a place of gratitude, you can see the bigger picture of what's best for you and your inner fire.

While other spiritual traditions and self-help practices advocate doing a regular inventory, often people do so from a place of lack, focusing on what is wrong rather than feeling gratitude for all of it.

As the monarch of your own destiny, you take leadership and sacred responsibility for the welfare and abundance of your whole domain. As a wise monarch, you listen carefully to your subjects—the mental, spiritual, emotional, and physical parts of yourself—and you keep an eye out for their overall health. You recognize and honor the responsibility you have, and from this overall perspective you can see imbalances as they arise and correct them before they affect the entire kingdom.

As the queen or king of your own realm, your duties include noticing the thoughts that arise in your mental landscape and deciding which should be honored and which should be released. You watch what arises in your emotional kingdom and make sure that your feelings are being expressed rather than dismissed. In your spiritual realm, you endeavor to stay grounded in your faith rather than blown about by the winds of busyness and a desire to control outcomes. You respect the needs of the physical domain, honoring your body as the vehicle with which you experience the world and taking whatever steps are necessary to support it.

You survey all of your realms from a place of gratitude and compassion, because you know that you are lucky to be here, with these special powers, knowing even the best rulers make mistakes.

So at the end of each day, I invite you, as the ruler of your own internal kingdom, to ask the following questions of your “subjects” and listen with an open heart to the reports that are coming back regarding the state of all that is in your care:

### *Mental Realm*

What parts of you wore the crown in your mental realm today? Was it your judge? Your victim? What thoughts occupied your time and drained your energy? Which ones fed your energy? When did you have moments of clarity?

### *Emotional Realm*

What emotions did you experience today and what triggered them? Did you let them flow? If not, what wants to be expressed?

### *Spiritual Realm*

What steps did you take to nurture yourself spiritually? Were you grounded in your true faith? Or did you have moments when you were overtaken with worry and anxiety? Did you try and control situations rather than go with the flow?

### *Physical Realm*

How did you treat your body today? Did you listen to it and give it what it needs? Or perhaps you ignored it and forgot it was there?

Remember, as you answer these questions at the end each day, you will always do so from a place of gratitude for everything in your life. Drop the “I should be” from your answers—such as “I should have listened to my body better,” “I should stop trying to control situations”—because this is not a place to beat yourself up (and to be clear, *no place* is good for that). The point of this exercise is to learn from what your review shows you, to appreciate the strides you’ve made, to gain more knowledge from your entire being about what fuels your inner fire and what drains it so that you can choose better the next time if need be.

And as you do this, since you are centered in a place of gratitude, you are able to be creative and bring the intent of your true work into focus throughout all the different aspects of your life.

### Gratitude Practice

Write down at least five things you are grateful for. Every. Single. Day. Read the list out loud, and then spend a few minutes breathing in your gratitude, imagining it infusing from your heart into all of your

cells, and then spilling over and extending out in all directions, blessing everything around you in your overflowing gratitude.

### Clearing Unconscious Mantras

Take a few days to explore your subliminal habits and patterns, the most important being the internal mantra you say to yourself that takes you away from gratitude.

For example, if you're really honest with yourself, you might realize that your current unconscious mantra is

*May I avoid punishment.*

With some alternate thoughts included:

*May I do a good job so people like me.*

*May I be productive and busy so I do not feel inferior.*

*May I get this project done so I get a raise.*

You can uncover these repeating dialogues by noticing your actions and thoughts. For example, if you catch yourself saying, "I am sorry," throughout the day, take note of the feeling and thoughts associated with "I am sorry," and see the actual belief that lies beneath it.

The belief might be “I do not deserve to live,” or “I will get hurt if I am too big in the world,” or “I can’t do anything right.”

Now image that part of yourself is saying a mantra based on this belief. What words would that part of you use? Go all the way! Play with this idea without analyzing it too much, and be willing to make your mantras sound over the top.

*May others see my fear and leave me alone.*

*May I be small and invisible, so others will not hurt me.*

*May I do everything perfectly in order to avoid rejection.*

When you say it out loud, it will be clear that you don’t really desire these things in any wholehearted, grounded way. By bringing this unconscious mantra into the light, you will take away some of its energy and power. You are making room to create a new mantra—one just for you—forged by consciously rewriting your old mantra into one that is in alignment with what you really want to experience.

Here are some transformations to get you started:

*From: May I be small and invisible, so others will not hurt me.*

*To: May I hold my own power and light, knowing that I am held by the divine.*

*From: May I do everything perfectly.*

*To: May I do my best in each moment.*

*From: May others see my fear and leave me alone.*

*To: May I connect with myself and others through my opening heart.*

Ah, much better! As you find yourself in situations that trigger the old patterns, repeat your new mantra to yourself over and over again. Eventually it will become as much of a part of you as the old one was, while still reconnecting you with the things you really desire.





# The Inner Fire Prayer: A Daily Practice for Bringing It All Together

*Gorgeous, amazing things come into our lives when we are paying attention: mangoes, grandnieces, Bach, ponds. This happens more often when we have as little expectation as possible. If you say, "Well, that's pretty much what I thought I'd see," you are in trouble. At that point you have to ask yourself why you are even here. Astonishing material and revelation appear in our lives all the time. Let it be. Unto us, so much is given. We just have to be open for business.*

—Anne Lamott

Throughout this book, we have looked at the four aspects of the self—mental, spiritual, emotional, and physical—and how each of them relates to our inner fire, or the energy that powers these aspects of ourselves.

Out of these four aspects, I explained how we tend to rely most heavily on our mental processes, or the thinking mind, especially when it comes to interacting with the outside world. I think it is safe to say that one of the reasons we overthink things rather than developing all aspects of ourselves equally is because our society has placed a higher value on our thinking mind.

The problem with this approach is that when we rely too heavily on one aspect of ourselves, we disconnect from our other realms of being. As a result, we often neglect our physical bodies, repress our emotions, and/or ignore the inner guidance of our spiritual nature, all at great cost to our overall well-being.

To bring balance and harmony into our days, we must learn to harness the power of our mind along with the deep wisdom of our body, emotions, and spirituality, and to bring out our true work through each of these four interconnected aspects of our being. By integrating these four aspects, we fan the flames of our inner fire, and the result is that we live a deeply connected and gratifying life.

To help integrate all the teachings in this book, I have written a potent prayer (or mantra, if you prefer) that I call the Inner Fire Prayer, as a method to honor all aspects of ourselves equally. By implementing a daily practice that includes a prayer/mantra, we are using the power of the thinking mind and words (since our words form in the mind) to bring attention to the other aspects of ourselves. So in a way, we could say we are using the mind's powers to move past the mind itself, bringing attention into all aspects of ourselves equally.

I originally created the Inner Fire Prayer for myself, as a new way of opening to the process of my true work, and I began to use it in my everyday life. Soon after, I found that when I started using the Inner Fire Prayer consistently, it started to work through me. When I get stressed or busy, the words of the prayer happily show up in my mind, like a sweet angel at the door reminding me to stay connected to all aspects of myself and bring my true work into the daily tasks that show up. Here is the prayer that sums up everything we have learned in this book

*The Inner Fire Prayer*

*May I clear my mind of all thoughts  
and focus my intent on stillness.*

*May I clear my field of busyness  
and connect to my deepest faith.*

*May I open my emotional body  
and allow healing flow.*

*May I honor this physical form  
as a sacred temple.*

*May I walk my highest purpose  
with gratitude for this precious time.*

In my experience, the Inner Fire Prayer will benefit you the most if you say it out loud and in the mornings, shortly after waking up. I personally recite it just after I wake up to set the coals for my inner fire to burn brightly all throughout the day, which keeps me from falling victim to unreasonable fears, becoming overwhelmed, or being sabotaged by self-doubt.

There is also something powerful about saying the words out loud, as hearing the words helps you feel into them as they take shape in your mouth and as the sound moves through your ears. When you speak each line, feel the energy and intent behind the words and consciously create the state that each word represents in your body.

Repeating the prayer each day will allow it to bypass your conscious mind and seed in your subconscious, where inner awareness can begin to grow and unwind the structures of stress and anxiety.

Another benefit of the prayer is that through reciting it we are consciously directing our attention

to a larger intelligence than our thinking mind possesses. What you call this larger intelligence—Life, God, Goddess, Higher Self, Universal Consciousness, the Creator, etc.—doesn't really matter; all interpretations are welcome here. The point is that reciting this prayer/mantra is a conscious act of getting out of our own way, of asking to be shown a bigger picture and lovingly guided back to a sense of well-being, connection, and wholeness.

I especially like to use the prayer/mantra to energetically point toward expressing my true work in the world, no matter what everyday tasks may arise. When we utilize the prayer in this way, it becomes a tool or a telescope that allows us to see beyond old agreements and associations. As we move outside of these old agreements and associations, we can more easily bring the spirit of our true work into everything we do, whether that is changing diapers, creating databases, or anything in between.

I have put together several guided reflections to take you through each stanza of the Inner Fire Prayer so you can see how they relate to the topics we've covered. For some stanzas, you may want to go back to the full chapter and reread it, as the goal here is to sharpen your understanding of how to consciously untangle the knots created within you and fan the flames of your inner fire in the process.

## **First Stanza of the Inner Fire Prayer Meditation: Stilling the Mental Realm**

The Inner Fire Prayer starts out dealing with our mental aspect. When you find yourself overthinking something or becoming anxious, find a quiet place to pause and recite this stanza of the Inner Fire Prayer. The guided meditation below will allow you to feel more deeply into your mental state by using the prayer stanza as an anchor for focusing your intent.

### PRAYER STANZA

*May I clear my mind of all thoughts  
and focus my Intent on stillness.*

### REFLECTION

We begin by calling forth the will to clear the mind of all thoughts and to become a blank slate. We move our awareness from the outer world to the world within us. This allows us to move into our center of balance and open to child/elder mind, as if we were seeing, feeling, hearing, sensing, and tasting everything around us for the very first time, but from a place of deep wisdom. Remember, this does not mean that we want to clear our mind of all thoughts once and for all (nor is that possible), but we instead come to a place where our thoughts are not running the

show. From this place we see thoughts as they arise, acknowledge them, but do not allow them to hook our attention. From this place of mental peace, we have the ability to sweep our mind clean and start fresh in the present moment.

As we clear our mind, we also give it a new direction: to find the stillness within. This is a critical step. A mind left without a task jumps right back into overthinking mode and makes its job judging, classifying, and trying to figure everything out. This isn't good or bad; it's just what the mind does. By giving our mind the intention of stillness to grab onto through the recitation of the prayer, we have the opportunity to both clear our mind and *direct* it where we want it to go: toward *stillness*.

If you'd like to review the full discussion of moving the mind toward stillness, return to lesson 3.

## **Second Stanza of the Inner Fire Prayer: Connecting to Your Deepest Faith**

The second stanza of our Inner Fire Prayer embraces our spiritual aspect. Remember that faith, by definition, is having complete trust or confidence in something. That something can vary from day to day, but what's important is to connect to whatever your deepest faith is in this moment, whether it be a higher



truth such as God/Goddess/Universe, or the simple fact that the sun will still come up tomorrow. There is nothing wrong with changing what you put your faith in each day, so long as you are willing to have faith and let your spiritual side feed off of this energy.

#### PRAYER STANZA

*May I clear my field of busyness  
and connect to my deepest faith.*

#### REFLECTION

Anytime we get caught up in events of the world, or busyness, we forget the power of the Universe. From this state of busyness, we revert to trying to control things. Our deepest faith supports us when we surrender and let go of this need to control situations, outcomes, people, etc., by acknowledging that the outcome of our efforts will always be in our best interest, regardless of what they are. This doesn't mean we won't or shouldn't work to change or create things in the world; it simply means that as we attempt to do so, we maintain that state of sweet surrender and remain open to the outcome even if it isn't what we expected it to be.

As you repeat this stanza of the prayer, use this moment as an invitation to give up attempting to control things, to stay away from the trap of busyness, and to connect to a deeper faith. The spirit of

this stanza is to reconnect with the fact that the Universe really does have our back (even when it doesn't seem that way), and our job is to get out of the way and let things unfold without resistance. While you sit with this stanza, allow yourself to look within for where you would like to place your faith today, and draw that faith up until you can hold it within your core where your inner fire shines more brightly from the support that it is receiving from the Universe.

If you'd like to review the full discussion of releasing into the sweet surrender of faith, return to lesson 4.

### **Third Stanza of the Inner Fire Prayer Allowing Emotional Flow**

The third stanza is all about the emotional realm. The trickiest part about engaging with our emotions is overcoming years of reactive behavior in which we stuff down or otherwise dam up the flow of our emotions because we think they make us look weak or needy. We believe that these dams are protecting us, but real dams allow water to spill through at certain times to ensure the river continues to flow healthily and to keep upstream areas from flooding. In just such a way, we must allow our emotional river to become undammed, so that we neither starve ourselves of emotions nor allow them to overflow problematically into other areas of our being.

## PRAYER STANZA

*May I open my emotional body  
and allow healing flow.*

## REFLECTION

In this stanza, we step away from the idea that our emotions are liabilities and commit to feeling them completely, which releases pent-up energy and allows healing. Our goal, as outlined in this stanza, is to be proactive in our relationship with our emotional body by *clearing* emotions rather than ignoring or stuffing them down.

Being in touch and fluid with our emotions allows us to tap into the power of our intuition, as well as sense what feels right for us in particular situations rather than just thinking about it. In times of decision, I will repeat this stanza and then consciously take a deep breath and pause, waiting to see what feels right. When your emotions are flowing freely, your answer will drift to you like a paper boat on a tranquil stream. If your emotions are not flowing and the answer is not forthcoming, take some time to nurture and nourish your emotional body. It may be uncomfortable work at first, but it will be well worth your effort.

If you'd like to review the full discussion of opening to your emotions, return to lesson 5.

## Fourth Stanza of the Inner Fire Prayer Honoring the Physical Temple

The fourth stanza concerns the often forgotten physical realm. Disconnecting from our bodies is essentially the same as cutting out a whole piece of our being. Whether you like your body or not, it is the vehicle carrying you through this life and allowing you to have a physical experience in this world. Honoring and thanking all parts of it (*especially* the parts you don't particularly like) will ground you in the physical world around you. With this stanza we are committing to honor our body as sacred, because through it we experience the world.

### PRAYER STANZA

*May I honor this physical form  
as a sacred temple.*

### REFLECTION

Take this moment to repeat the fourth stanza with one hand on your belly and one hand on your chest. Breathe deeply. Feel the rumble of your voice in your chest as these words move through you. Pay attention to small discomforts or pleasures in your body; allow it to speak through you as you speak through it. Direct your attention to the places where you have a tendency to hold tension in your body. Breathe into

those areas and then release any tension you find there. (For many of us that tension is in the belly, shoulders, or hips.)

This is all about learning how to listen to your body's wisdom, treating it with care and compassion, and dropping any notion that your body is in any way flawed or just a barrier or a vehicle.

As you say the Inner Fire Prayer out loud each day, pause at the fourth stanza and, in your mind's eye, see your physical body as the sacred temple of which you are the appointed caretaker. It is beautiful and holy; as are you.

If you'd like to review the full discussion of respecting your body as a sacred temple, return to lesson 6.

### **Fifth Stanza of the Inner Fire Prayer: Giving and Receiving Gratitude**

The fifth stanza invites us to live with gratitude in the moment. Gratitude isn't simply a means of giving energy, but also a way of receiving. Many of us can be very good at saying genuine thank-yous, but it's more difficult for us to accept other people's sincere gratitude. For some reason, we become uncomfortable, feel that we are undeserving, or get squeamish about having attention put on us. But gratitude is a two-way street; all the love and thankfulness you give

out, you will also receive. Open up to gratitude in the present moment and you will begin to recognize the ripple effects that one act can have, whether it comes from you or is directed at you from someone else.

#### PRAYER STANZA

*May I walk my highest purpose  
with gratitude for this precious time*

#### REFLECTION

The last part of the Inner Fire Prayer invites us to step into the present moment and remember that all we ever have is right now. Each moment contains blessings, if we only take the time to see them. We renew our appreciation for each moment by staying conscious of the gift of being alive and by sharing that gift with others and allowing others to share that gift with us. When we allow for gratitude, our inner fire is carefully nourished with thoughtfulness and kindness to and from a world that is always supporting us.

By focusing on your true work in everything you do (no matter what you actually do in the world), you find yourself naturally in a state of gratitude, the combination of which feeds your inner fire like nothing else. As you finish saying your prayer, close your eyes and feel into your gratitude. In your mind's eye, imagine what it feels like to bring your true work into everything that you do throughout the day.

If you'd like to review the full discussion of the power of gratitude, return to lesson 7.



As we come to the final pages of this book, I'd like to return to the questions I posed in lesson 1, as by now you realize they point to the main tenants of *Awaken Your Inner Fire*:

*What is stillness?*

*What is faith?*

*What is healing?*

*What is sacred?*

*What is gratitude?*

Has your understanding of these concepts broadened or deepened as a result of what we have learned throughout this book? For me, these questions have been the keys to understanding my connection to my whole being and have allowed me greater insights into the deeper parts of myself often neglected when my inner fire was at its lowest.

In the exercises that follow, I'll share how I use prayer beads as a way to go deeper into the practice of the Inner Fire Prayer.



## EXERCISES

### Prayer Beads

Prayer beads are used in a variety of spiritual traditions around the world. You might find this practice useful in cultivating your relationship to the Inner Fire Prayer.

In my own case, it wasn't until the last couple of years that I first started using prayer beads seriously. Growing up, I remember my grandmother praying the rosary, but I wasn't raised Roman Catholic and never really had any interest in the rosary. That changed for me as an adult, mostly because of the vast amount of time I have spent in Mexico, where I developed a great love for Our Lady of Guadalupe. When a friend invited me to join his fifty-four-day rosary practice, I felt moved to participate. Some of my friends were surprised by my decision, because (as you may have noticed) I was a non-Catholic, pagan, shaman girl, but I committed myself to fifty-four days of praying the rosary in Spanish.

The irony is that once we got started, I fell in love with it. The feeling of the beads moving through my fingers and the anchor of daily repetitive prayer and being part of a community praying together filled my soul. I subsequently went on to explore prayer using a Hindu forty-day mala practice (done at 4 a.m. with



my thumb pressed to the earth). After these experiences studying prayer beads in different traditions, I felt inspired to create a prayer bead practice to correspond to the Inner Fire Prayer.

### Using Your Prayer Beads

To begin, you'll need to get some prayer beads. Anything will work: a bead necklace, a traditional Buddhist mala, Islamic misbaha, or Catholic rosary beads—whatever feels sacred to you. When I started doing the Inner Fire Prayer with beads, I made my own custom set by restringing an old green stone mala with purple fluorite beads to mark each of the prayers. (You can buy Inner Fire Prayer beads through my website at [heatherashamara.com](http://heatherashamara.com); each set is unique, and all are made with intent and prayer. All proceeds go to our charity programs.)

Whatever you choose to use, make sure it is sturdy and feels good in your hand. Now, count off the beads and create your own special and unique way of marking sections for each stanza of the prayer. Rosary beads are the easiest because most have five sections consisting of ten beads, with a larger or separated bead that is designed to indicate the end/beginning of each of the sections. If you are working with a different type of prayer bead or a bead necklace, count the number of beads that you have and divide

that number by five. Mark each section off by tying a piece of string or ribbon in front of it or gently filing down the beads at the end of each section in order to make them rough and/or in some way different to the touch. Use any extra beads as a beginning or closing for your prayers.

Be creative; there is no right or wrong way to do this. When I pray using my Inner Fire Prayer beads, made out of the 108-bead mala, I use the first four and last four beads to support and strengthen my true work or my day's focus. I use twenty beads for each of the five stanzas. When I have reached the first bead in the first grouping of twenty, I start the Inner Fire Prayer. Similarly, when I pray using my heavy black obsidian rosary, I start with the Lord's Prayer and Hail Mary in Spanish, or my Sanskrit Kali prayers (which I also do on my rosary), then begin the Inner Fire Prayer when I hit the first decade (or the first group of beads on the round, "necklace" part of the rosary).

Once you have acquired your Inner Fire Prayer beads, take a moment to bless them. I like to use the four elements: air, fire, water, and earth. To use these blessings, offer your prayer beads to the air; light a candle and pass them over the fire; dip them in water; and then press them to the earth. No matter how you choose to bless your beads, ask God/Goddess/Creator/Life to infuse your beads with guidance and strength. Say a prayer out loud if that feels good to

you. Keep them sacred by wearing them or by putting them in a place that is special to you.

I have found that learning to integrate touch, prayer, and breath weaves a strong sateen blanket of connection and peace.

Whether you use a mala, rosary, or other type of beads, you should have five sections to work with. Each section of beads will correspond with each of the five stanzas for the Inner Fire Prayer.

Here is a detailed overview, and I've provided a quick-reference study guide table for you to turn back to if you get lost.

Begin on any "leftover" beads that aren't included in your five sets by praying your true work (whatever word that may be).

Next, for each set of beads you will pray one stanza. When you hit your string/ribbon/transition bead between sets, pause and take a breath before continuing to the next set.

First set of beads:

*May I clear my mind of all thoughts and focus  
my intent on stillness.*

Second set of beads:

*May I clear my field of busyness and connect to  
my deepest faith.*

Third set of beads:

*May I open my emotional body and allow healing flow.*

Fourth set of beads:

*May I honor this physical form as a sacred temple.*

Fifth set of beads:

*May I walk my highest purpose with gratitude for this precious time.*

When you have completed the prayer, sit in silence for a few moments to integrate the prayer and ask for guidance and support.

If you get lost, feel free to flip back to the quick-reference table below, or make a copy to keep close by while you start working with the beads. It may seem complicated at first, but as you get the hang of it, you'll find that praying on your prayer beads can be calming and allows you to more deeply focus on your prayers by incorporating all four aspects of yourself into your prayers.

Stanza	Bead Set	Prayer
Opening Prayer	Pendant, antiphon beads, or any extra beads that aren't included in your five sets	Repeat your true work word for each bead
First Stanza	First Decade, first group of beads	<i>May I clear my mind of all thoughts and focus my intent on stillness</i>
Second Stanza	Second Decade, second group of beads	<i>May I clear my field of busyness and connect to my deepest faith</i>
Third Stanza	Third Decade, third group of beads	<i>May I open my emotional body and allow healing flow</i>
Fourth Stanza	Fourth Decade, fourth group of beads	<i>May I honor this physical form as a sacred temple</i>
Fifth Stanza	Fifth Decade, fifth group of beads	<i>May I walk my highest purpose with gratitude for this precious time</i>

## Afterword

*There will come a time when you believe  
everything is finished. That will be the  
beginning.*

—Louis L'Amour

As I write this, I am sitting in a little wood and bamboo bungalow in Bali, surrounded by rice paddies and fertile, vibrant green nature. My stay here will last five weeks in order for me to have both spaciousness and distance from our fast-paced world while finishing the book. I wanted to be someplace that was familiar, nourishing, and superquiet so I could bring that same energy into the final draft of *Awaken Your Inner Fire*.

Today I feel calm, unplugged, and open. I cook my own simple meals in one pot and use one small bowl and a spoon. I have only three cotton outfits that I hand-wash in a little orange bucket. My email inbox is mostly up to date. I have staff I trust who are taking care of my business at home while I am away. I focus on keeping my thoughts away from their business and attending only to mine in this moment. Because I am caring for my energy and staying grounded in the present, my inner fire is filled with birdsong and golden glitter.

In contrast, however, the last time I visited Bali four years ago things were not so sparkly in my world: for one, my marriage was ending and I was still in denial until my husband, about a week into our journey, told me that he thought we should take a break. Deep inside myself, I knew exactly what that meant . . . he was leaving me for good. While I was dealing with this emotional devastation, I was

also making numerous emergency calls to the United States in the middle of the night because my business was falling apart. Needless to say, despite being in paradise, I was one stressed-out, shattered person, and it felt like even the embers of my inner fire were about to be extinguished. It took quite some time to gather my inner resources to rekindle my flame.

I'd like to share with you the wisdoms that were carved into my being during that time and since. They are those lessons that can remind us all again and again that life goes in cycles. Please don't believe that if you just do it "right" you can somehow avoid pain, grief, stress, or overwhelm. Or if you just build your inner fire strong enough, you'll be done and won't ever need to attend to it again. *Awakening Your Inner Fire* isn't about avoiding the ups and downs of life or being a stoic stone Buddha omming through whatever arises. It is about learning to trust yourself to grow and stretch and expand with what life brings you. It is about building resiliency. It is about tending to your fire the best you can, day in and day out, knowing that some days will stoke your fire into supernova bliss and other days will feel like they are sucking the heat right out of you.

Through all experiences, learn, explore, try again, repeat. Remember your true work.

When you fall down, or you are struggling with the feeling that life is doing everything it can to



dampen your fire, take a moment to stop and bank your coals. Listen to the wisdom within, which will reveal the right action for you in this moment. Know that “this too shall pass,” and after the pulling in or busting out, you can then start steadily feeding your fire again, twig by twig, action by action. You will go through many cycles, as we all do. Be with your fire, not with where you wish your fire could be.

You are not here to live your life perfectly without any mistakes or negative situations. You are not here to prove anything to anyone, or to have a neat and tidy desk and day planner. Chaos and drastic change are not bad things: they shake us up, rattling away old beliefs and safety and giving us the opportunity to see a larger picture. When your world feels small and starts shaking, look up toward the highest peak that life has to offer. Look forward, but also take some time to honor the dismantling and dismembering of what was or what may never be again.

I love this quote from Rumi:

*What does patience mean? It means to look at the thorn and see the rose, to look at the night and see the dawn. Impatience means to be shortsighted as to not be able to see the outcome. The lovers of Life never run out of patience, for they know that time is needed for the crescent moon to become full.*

Lovers of Life never run out of patience. We awaken our inner fire when we become an unconditional lover of Life, which includes the Life that we are: mind, body, emotions, and spirit. Continue to become more and more intimate with all of you as you patiently practice ways to create more space and love in your days. Walk the walk of your true work wherever you are, and bring more warming heat to your inner fire.

I heard this fabulous story in India from a Western renunciate (monk) who used to drive tugboats. He shared that on his journey from California to Hawaii the trade winds would get so strong that while pulling two or three large ships behind his little boat, they would come to a standstill, and sometimes even be pushed backward for days at a time. But no matter how hard the winds blew, he kept going at the same steady pace and eventually the tugboat arrived at its destination.

Sometimes in life the wind is at your back and your fire gets powerfully stoked, and sometimes you are heading into the wind and your fire gets blown wildly about. Keep going. (Or turn around if you realize that you really wanted to go to Santa Cruz, not Hawaii . . . Course-correct as needed, dear ones!) Patience, perseverance. More patience. Remember: Patience doesn't show up uninvited, walk in your door, and say "Sit down, have a cup of tea, we have

plenty of time!” Patience is something that we must invite into our hearts every day. Patience is about maturity and seeing the larger picture, which is something that we could all use more of in our panicked “make it happen now, why isn’t it done already?” moments. Don’t do more or less than you need to do (unless more or less is absolutely needed; sometimes it is). Stay steady, stay focused, and you’ll find yourself arriving at your destination, even if you get pushed back for a while. Your destination may not look the way you thought it would, but it will be right for you if you are clear on your true work and continue to feed your inner fire.

Bring this gentle tugboat attitude to all the exercises and teachings in this book, and let yourself take as long as you need to digest and experiment with it. Study it intensely or put it on the shelf and pick it up when you are nudged to do so. Make it a lifetime practice or a seed of inspiration rather than something to wrap up and check off so that you can move to the next thing. Integrate. Keep going. Know sometimes it will be hard. That’s okay. Sometimes it will also be joyful. Every day is a new day to practice, learn, experience, try again. Maya Angelou once said, “Today is a wonderful day, I’ve never seen this one before.” Use each morning to embrace the new opportunities the day presents you with, knowing

that there will be whole new adventures and trials waiting for you with the next one.

Blessings on your prayers, your true work, and all of your actions. May you continue to awaken your inner fire so that it burns so bright it lights the path for others.



## Acknowledgements

Heaping blessings upon blessings for my new mastermind (“madamemind”) Total Elevation Activation Madamemind or T.E.A.M. of women entrepreneurs holding hands and cheering each other on: Cara Ferrara Bradley, Kate Marolt, Kelly McNelis Senegor, Makenna Johnston, and Zoe Kors. Thanks for growing with me, challenging me, loving me.

To the lands of Sedona where so much of this book was written on various writing retreats, and for my Thelma (or are you Louise?) and writing/teaching partner, Sarah Rose Marshank, for long walks, deep talks, meditation sits, and ROTFL over wacky Bitmojis. Waves of gratitude to all the staff of Sedona Mago Retreat and especially to Jay Stinnett and Adell Shay for your unbounded love and generosity, oat milk lattes, and welcoming me into your home and hearts.

To the people and sacred devotional heart of India and Bali where I spent two months on sabbatical, letting *Awaken Your Inner Fire* percolate within me and blend with the waters of stillness and spaciousness.

A deep bow to Amma and her Amritapuri ashram in Kerala, a high five to my little bamboo cabin in the rice paddies of Ubud, and to Yellow Flower Cafe, and a huge hug to my favorite writing distraction and Libra friend Dennis Hauswirth for introducing me to acroyoga, the joy of talcum powder during hot flashes (it works!), and hosting me at your mouth-dropped-open beautiful home. A big hug to Beth Bell for sisterhood and flower-whispering magic.

To the team at Emerging Women: Chantal Pier-rat, Nicole Fegley, Kelly Dwyer, and Jammie Speyer for all the ways you are selflessly giving back to women. I'm so happy to be part of the EW circle and honored to bring the gifts of the fire forward.

To R and A for all the immense gifts you have given me over the years, both in relationship and beyond. So much of the wisdom in this and previous books came from my sacred dance across time with you both.

And I especially give gratitude to you for reading this book and tending the gorgeous, unique flame of your inner fire. Share your stories and insights with me—we are all in this journey together!

## Inner Fire Resources

Visit my website for additional resources  
and sign up for Daily Spark, my tiny morn-  
ing emails to help ignite your day:  
[www.heatherashamara.com](http://www.heatherashamara.com)

Join the Inner Fire Tribe Facebook  
page and get daily inspiration at:  
[www.facebook.com/groups/innerfiretribe](http://www.facebook.com/groups/innerfiretribe)





Catherine Just



## About the Author

Raised in Southeast Asia, HeatherAsh Amara has traveled the world and is continually inspired by the diversity and beauty of human expression and experience. She brings this openhearted, inclusive worldview to her writings and teachings, which are a rich blend of Toltec wisdom, European shamanism, Buddhism, and Native American ceremony. She is dedicated to inspiring depth, creativity, and joy by sharing the most potent tools from a variety of world traditions.

HeatherAsh Amara is the author of *Warrior Goddess Training*, *Warrior Goddess Training Companion Workbook*, *The Warrior Goddess Way*, and *The Toltec Path of Transformation*. Visit her online at [www.heatherashamara.com](http://www.heatherashamara.com).



Hierophant Publishing  
8301 Broadway, Suite 219  
San Antonio, TX 78209  
210-305-5027

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



**Y**our Inner Fire is the vital energy within you, the unseen force that gives life to your being. Perhaps because this energy can't be measured in a lab, many people live without any idea of its existence, or the importance of tending to it.

In this groundbreaking book, best-selling author HeatherAsh Amara introduces you to the fundamentals of your Inner Fire, and explains how the four major aspects of your being—the mental, spiritual, emotional, and physical—all interact with this powerful energy.

Amara teaches that when you view these four aspects through the lens of your Inner Fire, you can radically change how you think, feel, and live in the world. In these pages, you'll find practices, meditations, and explorations to put the concepts to work in your life.

By tending to your Inner Fire, you will learn how to:

- **Find your true work in the world, regardless of any job you do or role you play.**
- **Use your Inner Fire as your own personal North Star, allowing it to guide you when making important decisions.**
- **Move beyond busyness, stress, and overwhelm and live in joyous creation.**
- **Implement a new daily practice to live in balance no matter what life brings.**

Learning how to tend your Inner Fire in a world that is constantly trying to hook your attention is a challenge—but this book invites you to take a new perspective on who you are and how you relate to the world.

---

Raised in Southeast Asia, HeatherAsh Amara brings an openhearted, inclusive worldview to her writings and teachings. She is the author of *Warrior Goddess Training*, *The Warrior Goddess Way*, and numerous other books. Visit her online at [www.heatherashamara.com](http://www.heatherashamara.com).

\$17.95

Hierophant publishing

