

12 Movements of Resiliency

A project of Growing Together: practical and spiritual resiliency and sustainability

By Sara Lewis

This program is designed to be used by individuals or groups, exploring different aspects of life and how we can all live more resiliently and sustainably. Using the metaphor of a tree, twelve aspects of life are explored with encouragement to move in a direction of greater intention, flexibility, and strength – all the ingredients of resiliency.

Tree of Resiliency



There are many uncertainties in the world right now: climate chaos, economic uncertainty, racial justice reckonings, and more. Uncertainty and change and challenge are all givens, just as they are for all living organisms. But, somehow, some life finds a way to weather those times of challenge, face the uncertainty, change with changing circumstances. Life is adaptable and resilient, and we can be too.

You don't have to be perfect, and you don't have to find the one right answer to anything. It's going to take a whole lot of imperfect beings finding partial answers and working together to piece a patchwork quilt of resiliency to weather the coming changes. Each of us can increase our own personal resiliency and also build networks of mutuality that result in greater resiliency for us all.

We are about to embark on 12 movements of resiliency, making movement toward greater resiliency and sustainability in our lives. One way to think of these 12 movements is by placing them in a tree. The first five movements are the roots holding your tree in place and nurturing it. The next three movements are like the trunk, giving shape and stability to your life. And the final four movements are up in the branches, over everything, in touch with the transcendent, and feeding the tree from the sun.

I've used this metaphor, inspired by the ecological and biological reality of trees and by the archetype of the Tree of Life that is found in many cultures and traditions. Trees are symbols of growth, strength, and generosity. We can learn a lot from the trees.

In each movement, there are several exercises to try. Not all of them will appeal to everyone, and that's fine. Explore and challenge yourself, and take what works for you. If you are doing this work alone, then use the reflection questions for some journaling or other method of reflection. And if you are doing this with a group, come together for discussion and sharing.

Who I Am

This work comes from a very personal place for me, so let me introduce myself. I grew up in Seattle, Washington during the 80's and 90's, with a slightly unconventional upbringing. My parents were engaged in alternative medicine, community theater, music, and I was homeschooled. My family's religious and spiritual beliefs were a mix of New Age practices and general agnosticism, gradually shifting toward Wicca and paganism in my tween and teen years. I was also very much shaped by the unrealized dream of my parents to go back to the land and live off grid and self-sufficiently. This self-sufficiency ideal became a bit of a survivalist and prepper stage for me as a teen, as I focused on being prepared for disaster, emergency, and the possible end of the world.

My life was changed by an unlikely source, a post-apocalyptic science fiction book (*The Postman*, by David Brin). Reading this tale of communities surviving and rebuilding led me to a profound shift in mindset from individual survival to community mutuality. Community has been important to me ever since. I joined a Unitarian Universalist congregation in my teen years and have been UU ever since, I served in the National Guard, and I have volunteered actively for everything from hiking trail maintenance to volunteer chore services for those in need. In the last decade or so, I have also been increasingly made aware of the need for justice and systems change in our society, and that civic engagement includes protest, political action, and the centering of voices that have been marginalized and ignored for too long.

I am married to a man I met in the National Guard, and we are raising two young people, who I homeschooled for part of their education. We live on a four acre "hobby farm",

trying to live sustainably and steward this land well. I have a Masters in Teaching and have been a religious educator for a Unitarian Universalist congregation for 13 years, and I am now in process to become ordained as an Interfaith Chaplain from the Chaplaincy Institute. The call to ministry that I feel is very much to eco-ministry, tending to people and the planet in the face of climate chaos and environmental degradation.

I bring all of this to the 12 Movements curriculum. And I bring the reality that I do not represent all view points or human experiences. I am white, middle class, educated, a cis-woman, living in a heterosexual relationship, and fairly able-bodied. The challenges I face in life will be different, and in many cases smaller, than the challenges faced by others living with different identities and social locations. It is my humble hope that there is still something of use here for most, if not all, people. This is my gift-offering, and as such please feel free to take what works for you and leave what doesn't.

The Roots: What Grounds Us

Roots perform many functions, such as digging down to provide stability and strength and drawing water and nutrients up for the organism. The root system of a tree will be just as large and wide as the branches are. In your personal tree of resiliency, your roots ground you in some of the most basic aspects of life and death. Here you draw nutrients to feed yourself, you sustain your physical body, and you face survival questions of fear and stress. Resilient roots will supply your life with strength, keep you stable, and feed you. Let's dig into those root systems!

Movement One: Food

One of my earliest memories is of picking beans in my mothers garden and eating them right off the bush, the crisp delicious snap of good food literally at my fingertips. My mother didn't keep a garden every year of my childhood, but when she did I loved to eat right out of the garden. As an adult, keeping a garden is a spiritual practice for me, a way to stay connected to the rhythm of soil and sun and food. But I've learned that just growing the food isn't the main event ... it's what you do with the food you have.

It all begins in the kitchen! Whether you have a big homestead with lots of local food or you live in a tiny apartment in the city, the kitchen is the nexus of some of the most important life decisions you can make for yourself and for the planet. How and what you eat is one the largest contributors to your overall resource footprint, and there are many factors to consider. How was the food you eat grown? What chemicals were used in its cultivation? If you eat meat, how were the animals treated? How far did the food travel to reach you? And how were the people in your food chain treated? Did they earn a decent wage?

With all of these questions in mind, building a sustainable and resilient life can begin with what you eat and how you prepare it. So our first movement will begin here, examining our relationship to food and cooking.

Inspiration

One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well. - Virginia Wolf

People who love to eat are always the best people. - Julia Child

All you need is love. But a little chocolate now and then doesn't hurt. - Charles M Schulz

Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food. - Hippocrates

There are people in the world so hungry, that God cannot appear to them except in the form of bread. –Mahatma Gandhi

Hunger is not a problem. It is an obscenity. How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world. –Anne Frank

Spiritual Exercises

Exercise One: A Recipe for Healthy Eating

Many of us have an unhealthy relationship with food, shaped by our society and diet culture. Here is a recipe for a spell or spiritual exercise to try and heal some of that relationship.

Take a container with a lid that can sit on your altar or in another special place while it “cooks”, and some slips of paper or small stones or other objects to represent the following:

- Water
- Good food
- Fun Movements and Exercise
- Enough Sleep
- Love and body acceptance
- Self-discipline

You can proportion this how you like. For instance, it might feel good to give yourself a big helping of Love and just a small dash of self-discipline. Make one a big slip of paper and the other a small one. You can also add more ingredients that make sense to you.

Close your container and set it somewhere safe to “cook”. You can return to it to stir the contents as needed. When you do, ask yourself how these ingredients are alive and moving in your life. As much as possible, allow the recipe to guide you in your living.

Exercise Two: Grace Before Each Meal

I wasn't raised with the practice of grace, so I was always a little bit flustered if someone said grace or silently prayed before a meal. However, the essence of this practice is to remind us that the food we are about to receive, or eat, is a blessing to be grateful for. That's a reminder I think we could all use more of.

For a week, give yourself the challenge to say grace before each meal you eat. It doesn't have to be fancy, you could just pause for a heart felt *Thank You*, but try pausing to express your gratitude for this gift.

After a week, how did it feel? Did it help reshape your relationship to food? How?

Practical Exercises

Exercise Three: Meatless Mondays (or More!)

The consumption of meat contributes to many environmental ills, and a vegetarian diet is one way to make your lifestyle more sustainable. However, it doesn't have to be all or nothing, and many omnivores find satisfaction from simply abstaining from meat one or more days a week. So unless you are already vegetarian, give it a try. Set aside one day a week to eat meatless. Find some new veggie-centered recipes to enjoy!

Exercise Four: Eat Local and In Season

Eating food that was grown locally and is in season right now is a great way to become more connected with local farmers and build a more resilient local community. The food will have a smaller climate footprint because it didn't travel as far, you can know more about how it was cultivated, and as an extra bonus it often tastes better than processed and shipped food does. So seek out your farmer's markets or join a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) at a local farm. What is currently being offered up by local farmers will be what is in season where you live. Eat and enjoy!

Community Exercises

Exercise Five: Host a Soup Swap

Soup is an incredibly flexible food, allowing you to take a little and stretch it into a lot, often just by adding more water. It's also a great food for storage, doing well in the freezer and reheating easily. And there are so many different soups!

To enjoy soup in all its variety, host a community soup swap. All you need are some friends who are willing to cook soup and a time to get together to swap soups. Everyone makes a big pot of soup, and then portions it out into swappable size containers. I do this by making a big pot of soup and then using mason jars to store it.

For a simple swap, just trade jars with your friends. For a more fun swap, host a party and eat soup then send everyone home with soup jars.

Exercise Six: Cookbook Club

And finally, for a fun way to build community around food, host a cookbook club night. Pick one cookbook and everyone cooks a dish from that book, then brings them for a potluck dinner. This can be a fun way to explore a new cookbook!

Resources for Food Resiliency and Sustainability

Websites:

[Food Deserts: Causes, Impacts, & What to Do | Food Revolution Network](#)

[Sustainable Food - Jane Goodall](#)

[Slow Food International](#) www.slowfood.com

Videos:

Feeding 9 Billion People, <https://youtu.be/raSHAqV8K9c>

Food Security in an Insecure World: <https://youtu.be/8jvRB8U8vEw>

The Diet that Helps Fight Climate Change: <https://youtu.be/nUnJQWO4YJY>

Books:

Animal, Vegetable, Miracle by Barbara Kingsolver

Cooked by Michael Pollan

Blessing the Hands That Feed Us by Vicki Robin

And too many wonderful cookbooks to list them all!

Reflection Questions

1. If you are what you eat, what do you primarily put inside your body? Are you happy with your diet? What needs to change?
2. What is your relationship with food? Is it a healthy relationship? Where could you use some healing in your relationship to food?
3. What special memories of food do you have? What are your food stories and family food ways? What did your family teach you about food?
4. What seasonal treat do you look forward to all year long? How is eating seasonally a satisfying practice in your life?
5. What change could you make to your diet to be more sustainable? How are you working toward that change?
6. Is food a human right? Imagine a world where no one was food insecure or hungry. How could that happen?

Movement Two: Health and Body

There are two stories told about our embodied selves. One is from the Hebrew scriptures, and says that after God had created the world and the plants and the animals God decided to create humans “in our own likeness”. Human beings were the crowning jewel of creation. The other story comes from science, and says that every atom that comes together to form our bodies was once the stuff of stars, that we are living star dust, the universe formed in such a way as to be aware of itself. Both stories make it clear that our being is a miracle, an unlikely but amazing creation.

We all have this miracle in our possession, a human body. How you take care of your body and relate to your body will have huge impacts on your ability to be resilient and sustainable, not to mention just everyday quality of life. And yet we live in a culture that gives us very mixed messages about our bodies, with entire industries devoted to feeding us things that are bad for us and other industries devoted to selling us solutions, often with advertising designed to make us insecure and unhappy with our bodies. So this movement is all about finding a happy relationship with the body you have, not the body society tells you that you should have.

Inspiration

It is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society. Jiddu Krishnamurti

The art of healing comes from nature, not from the physician. Therefore the physician must start from nature, with an open mind. Paracelsus

It is health that is real wealth and not pieces of gold and silver. Mahatma Gandhi

Knowing that we can be loved exactly as we are gives us all the best opportunity for growing into the healthiest of people. Fred Rogers

The first wealth is health. Ralph Waldo Emerson

The human body is the best work of art.— Jess C. Scott

Spiritual Exercises

Exercise One: Love Notes to Yourself

Do you know that you are a miracle? In fact, we all are miracles, the unlikely result of millions of years of life, and literally made of the same stuff as stars. Your body is a miracle of existence, flabby and creaky bits and all. So for this exercise, try writing your body a love note. Tell yourself how amazing you are, how beautiful, and all the things you are glad you can do with your body. Post your note somewhere you will see it regularly (a bathroom mirror or a closet doors is a good place). Celebrate the miracle you are.

Exercise Two: Earthing and Sunning

You exist in the space between earth and sun, and your body responds to both. Take some time to connect and soak up the goodness of these two elements. Find a good spot where you can have skin contact with the earth. Take off your shoes, wiggle your toes, lie down on the earth. Feel connected and held by gravity. And close your eyes and soak up some sun too. Feel nourished and fed by the sun's rays. Take as much time here as you like, don't be in a rush. How does it feel to be connected and grounded? Take that feeling in.

Exercise Three: A Body Blessing

Sit or stand comfortably. Breathe in and out deeply a few times.

Send your attention to your feet. Perhaps reach down and touch them, or give them a little massage. Thank your feet for all they do. Feel rooted down.

Now bring your attention to your legs. Perhaps bend your knees a bit, or wiggle your legs. Thank your legs and knees for all they do. Feel the strength there.

Next, bring your attention to your hips and pelvis. Perhaps swing your hips in a circle. Thank your hips and pelvis for all they do. Feel a bit sassy, a bit of a swing.

The core and the abs come next. Place your hands on your stomach and thank your center for all it does. Feel yourself balanced.

Go up to your heart, lungs, and chest. Place your hands on your chest and thank it for all it does. Feel your heart beat, steady.

Now your shoulders and arms. Perhaps shrug your shoulders, or give yourself a hug. Thank the arms and shoulders, and especially the hands, for all they do. Wiggle your fingers and feel powerful.

Bring your attention up to your neck. Perhaps give yourself a little neck roll. Thank it for all it does. Feel tall and erect.

Finally, bring your attention to your head and face. Perhaps touch your forehead, and smile a little. Thank your head for all it does. Feel embodied.

Say one final thank you to your whole body: “Thank you for being my body, thank you for all you do and all you are. May you know yourself to be a miracle, may you be well, may you be whole. Blessed Be.”

Practical Exercises

Exercise Four: Move that Body

Bodies are made for movement, and we are fortunate to have so many amazing ways to move. Perhaps you already have a favorite way to move, and that’s great. Do that. Run, dance, walk, climb. Whatever your preferred way to move, just do it. Perhaps you don’t have a favorite way to move. Start simple, then. Just stretch, or walk, or try chair yoga. Whatever your chosen movement, give yourself a challenge to do it on a regular basis. Set a goal, of steps or days or miles. Celebrate yourself when you accomplish the goal.

Exercise Five: Set Yourself Up for Better Sleep

A lack of good quality sleep will negatively effect your body and your health. So give yourself the gift of a good night’s sleep with some attention to your sleep hygiene. The Sleep Foundation has some good tips here: [What is Sleep Hygiene? - Sleep Foundation](#)

Set up your bedroom space for ideal sleep, disengage from electronics for 30 minutes before sleep, and try some relaxation or breathing techniques. Set a routine bedtime and wake up time. Getting good sleep is worth it.

Community Exercises

Exercise Six: Be a Friend to Parks and Trails

We all need places to get outdoors and get some exercise, and parks and trails provide both. How does your community provide for these life-quality enhancing places? If you are lucky to live in a place with wonderful parks and trails, is there a way you can volunteer there? Many parks departments have volunteer clean up days, for instance.

And if you live somewhere that is lacking in parks and trails, or where your parks and trails need some love, reach out to your local government to advocate for the importance of those parks and trails!

Resources

Websites:

[Healthy lifestyle: 5 keys to a longer life - Harvard Health Blog - Harvard Health Publishing](#)

Videos:

What Americans Agree On When It Comes to Health

https://www.ted.com/talks/rebecca_onie_what_americans_agree_on_when_it_comes_to_health?utm_campaign=tedsread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

What Makes Us Sick? Look Upstream

https://www.ted.com/talks/rishi_manchanda_what_makes_us_get_sick_look_upstream?utm_campaign=tedsread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

Sleep is Your Superpower

https://www.ted.com/talks/matt_walker_sleep_is_your_superpower?utm_campaign=tedsread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

Books:

The Body is Not an Apology by Sonya Renee Taylor

The Body Keeps the Score by Bessel van der Kolk M.D.

Reflection Questions:

1. What do you do to celebrate your body? What are you grateful to your body for? How do you build a healthy and loving relationship with your body?
2. Do you struggle to feel positive about your body? How could you accept and love yourself more?
3. How do you support your own health? What are your healthy habits? What healthy habits are you working on?
4. Imagine a health care system that worked. What would we need to change?
5. Imagine a healthy world. How would we transform our society if we focused on health? What can we do to promote a healthier world for everyone?

Movement Three: Stress Regulation

Stress is the body's reaction to perceived dangers, and it causes a whole cascade of physiological events in the body. Exposure to some level of stress is a given for most people, but not everyone reacts equally to those stressors. Not everyone is under equal stress, of course, and this movement in no way is meant to imply that it is just a choice to be stressed. Some in our society are under oppressive levels of stress, and that is something we all should work to shine the light of justice upon.

But, stress is also a *reaction* to outside circumstance, and you can improve your stress regulation through a variety of actions, all of which will help you be more resilient and live a sustainable life. This third movement asks you to look at the way you cope with stress in your life and move toward healthier habits.

Inspiration

The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another. William James

Stress is caused by being 'here' but wanting to be 'there'. Eckhart Tolle

In times of stress, the best thing we can do for each other is to listen with our ears and our hearts and to be assured that our questions are just as important as our answers. Fred Rogers

You can't always control what goes on outside, but you can always control what goes on inside.
Wayne Dyer

Life is 10 percent what you experience and 90 percent how you respond to it. – Dorothy M Neddermeyer

You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated. In fact, it may be necessary to encounter the defeats, so you can know who you are, what you can rise from, how you can still come out of it. – Maya Angelou

Spiritual Exercises

Exercise One: Try Meditation

There is a story about a spiritual teacher who told his students to meditate for an hour a day. He was asked “what if we don’t have time?” and his answer was in that case to meditate for two hours a day. The truth is, the busier and more stressed you are the more you could benefit from intentionally slowing down. But it doesn’t have to be for hours!

If you have a form of meditation you do already, make a commitment to prioritize that practice in your life. If you have never meditated, it’s super easy! You can follow the simple directions below, try a meditation app, or follow a youtube video like this one:

<https://youtu.be/z6X5oElg6Ak>

Simple meditation:

- Sit in a comfortable way, with your feet flat on the ground and your back fairly straight. Lay your hands in your lap or on your knees.
- Lower your gaze, or focus on one object, or close your eyes.
- Take a deep breath in, focusing on that breath. Hold it for a count of two, and then exhale long and deep, holding your exhale for a count of two.
- Continue focusing on the breath, for a cycle of 30 breathes.
- That’s it! Just focus on your breath. If other thoughts arise, just let them drift away and return your thoughts to your breath.

Exercise Two: Create Your Own God/Higher Power Box

You can read more about the God Box here: TheGodBoxProject.com | [The God Box book by author Mary Lou Quinlan](#)

It's a simple concept. Just get yourself a box of some kind, preferably with a lid. Any sort of box will do, but you can also decorate and beautify your box.

Then, whenever you have something that feels like it's too heavy for you to carry, write a little note and put it in your God Box. In essence, these are the things that you are asking for a higher power to help you with.

Try it for yourself! You just may find that it helps you let go rather than stress.

Practical Exercises

Exercise Three: Dancing With Yourself

Exercise and movement of any kind help with anxiety and depression, but dance is an especially great way to metabolize stress out of your body. You don't have to be a good dancer, but just try it. Put on some music that you like, and just dance. Notice how it makes you feel. Have a little dance party by yourself in the kitchen. Have fun. Shake it off.

Exercise Four: Assess Your Use of Substances

One common, but often unhealthy, coping mechanism for stress is the use of substances such as alcohol, marijuana, tobacco, and other drugs. Substances can numb and ease the stress and anxiety, so their use is understandable, but can quickly get out of control.

This week, notice how much you drink, smoke, or imbibe. If it feels like it's too much, challenge yourself to cut back. If that doesn't feel like something you can do, seek help. Join a 12 step program, talk to your doctor, talk to your therapist, or talk to a friend. You can do this. You can be in charge of how you respond to stress.

Exercise Five: Limit the News

Yes, you want to stay informed about what matters and what's going on in the world. However, the 24/7 news cycle doesn't so much inform as it inflames. Turn it off. Decide on a strategy for getting the news, and seek out sources you trust. Seek out more in-depth reporting and take in less TV news and pundit shows. Your adrenal system may end up thanking you.

Resources

Videos:

How Stress Effects Your Body: <https://youtu.be/v-t1Z5-oPtU>

How to Make Stress Your Friend: <https://youtu.be/RcGyVTAoXEU>

Books:

The Age of Overwhelm: Strategies for the Long Haul by Laura van Dernoot Lipsky

Reflection Questions:

1. Think of a time you were under a great deal of stress, but you succeeded or made it through anyway. How did that feel? What were your healthy coping mechanisms?
2. What is your stress go-to (food, booze, etc)? What would be a healthier alternative?
3. How much news and media do you consume regularly? How does the media you consume end up making you feel? What strategies might help you stay informed but also non-stressed?
4. Our culture has some very unhealthy messages around stress. Do you ever feel that it's a badge of honor to be overworked and over stressed? How do those unhealthy messages affect you?
5. Where can you give yourself more space for calm and mindfulness in your life? What would you have to let go of to create a less stressful life?
6. How much do you have control over the level of stress in your life, and what can't you control? Can you change the way you respond to what you don't control?

Movement Four: Facing Fear

Fear is a natural emotion and helps us to survive. Think of prey animals ... if they weren't afraid they would likely not live as long as more fearful and cautious animals. Being fearless is similar to being foolhardy.

And yet, fear can also hold us back in ways that are not helpful to us. All life forms occasionally need to take a risk, and move through fear to try something new or challenging. We humans also need to take risks and do things that scare us, moving through fear.

So it's a tricky balancing act. We need to face our fears, and decide if they are grounded in wisdom or in folly. Are they justified fears, and is there anything we can do to be better prepared in case they come true? Or are they the kind of fear that is just holding us back? How can we move through that fear? Explore these questions, and more, in the exercises that follow.

Inspiration

“First of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself – nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.” — Franklin D. Roosevelt

“Move outside the tangle of fear-thinking. Live in silence.” — Rumi

“Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less.” — Marie Curie

“I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.” Nelson Mandela

Spiritual Exercises

Exercise One: Try Prayer

Prayer is an ancient spiritual practice, most often associated with theistic religions. However, prayer doesn't have to be directed at a deity. Prayers can take many forms, including secular prayers. You can explore prayer more with the books *Simply Pray* by Erik Walker Wikstrom and *the Power of Ritual* by Casper Ter Kuile.

You can write your own prayer, make it up as you go, or find a prayer that you like and borrow it. A classic prayer that may be helpful is known as the Serenity Prayer. Here's an adaptation of this type of prayer you can use. Use the name of a higher power that works for you: Lord/God/Universe/Spirit of Life/Mother Earth/Etc

(Higher Power), give me the strength to change what needs to be changed,

And to face the fears I need to face.

Give me the serenity to accept what cannot be changed

And the wisdom to know the difference

Try saying this prayer daily, or as needed.

Exercise Two: Spellwork

Spellwork, from Wicca, offers us another way to address our fears and anxieties. Try this spell as you face your fear:

Practical Exercises

Exercise Three: Emergency Preparedness Plan

What emergencies and disasters are most likely where you live? Are you prepared for hurricanes, earthquakes, or other natural disasters? Make a plan and get prepared. There are many useful resources at [Plan Ahead for Disasters | Ready.gov](#)

Even a simple step, such as putting a blanket or a pair of walking shoes in your car, is progress. Don't let the enormity of disaster preparedness overwhelm you! I like the approach of each time I'm reminded of a danger (say an article about an accident is in the paper) I do just one thing to be better prepared to face it. A car accident? I check the batteries in the flashlight I keep in the car. A reminder of the earthquake danger here? I check the expiration dates on my emergency water supply. Each little step will add up to better preparedness in the end.

Community Exercises

Exercise Four: Neighborhood Network

Knowing your neighbors makes you safer and more resilient in the face of emergencies. And yet many of us don't know our neighbors at all. You can change that by reaching out. Make up a card that lists your address and phone number, and go door to door introducing yourself. Ask your neighbors if they'd like to be on a neighborhood contact list, which you are putting together. Even if only a few people opt in, you'll still be building connections.

If the whole neighborhood seems daunting, just challenge yourself to meet one or two neighbors you don't already know or have contact information for.

Resources

What Fear Can Teach Us: <https://youtu.be/OwgWkUIm9Gc>

One simple trick to overcome your biggest fear: <https://youtu.be/tqCQ5iNLnI0>

Daring Greatly: An animated summary: <https://youtu.be/eF6V8VBUKwA>

Daring Greatly by Brene Brown

Reflection Questions

1. What have you feared in the past but no longer fear? What changed?
2. Which of your fears have valid grounds? What can you do to face these fears and be better prepared?
3. Which of your fears are less likely, or even baseless? What can you do to calm these fears?
4. What dangers don't bother you? Is there something you have avoided thinking about or preparing for (such as an earthquake)?
5. Is fear holding you back or keeping you too guarded? Where would letting yourself be vulnerable move you in a positive direction? Can you let your guard down for that?

Movement Five: Home

Your home is your little corner of this world to manage and care for, and in return it shelters and cares for you. And just like how there are many homes in the ecosystem for many different kinds of creatures (a hole in the ground is perfect for some, but others build a nest in a tree) your home should be right for you. Some of us may love apartment dwelling in an urban environment, others a tiny house on wheels, and others may love a cottage or farmhouse in the country.

But wherever you dwell, how you live in your home is a big part of the impact you make on the environment and climate sustainability, as well as a source of your own resiliency. Making a sustainable and resilient home is a big task, but a rewarding one. So let's explore this topic together.

Inspiration

"There is nothing like staying at home for real comfort." Jane Austen

"The ache for home lives in all of us, the safe place where we can go as we are and not be questioned." Maya Angelou

"Home is the nicest word there is." Laura Ingalls Wilder

"He is happiest, be he king or peasant, who finds true peace in his home." Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Spiritual Exercises

Exercise One: A Home Blessing

From hanging a sign that says “Bless this Home” to smudging the home with burnt herbs, there are many ways to bless a home. And while it might be more common to bless a home when you first move in, a home blessing is something that can be done anytime, and multiple times.

There are many ideas and prayers for a Christian Home Blessing here: [House Blessings & House Blessing Prayer - Terra Sancta Guild](#)

And for a pagan Home Blessing here: [House Blessing Ritual \(isisbooks.com\)](#) and here: [A Home Blessing Spell - PaganSquare - PaganSquare - Join the conversation! \(witchesandpagans.com\)](#)

Or try this super simple blessing:

Light a candle, and say:

“We who dwell here bless this home.

May nothing evil cross its door

May it keep love in, and keep hate out.”

If you like, you can carry the candle throughout the home, repeating the blessing in each room. You might also want to pay special attention to doorways, and say the blessing on the threshold.

Exercise Two: Make a Chore into a Spiritual Practice

There’s no getting away from the fact that with a home comes chores. Sweeping, dusting, and other tasks must be done repetitively. But they don’t need to be a hardship, in fact they can be their own form of a spiritual practice. Try picking one task that you do almost daily. For me, it’s the dishes. Now try approaching this task with complete mindfulness. If you are washing dishes, be aware of each dish, pay attention to the motion of your hands. Be totally present to the task at hand. Don’t rush. Breathe. In these simple ways, just by changing the way you approach the task, you can change the whole experience of doing it. Notice how you are experiencing the task now that you are bringing mindfulness and intentionality to it.

Exercise Three: Acknowledge Whose Land This Is

If your home is in the United States, it is likely on land that was taken away from an indigenous people. While we cannot change history, we can learn from it and acknowledge the harm that has been done. Even just an acknowledgement is a first step. Find whose land you are on with this app: [Native-Land.ca | Our home on native land](#)

Next, assess whether you are harming native peoples and lands now. Some self assessment questions can be found here: [A Self-Assessment - Native Governance Center](#)

Then, depending on where you live, there may also be ways that you can make financial restitution as well. Seattle has the “Real Rent Duwamish” program, and many other areas have similar voluntary land tax programs you can opt into.

Practical Exercises:

Exercise Four: Do an Energy Audit

There is no getting away from the fact that we are energy consumers, in one way or another. That’s our niche in the ecosystem, since we animals cannot perform photosynthesis. But humans have gone far beyond a balanced and honorable harvest of energy, into massive energy consumption that is far out of balance. Much of that energy is used at home.

A large part of your carbon footprint is taken up with heating and cooling your home, along with other home energy use. You can make a big impact with a few upgrades and they don’t all have to be expensive. Sealing air leaks (drafts) can be done with curtains and fabric door stops. Insulating windows for the winter can be done with inexpensive plastic inserts you can build yourself, or even just by applying bubble wrap to your windows.

So assess how well your home is doing now, and then make some priorities for improvement. Here are some helpful tips for doing a DIY Audit of your home: [Do-It-Yourself Home Energy Audits | Department of Energy](#)

Exercise Five: Detox Your Home

You spend a lot of time in your home, so it shouldn’t be a place that makes you sick! And yet many household products do contain dangerous and just icky toxins. And, unfortunately, getting your home better insulated and sealed can just trap you inside with those toxins and not allow good air circulation. Look at the products in your home, read the labels, and maybe even do some research. You might not be able to do anything about the new carpet or the mattress, but what about your cleaning products and personal hygiene items? You may want to swap those out for healthier alternatives, such as these products: [15 Best Natural House Cleaning Products 2021 | The Strategist | New York Magazine \(nymag.com\)](#)

And then you can clean your air. You can get an air purifier, but you can also use houseplants! Many plants are super at cleaning indoor air up, such as these: [20 Best Plants for Cleaning Indoor Air 2021 | HGTV](#)

Resources:

[Green Living | Green America](#)

[Resilient homes: Future-Proof building for a changing Climate - Ecohome](#)

Making Home by Sharon Astyk

Sweeping Changes by Gary Thorp

Reflection Questions:

1. What kind of home did you grow up in? Is that the kind of home you want to live in now? How is your current home different?
2. How is the home you have now already your “dream” home? What do you most appreciate about your home?
3. How eco-friendly is your home? What are your priorities for improvement? What would be your big dream for making home sustainable?
4. What is your relationship to the concept of “home making”? What attitudes were you raised with? How do you feel now? What aspects of home making do you enjoy and which do you not? How can you shift your relationship to enjoy it more?
5. Should housing be a right? What could we do as a society to see everyone housed?

The Trunk of the Tree: Structure and Bridge

Now we come to the trunk of our tree of resiliency. The trunk is the bridge between the nourishment of the roots and the leaves, and gives the tree its structure and height. While it can look like not a lot is happening in the trunk, without a strong and flexible trunk the tree couldn't stand. The three movements I've placed in the trunk of the tree all have to do with how we relate to others and are part of systems larger than ourselves, so this is also a reminder that a single tree standing alone is more vulnerable than a tree that is part of a grove or a forest. Our trunks will be most resilient when they are in relationship with others who are also resilient.

Movement Six: Economics

Money is one of the top stressors for many people and ranks among the top subjects couples argue about. And yet, money is just a tool, a way to keep track as we move goods and services

around in our communities and our world. But this tool has a lot of mystique around it, and many of us were not educated in how to use this tool. There are many organizations and individuals who exploit us in our capitalistic society as well. The system is set up to encourage the average individual to spend more than they can afford and to get into debt. It can be a vicious cycle, and hard to break free.

“The Economy” has also become an almost mythic idea for many of us. And yet humans have not always lived with this understanding of that word. Economy comes from the roots “eco”, meaning *home* and “-nomy”, meaning *management*. So another way to think about the economy is that it is how we choose to manage the resources of our home ... Earth.

So how can you be more sustainable and resilient in your relationship to money and the economy? What money education have you received, and what would you like to get better at? Together, let’s explore this sometimes tricky topic.

Inspiration

“It is not the man who has too little, but the man who craves more, that is poor.”- Seneca

“It’s good to have money and the things that money can buy, but it’s good, too, to check up once in a while and make sure that you haven’t lost the things that money can’t buy.” - George Lorimer

“That man is richest whose pleasures are cheapest.” - Henry David Thoreau

“Capital as such is not evil; it is its wrong use that is evil. Capital in some form or other will always be needed.” – Gandhi

“We can tell our values by looking at our checkbook stubs.” – Gloria Steinem

“I don’t think it is an exaggeration to say that financial literacy, economic empowerment, and wealth building is going to be the last leg of the civil rights movement. Because one step toward financial literacy takes you two steps toward personal empowerment.” – Russell Simmons

Spiritual Exercises:

Exercise One: A Prosperity Altar

Try creating a prosperity altar to honor abundance in your life. First choose a location. You might want to consider the feng shui of your space in selecting the location, but anywhere in your home or business is fine. Then build your altar, with the following as possibilities:

- An altar cloth, maybe green or gold or of a sumptuous fabric
- Green or gold candles

- Statue of a prosperity Buddha or other allies you feel called to
- Crystals or semi-precious stones you're drawn to
- Incense
- Cash or gold
- Anything that brings to mind prosperity for you

Set up your space with care and attention, and then set an intention for the space. A simple prayer would do, such as the following:

May I/we be blessed with much

As we are grateful for the abundance

All around us. May we know

Prosperity and true well-being

As we also know generosity

May it be so

And then revisit your altar often to keep it tidy and free of dust, and to set new intentions or wishes.

Exercise Two: Tithing

Many spiritual and religious traditions have a concept of charitable giving built into them. For a Christian it may be the duty to tithe to the church, for a Muslim it is zakat, or the paying of an alms tax to charity. Whatever your religious or spiritual leaning, generosity and charity can be a part of it.

So try this out. Set yourself a goal of how much you want to give. It can be a percentage of your income, or a set dollar amount. Aim for generosity but not so high that it hurts your own well-being. Once you have your goal number, you can decide where to donate. What causes match your values and vision for the world? Donate there and know that your money is carrying your values into the world.

Practical Exercises

Exercise Three: Money Mapping

Where does your money go? If you don't know exactly, try an exercise called a Money Map. On a large piece of paper, pencil in circles for the known expenses: home, car, food, etc. Leave yourself space for unexpected or unknown expenses to come as well. Now, for a month, place a

little pen mark in each location that your money “goes”. You can put the actual number there too and add it up at the end of the month. This more visual way will give you a realistic idea of where your money goes.

Exercise Four: Make a Budget

After you’ve mapped where your money currently goes, your next step could be to make a budget. There are a lot of budgeting tools out there, but in its simplest form a budget is just a plan for how you want to spend your money. These resources may help you get started:

[Budgeting 101: How to Budget Money - NerdWallet](#)

[Making a Budget | Consumer.gov](#)

[How to Create a Budget: Step-By-Step Guide \(cnbc.com\)](#)

Community Exercises

Exercise Five: Join a Non-Consumer Group

Money is just a tool, and there are other ways we can organize ourselves to exchange goods and services. Look in your local area for a mutual aid society or a Buy Nothing Group (they may be on Facebook). It’s incredibly satisfying to have a group where you can post a need or a want and have others respond to you. Explore other ways to create alternative economies: Little Free Libraries and Pantries, Food is Free programs, and neighborhood swaps. Or go really simple, and just ask a friend for help, or offer your help.

This exercise will be most powerful if you really engage in trying to get some of your needs met in a non-consumer way and you engage in helping others. I have found it really powerful to loan and borrow goods. We don’t all have to own a full set of camping equipment or every specialty tool – we can share!

Exercise Six: Help Create a Better Economy

With whatever resources you have, you can help create the economy you’d like to have. Here are some ideas, (based on the work of [Della Duncan](#)), what works for you?

- If you own more than two homes (primary and vacation home), transition your other properties into a community land trust home.
- If you steward land, convert all or some of it into a land trust.

- if you own a for profit business and make more than 100,000 per year, contribute 100% of your profit (after your income and expenses are paid) to a non-profit of your choice.
- If you own a business and have employees, cooperativize your business and bring them into the profit sharing and decision making.
- If you work in a nonprofit, adopt a horizontal governance structure and become a worker-self-directed-nonprofit
- If you bank with a corporate bank, move to money to a credit union
- If you invest in the stock market (even if it's "socially responsible" investing), move your money and invest directly and locally.
- If you need a ride, delete Uber and Lyft and take a cab or public transportation until a platform cooperative alternative exists.
- If you need to order anything, delete your Amazon account and purchase it directly from a small, local, and independent business that delivers. And if it takes longer, see it as an opportunity to practice patience.

Resources:

Debtor's Anonymous: [Debtors Anonymous - Meetings, Support, Groups and Programs | Debtors Anonymous](#)

The Foreign Language of Financial Literacy: <https://youtu.be/ny5sciZoyHc>

Break the Social Taboo About Money: <https://youtu.be/5j33a8c1o-c>

Money Shame: The Silent Killer: <https://youtu.be/RxBfPDq8VF4>

The Art of Frugal Hedonism by Annie Raser-Rowland and Adam Grubb

Inspired Philanthropy by Tracy Gary

Reflection Questions:

1. What money stories did you learn as a child? When did you start managing money for yourself? How did it go?
2. What lessons have you learned about money and the economy? How equipped do you feel to manage economically?

3. What relationship do you have with money now? What parts of your relationship with money need some work?
4. Do you find anything problematic about our economic system? How can you work around the parts of the economy you don't like? (For instance, do you shop a certain way or do trades or ?)
5. How could the economy be more fair and take care of people and the environment? What do you envision as a possibility?

Movement Seven: Relationships

Human beings evolved to be relational, or in other words we are built for relationship. Relationships with others provide companionship, fun, challenge, accountability, and so much more. In encountering another, we are often given our greatest insight and growth for ourselves. And, of course, it's nice to have someone to call for help with things like a ride or help moving something! But relationships also take work, and sometimes bring with them pain. Every relationship will end, one way or another, and no one you enter into relationship with will be perfect. So how do we find relationship as a source of resiliency?

Inspiration

"I am convinced that material things can contribute a lot to making one's life pleasant, but, basically, if you do not have very good friends and relatives who matter to you, life will be really empty and sad and material things cease to be important." David Rockefeller

"The beginning of love is to let those we love be perfectly themselves, and not to twist them to fit our own image. Otherwise we love only the reflection of ourselves we find in them." Thomas Merton

"No road is long with good company." Turkish proverb

"Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves." Carl Jung

"Some people go to priests; others to poetry; I to my friends." —Virginia Woolf

"It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences." - Audre Lorde

Spiritual Exercises

Exercise One: Love Magic

One of the biggest stereotypes about spellwork and magic has to do with love potions, or the idea that magic can make someone love you. If that were true, there would be some serious ethical questions about using magic to control another person. But most pagans I know don't believe this is how love magic works. Magic can only focus and amplify energy that is already there. So, whether you'd like to give some energy to strengthening the love you already have or to attracting new love into your life, you might try one of [these simple spells](#).

Exercise Two: Forgiveness and Atonement

Human beings aren't perfect, and we often hurt each other in relationships either intentionally or unintentionally. Giving forgiveness and grace is a way to move beyond the hurt of those moments, a way to return to healthy relationship (with others or with ourselves). But forgiveness does not mean that you have to subject yourself to ongoing hurt Sometimes a relationship must end because it is not healthy to remain in it. You might still want to practice some forgiveness, while maintaining those healthy boundaries to protect yourself.

A simple forgiveness exercise involves thinking of a person you'd like to forgive, and writing them a letter. This does not have to be a letter you will actually send, so feel free to be open and vulnerable as you imagine telling this person how their actions impacted you. And then choose to forgive and let go. When you are done writing, you might like the catharsis that comes with burning the letter, or shredding it, burying it, or (depending on type of paper you used) dissolving it in water. As the letter falls apart, visualize releasing the energy you've been holding around this relationship issue. Let it go.

For an atonement exercise, think of a person who you have harmed and an action you'd like to atone for. Depending on the relationship, you might seek this person out to make a sincere apology. Or, if that's not wise or feasible, you could adapt the letter writing exercise to be a letter of atonement, and at the end you choose to forgive yourself.

Exercise Three: Grief Shrines or Altars

Every relationship ends, and we will all lose someone (human or animal) who we love. One way to remember and keep that relationship present for you might be with an altar or shrine. We see shrines pop up in public places where someone has died, but a shrine could also be in a private place such as your home. You can even make a small portable shrine in a box that you can bring out when you need it. There is no one right way to do this, it's just what works for you and reminds you of the person or pet you are remembering and honors the love and grief you feel for them. There are some helpful ideas [to be found here](#).

Practical Exercises

Exercise Four: List the Positives

It can be a very human thing to start to notice more negatives and annoyances about another person, and not take note of the good things. It's easy to take people for granted. So here is a little brain hack that can help you focus on the positives and improve your relationship. Each day, list all the things you appreciated about the other person that day. What did they do that made you feel good or supported you? What aspects of their being did you enjoy? List them all. Optionally, you can both practice this together and then share your lists with one another. Knowing what another person appreciates about you can guide you to do more of that! But you don't have to share, you'll still benefit from the exercise even if you do it all alone and don't tell the other person you're doing it.

Exercise Five: Understand Love Languages

The golden rule tells us to treat others as we would like to be treated, but have you heard of the platinum rule? The platinum rule tells us to treat others as *they* would like to be treated. The difference here is the understanding that people have different preferences, likes, and dislikes. One model for understanding how people receive love in different ways was developed by Gary Chapman, called the Five Love Languages. Do you know what your love language is? When do you feel loved – when people do things for you, or bring you gifts, or verbally affirm you? Do you know the love language for your partner, your children, or other important people in your life? It's a fruitful topic to explore and understand! Learn more at: [What are The 5 Love Languages?](#)

Exercise Six: Stay in Touch

It's easy to get busy and lose track of the last time you spent time with someone or reached out to them, but you can never make new old friends, as the saying goes. Take this as a reminder to connect with someone and keep those ties strong. Maybe it's a phone call, a plan to hang out, or even just a card or a text. But take the time to reach out to an old friend or loved one.

Resources:

TEDtalk: [The Difference Between Healthy and Unhealthy Love](#)

TEDtalk: [Love, You're Doing It Wrong](#)

[The Five Love Languages](#)

Website: [Love is Respect](#)

Reflection Questions

1. How do your relationships make you more resilient, happy, and strong? Who are the people you can call upon in times of need?
2. What relationships have you lost, and what legacy have they left you with? What healing or grieving work do you still have to do?
3. What makes you feel good in a relationship? What is your love language and do the people in your life know it?
4. How do you show love and appreciation to the people in your life? What do you do to keep your relationships strong and healthy? Is there something more you'd like to do? How could you make that a priority for yourself?
5. What relationship skill do you think all people should be taught? How could we all learn to be better to one another?

Movement Eight: Community

Life is interdependent, with complex webs of relationships between different organisms creating the ecosystems we all depend on. Humans are no different ... we also form complex webs of relationships that we depend on for our lives. Most of us are part of many communities: our geographical community, an identity-based community, a school community, an interest-based community, and more. And all of those community bonds and connections, the quality of our networks, have huge impacts on our resilience. When you help to make your community stronger, you are helping yourself as well as everyone else in that community.

Inspiration

"There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about." – Margaret J. Wheatley

"We cannot live only for ourselves. A thousand fibers connect us with our fellow men." – Herman Melville

"The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members." – Coretta Scott King

"If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." – African Proverb

“We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community ... Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes and for our own.” – Cesar Chavez

Spiritual Exercises

Exercise One: List Your Spiritual Assets

We all bring qualities of our spirit into our interactions and our work in the world. For instance, some have a deep compassion, or an ability to forgive, a great sense of humor, or a commitment to justice. These can be thought of as your [spiritual assets](#), the gifts you bring to community. Take some time to reflect on your own particular spiritual assets. Not necessarily skills or interests, but the deep qualities of being that come from your particular spirit or your particular connection with the sacred/divine (however you understand that). List your assets. Are there some assets that you’d like to further develop? Are there ways to bring your assets to the community? And, most importantly, take a moment to appreciate the unique gift that you are! Your community needs you, just the way you are.

Exercise Two: Experience Spiritual Community

While it’s totally possible to have a rich and rewarding spiritual life that is comprised of solo practices, there is also a huge benefit to finding a spiritual community that can give you support and challenge for deepening in your spirit. In Buddhism, there are three refuges: The Buddha (the model), the Dharma (the teachings), and the sangha (the community of believers/learners/practitioners). Having a sangha, or a community, will help you follow the teachings and the models. What kind of community should you seek? That is totally up to you! For some, a yoga or meditation class will fit the bill. For others, singing in a church choir. There are many possibilities. It may take a while for you to find the right fit, so just commit to trying some experiences and see where they lead.

Practical Exercises

Exercise Three: Map Your Network

This exercise can be helpful just to raise your awareness of what communities and networks you are a part of. These are connections that can support you, and also influence points for you to impact others (and, eventually, the world). On a large piece of paper, place yourself in the center. Then draw or write each of your communities around yourself. Perhaps “old school friends” is one, or “other parents at school”, or “dance studio people”. These connections don’t have to your best friends ... these are any communities or networks that you are a part of.

When you are done, what do you notice? Are you more connected than you realized? Less? Are there communities you'd like to reconnect with? Become more active in? Or are there communities that don't feel healthy and you need more space from? If you like, journal about your noticings.

Exercise Four: Learn About Your Community

How much do you know about the place you live? Its history, ecosystems, local government, traditions, and local issues? With the decline in local newspapers, many of us are more aware of national or global issues than we are of what is happening in our own communities. How can you learn more? If you still have a local paper, consider subscribing. There may also be websites, blogs, or social media accounts that follow local news or events. Look up your local government and chamber of commerce websites and explore them a bit. Find out if you have a local historical society of any kind. Invest some of your time in knowing your local community.

Community Exercises

Exercise Five: Show Up to Support Community

There are many opportunities to just show up and support a vital community. Local festivals, free concerts in the park, parades, tree lightings ... many events are free and open to everyone to just show up. Then there are fundraisers for local organizations, ranging from the Lions Club Pancake Breakfast to fancy galas where you get dressed up. Or attend the local high school or community theater play, or go to the contra dance at the grange. Every community will be different, so it will take some paying attention. But there's nothing worse than throwing a party and not having anyone show up, so be one of the folks who shows up and enjoys what your community has to offer.

Exercise Six: Be a "Joiner"

In his 1995 essay "Bowling Alone", Robert Putnam traced the decline in American social engagement, and other demographic studies have indicated a decline in "joining" behavior. You might notice this in your own life and networks, that people are reluctant to commit, RSVP, or join a club or group. Unfortunately, this trend contributes to the weakening of our community networks. If you would like to counter this trend even a little bit, consider joining something. If you don't have much time to give, it can be something small and simple – even just your local NextDoor network or an online Buy Nothing or Mutual Aid Collective group. If you have more

time to give, consider joining a civic organization like the Rotary Club or the Friends of the Library. Look around, I'm sure you'll find a place that could use your engagement!

Resources

TEDtalks:

[Why You Should Talk to Strangers](#)

[Lessons on Community Engagement](#)

Other Videos:

[The Importance of Community](#)

[Tiny Leaps, Big Changes: The Importance of Community](#)

Website: [Charter for Compassion: Community](#)

Books:

Emergent Strategy by adrienne marie brown

Bowling Alone by Robert Putnam

The Art of Gathering by Priya Parker

Reflection Questions:

1. When have you most truly felt like you belonged? What were the qualities of that community and that time in your life?
2. How strong is your network now? Are you placing enough importance (time, energy, etc) in community building? What kind of community would you like to have?
3. What gifts and assets do you bring to your communities? How do you positively effect others in your network? What gifts do your communities give to you? What benefits do you receive from community?
4. What are some challenges that your communities are facing? Is there anything you can do to help your communities with those challenges?
5. What do you think is the key to building strong community? How could we have stronger communities in this world?

The Branches: Touching Something Larger

The next four movements will be in the branches of our tree of resiliency. Here, we stretch out beyond ourselves and our immediate surroundings and come in contact with the vast and sometimes unknowable. In the branches, we stretch toward the sky and the sun, and receive energy from that contact. This is where we may feel most in touch with the Transcendent, Spirit, or the Divine. These four movements will explore gratitude, uncertainty, mortality, and your mission or calling.

But trees don't grow from the top down. If you are feeling at all unstable in any of these movements, go back to the work you did in your roots. These movements compliment each other, so as you work on gratitude practices you may want to remember how you have worked on your stress regulation. Facing uncertainty also still involves facing fear. Facing mortality is another aspect of taking care of our embodied selves and our health. And at a fundamental level, how we feed ourselves makes it possible for us to carry out our mission and calling in the world.

Let the work you've done up to this point ground you and give you the stability to engage with these canopy level concerns. Take a deep breath, and let's go!

Movement Nine: Gratitude

A beautiful sunset, a melody, the smell of flowers, a gentle breeze ruffling your hair – the universe is full of beauty and goodness. However, as we go about our lives it can be easy to miss the beauty as we focus on the struggles and difficulties. Religious and spiritual traditions from around the world, and now science too, tell us that we should pause and take time for gratitude first. New studies are showing that doing so actually rewires our brains to experience more beauty and goodness – the act of noticing it helps us see more of it. No matter how much struggle or tragedy there is in this world, as long as there is life there will also be beauty. Let us root ourselves in gratitude for this gift.

Inspiration

"Finding beauty in a broken world is creating beauty in the world we find." - Terry Tempest Williams

"The more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the universe about us, the less taste we shall have for destruction." - Rachel Carson

"If we could see the miracle of a single flower clearly, our whole life would change." - The Buddha

“I don’t have to chase extraordinary moments to find happiness – it’s right in front of me if I’m paying attention and practicing gratitude.” - Brene Brown

“Thank you’ is the best prayer that anyone could say. I say that one a lot. Thank you expresses extreme gratitude, humility, understanding.” – Alice Walker

Spiritual Exercises

Exercise One: Greet Each Day

In the book *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Robin Wall Kimmerer describes her father’s practice of pouring some coffee out on the earth to greet each day and express gratitude. This type of practice, taking some time first thing in the day to express simple gratitude for the gift of life and another day, can root you in those feelings for the rest of your day. Try finding a way to greet the day that is right for you. Perhaps a [sun salutation](#), a [prayer](#), reciting a [poem](#), or simply going to a window and bowing to the world with reverence. Try it for a week and see how it feels.

Exercise Two: A Gratitude Journal

It’s become a bit of a cliché, but keeping a gratitude journal really can change your outlook on life. Any old journal will do, and there’s no one right way to do it. The important thing is to take a little time at the end of the day to reflect on what you’re grateful for. Just jot down a list, or write a haiku, or anything in between. Try it for at least one week.

Exercise Three: Write a Thank You Note

Expressing our gratitude spreads the joy around. Write a simple thank you note (it doesn’t have to be fancy, really!) to someone who you are grateful for. Perhaps they did some kindness for you, or you’re just really glad they are such a cool friend, perhaps they serve your community or work for a cause you care about, or perhaps they created a work of art that means a lot to you. Just tell them why you appreciate them and what they or their work have meant to you. Spread some gratitude goodness around!

Practical Exercises

Exercise Four: Make a Gift

Create a little more beauty and goodness in the world yourself, by making some kind of gift to the world. Bring cookies to a neighbor, or put out a bird feeder, bring dinner to someone in need, or make a donation to an organization helping others. It can even be as simple as letting someone go ahead of you in line – the world needs more kindnesses of all shapes and sizes. Be a gift to someone else, a reason for another to be grateful.

Exercise Five: Seek Out and Support Beauty

Artists and creators are actively bringing more beauty and wonder into the world. Take some time to seek it out – go to an art museum or gallery, a concert, or a show. Increasingly, art is being made available online as well, so you don't even have to leave home to find it. Support art and artists, even if all you can afford is a postcard.

Resources

Video: [How Beauty Can Save Us](#)

Articles:

[*How Gratitude Changes You and Your Brain*](#)

[*What Science Reveals About Gratitude's Impact on the Brain*](#)

[*The Subversive Power of Gratitude*](#)

Website: [Gratefulness.org](#)

Books:

Finding Beauty in a Broken World by Terry Tempest Williams

Active Hope by Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone

Reflection Questions:

1. Have you ever been just stopped in your tracks by the beauty, mystery, wonder, and awe of the universe? When have you seen or experienced something that continued to stay with you afterward? What experiences have truly moved you?
2. Do you find it easy and natural to keep an "attitude of gratitude", or do you need to work at it? What helps you reorient toward gratitude, beauty, and abundance?
3. What is one thing that you are most grateful for now, in your current stage of life? How has gratitude changed for you as you have aged? Are you grateful for different things now than when you were younger?

4. Do you notice practicing gratitude changing the way you approach life? How?
5. How can we put more beauty and goodness into the world? How much beauty and goodness is inherent and present even in horrible circumstances? Is beauty and goodness a human creation or an inherent part of the universe?

Movement 10: Facing Uncertainty

Our industrialized western culture likes to think things can be predicted and controlled, made ever more efficient and perfect. We like the idea of certainty and equate it with security. But the natural universe we inhabit is more dynamic and our perception of that reality more limited than we like to admit, meaning we really can't know or control as much as we would like to. This will only become more true as face late stage capitalism, social change, and climate chaos. Letting go of a need for certainty can help us take needed risks, be adaptable, and ultimately more resilient. How can you personally become more comfortable with uncertainty? Let's explore that with this movement.

Inspiration

"No one can possibly know what is about to happen: it is happening, each time, for the first time, for the only time." —James Baldwin

"Be open to the outcome, not attached to the outcome." —Angeles Arrien

"One is never afraid of the unknown; one is afraid of the known coming to an end." —Krishnamurti

Life is a balancing act of holding on and letting go. —Rumi

"I wanted a perfect ending. Now I've learned, the hard way, that some poems don't rhyme, and some stories don't have a clear beginning, middle, and end. Life is about not knowing, having to change, taking the moment and making the best of it, without knowing what's going to happen next. Delicious Ambiguity." — Gilda Radner

Spiritual Exercises

Exercise One: Meditation for Uncertainty

We often tend to focus on the future, which we cannot control, and can become overwhelmed with planning and worrying. Meditation can bring us back into the present, into the only moment that we actually inhabit. Try one of these meditations for uncertainty:

[Coping with Uncertainty Meditation - HelpGuide.org](#)

[Walking Meditation to Meet Uncertainty with Compassion - Mindful](#)

Exercise Two: Wisdom Stories

Humans have been using wisdom stories to teach important truths for as long as we have been communicating with one another, and many ancient wisdom stories are still incredibly relevant for us to learn from today. Read these wisdom stories and spend some time reflecting on what meaning they communicate to you.

[Taoist Story: The Farmer's Luck – Living The Present Moment](#)

[The Tiger and the Strawberry: A Short Zen Story About Living in the Present Moment - THE MINDFUL TECH LAB](#)

[Blind Men and the Elephant \(allaboutphilosophy.org\)](#)

Practical Exercises

Exercise Three: Learn More About Your Own Perceptions

We like to think that we can really know things and even that we can control things, but many factors come together to shape how we experience reality. Better understanding how your perceptions can be skewed can help you better understand the differences you experience from other people and the uncertainty of the world. You don't experience reality ... you experience *your* reality. Realizing this might help you better face uncertainty. Check out these resources to learn more about your perceptions vs reality:

[Eight Ways Your Perception of Reality Is Skewed \(berkeley.edu\)](#)

[Mind the Gap Between Perception and Reality](#)

[Your Reality Might Not Be Mine](#)

Exercise Four: Values Based Decision Making

In the face of uncertainty, it can feel really hard to make decisions and plans of what to do. The recent pandemic has been a prime example of this, with people having to shift the way they live, work, and socialize in radical ways to respond to a changing health threat reality. What can

you rely on when facts remain unknown and outcomes uncertain? How can you avoid getting whipped around by your emotional reactions to uncertainty and change? Well, one place you can ground yourself and your decision making is in your values. Values based decision making is a process of clarifying what you value most, and using that as the guide for each difficult decision you have to face. Once you know your values, it becomes easier to let them guide you. Try it out:

[Leaning Towards Values in the Face of Uncertainty: A Focus on Value Based Decision Making - Freedom Within Center | Counseling | Wellness](#)

Resources

Articles:

[There's A Lot of Uncertainty Right Now – This is What Science Says That Does to Our Minds, Bodies | UC San Francisco \(ucsf.edu\)](#)

[10 Ways Your Brain Reacts to Uncertain Times \(berkeley.edu\)](#)

[Accepting Uncertainty: We Can Be Happy Without All the Answers \(tinybuddha.com\)](#)

[7 Ways to Deal with Uncertainty So You Can Be Happier and Less Anxious \(tinybuddha.com\)](#)

Audio:

[Rebecca Solnit — Falling Together | The On Being Project - The On Being Project](#)

[Beyond Hope: Letting Go Of A World In Collapse \(podbean.com\)](#)

Books:

[*Comfortable with Uncertainty: 108 Teachings on Cultivating Fearlessness and Compassion* by Pema Chodron](#)

Reflection Questions:

1. What surprising twists and turns has your life taken? When has uncertainty and change been a good thing in your life, and when has it not?
2. In what ways do you think you perceive reality differently from the people around you? When is this a challenge and when is it a gift?
3. How do you cope with uncertainty? What do you fall back on when things are unknown or uncertain? How do you make decisions in the face of uncertainty?

4. What feels most uncertain in your world right now? How do you face those uncertainties?
5. How can we, collectively, make better decisions in the face of uncertainty? How do we move forward into an uncertain future?

Movement 11: Facing Mortality

All that lives is mortal and will die. Death is inevitable and normal and cannot be separated from living. Yet ours is a culture that likes to deny and ignore death, both the prospect of our own personal death and reality of the deaths of nature and animals that we cause through our actions. Denying death, we end up also denying aspects of life. Facing our mortality makes life more precious. Can we live like we know we are dying?

Inspiration

“A civilization that denies death ends by denying life.” —Octavio Paz

“The world is so exquisite with so much love and moral depth, that there is no reason to deceive ourselves with pretty stories for which there's little good evidence. Far better it seems to me, in our vulnerability, is to look death in the eye and to be grateful every day for the brief but magnificent opportunity that life provides.” — Carl Sagan

“All of us are creatures of a day; the rememberer and the remembered alike. All is ephemeral—both memory and the object of memory. The time is at hand when you will have forgotten everything; and the time is at hand when all will have forgotten you. Always reflect that soon you will be no one, and nowhere.” — Marcus Aurelius

“My refuge exists in my capacity to love. If I can learn to love death then I can begin to find refuge in change.” —Terry Tempest Williams

i don't pay attention to the world ending.

it has ended for me many times and began again in the morning.

—Nayyirah Waheed

Spiritual Exercises

Exercise One: A Memento Mori

Memento mori translates to “remember you must die”, and it refers to art or objects that can be frequent reminders to us of our own mortality. You can see many examples of different memento mori here: [History of Memento Mori \(dailystoic.com\)](http://dailystoic.com)

Try using a memento mori in your own daily practice. You can be as simple or as creative as you like. You could purchase a piece of art that reminds you of mortality, or you could sketch a skull and crossbones on a sticky note. Or choose a quote about death or a more subtle symbol, such as an hourglass, if you like. Whatever your symbol or visual reminder is, place it in a spot where you will see it everyday. Encounter the memento mori and let it remind you that life is temporary, and as such is precious.

Exercise Two: Observe Death and Decay

In nature, death and decay are all around us and are a natural part of the cycles and systems of life. On a hike through the woods you might encounter fallen leaves, rotting stumps, possibly even animal bodies. But in our human-centered artificial environments, we usually strive to keep decay well out of sight (unless you count the food going bad in the fridge!). In some spiritual traditions, such as Buddhism, there is a meditation on mortality referred to as “corpse contemplation” where you observe a dead body and meditate upon mortality. This is a simple variation on that:

Get some cut flowers and place them in a vase with water. Put them somewhere you will see them everyday. Don't change the water or do anything to prolong them. Watch and observe as they wilt and decay. Make note of the feelings this brings up for you. Reflect on the inevitable mortality of all life. Keep them and observe them for as long as you can before you dispose of them (preferably to compost so they can complete their decay process).

Exercise Three: Dead for a Day or A Day Off

This exercise, based on an idea by Stephen Levine ([A Year to Live by Stephen Levine | Book Excerpt | Spirituality & Practice \(spiritualityandpractice.com\)](http://spiritualityandpractice.com)), challenges us to imagine the world going on without us in it anymore. It's a bit similar to a movie like *It's a Wonderful Life*, where you catch a glimpse of what life would be like without you. It's simple enough to do. For one whole day, as you engage in your life, imagine to yourself what would happen to the objects, people, and places around you after you were dead. Your toothbrush? Would it be thrown away? Your clothes? Your home? Your family? Etc. Continue through your whole day, imagining a future where you are dead.

This exercise can be followed up with A Day Fully Alive, where you repeat the process but switch from imagining yourself as dead to visualizing yourself as fully and vibrantly alive. How do you interact with the world around you when you are fully present to the precious life you are living?

Exercise Four: Write Your Own Obituary

If you died today, would you be happy with the life you've led and the legacy you leave behind? Use this writing exercise to explore that question: sit down and write a truthful obituary for yourself of your life so far. How would you be remembered? Read it over and ask yourself: am I happy with how I'm living my life? What's missing from my life? What might I need to do to make my life feel complete?

And then, if you like, you can follow up with a fantasy or dream obituary. Write one for yourself as though you've lived your dream life, done the things you most truly want to do, and left the legacy you want to leave behind. What kind of life does that dream obituary describe? How could you live that life?

Practical Exercises

Exercise Five: Advanced Care Planning

Facing mortality means planning ahead for the inevitability of your own dying and death. Do your doctors and loved ones know how you want to be cared for? Do they know what your wishes are for your remains and how you want to be remembered? Have these conversations now and get your plans in place. An excellent resource for this work is [Five Wishes](#).

Community Exercises

Exercise Six: Organize a Community Conversation About Death

Death and dying are often treated as taboo topics in our culture, leaving us unpracticed in talking about death. However, I believe most people need and welcome a chance to confront mortality and grief together and discover how universal this experience really is. People are organizing ways to have this conversation, in a variety of ways. You could organize a [Before I Die Project](#) or a [Death Café](#), or create another option of your own invention.

Resources

Articles:

[Mindfulness of death: How to meditate on your mortality - Vox](#)

[Facing Death | Spiritual Literacy in Today's World | Spirituality & Practice \(spiritualityandpractice.com\)](#)

[Learning How to Die in the Anthropocene - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com)

Video:

Griefwalker: [Griefwalker | Orphan Wisdom](#)

Flight From Death: [Watch Flight From Death: The Quest for Immortality | Prime Video \(amazon.com\)](#)

End Game, available on Netflix

Reflection Questions:

1. When did you first become aware of death? What experiences have shaped how you view death?
2. What are your spiritual, religious, or philosophical beliefs about death? How do these beliefs shape the way you think about and face mortality? How do they shape the way you live your life?
3. What, if anything, do you find scary, disturbing, or difficult about facing the fact of mortality and death? How do you address those feelings?
4. If you knew you were dying, would you change anything about the way you are living your life? Are you living your one life well? Are you leaving the legacy you want to leave behind?
5. How could we, as a society, do a better job at facing our own mortality? Would facing mortality help us face other issues, such as climate change?

Movement 12: Calling and Mission

This final movement is the connection that will feed back into every other movement. It is the crown of your personal tree of life, but it feeds back down to the roots that sustain you. The final movement is about your calling, purpose, and mission in life. What is it that you are here to do? What do you choose to dedicate yourself to? What makes you feel most alive and energized? Humans are meaning making creatures, and we can make meaning of our own lives by finding a purpose. Purpose and meaning take us beyond surviving and into thriving. It doesn't have to be a huge purpose, you don't have to be a superhero or single handedly save the world. It could be as simple as "I am here to care for my family and spread happiness in my community" or "I am a maker of useful furniture" or "I'm here to help myself and others be fit and healthy". The possibilities are endless, because we are all unique parts of the larger whole, each contributing our own particular bit to the larger life. So take some time to explore this movement and find your own mission.

Inspiration

Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive. – Howard Thurman

The real work of planet-saving will be small, humble, and humbling, and (insofar as it involves love) pleasing and rewarding. Its jobs will be too many to count, too many to report, too many to be publicly noticed or rewarded, too small to make anyone rich or famous. – Wendell Berry

The mystery of human existence lies not in just staying alive, but in finding something to live for.
— Fyodor Dostoyevsky, [The Brothers Karamazov](#)

Find out who you are. And do it on purpose. – Dolly Parton

Let the beauty of what you love be what you do. – Rumi

Spiritual Exercises

Exercise One: Vision Boards

[Vision boards](#) are a fun and crafty way of clarifying what you want and what your goals are. They are basically just collages, but you can create the images yourself or snip them from magazines. You can create a digital board and copy and paste images from the web. You can use words or quotes. There's no wrong way to do this. Just explore some images and start gathering what calls to you. What does the world and life you dream of look like? Create that image!

Exercise Two: A Vision Retreat

Many indigenous traditions have a practice of vision quests, often for young people as they embark on their adult lives. There are a wide variety of practices and techniques used, and I don't encourage you to copy a practice that is not part of your culture. Instead, craft your own quest. The time frame is up to you, as well, but I like 24 hours. It could also be a few hours or a whole weekend or even longer. Other things to consider:

Place – somewhere you can be private and have quiet and not be interrupted, preferably near nature in some way

Activities – it's perfectly fine to just sit quietly and do nothing the whole time of your retreat. Or you might want to take a contemplative walk, walk a labyrinth, bring a journal or sketchbook, or

meditate. I recommend avoiding anything that might distract or take focus away, so leave your electronic devices and novels at home.

Food and substances – some traditions use certain plant medicines or other substances to induce an altered state of consciousness. That’s not something I recommend one way or the other. Other traditions encourage fasting from food or drink, which I also don’t recommend one way or the other. Make the choices that are right for you and that you are comfortable with. I do recommend avoiding snacks (a way we distract ourselves when we are bored), alcohol, and stimulants.

You may gain insight into yourself and your calling during your retreat. Or you may not. Don’t put too much pressure on the experience. Just try and be open to what comes.

Practical Exercises

Exercise Three: A Personal Mission Statement

Most companies and other organizations have a mission statement, describing their reason for existing. You, as an individual, can also use a mission statement to clarify your purpose and reason for being. It can be simple and short (although that’s actually harder to write!) or up to a paragraph. Begin by thinking about your values and vision for the world. Think about your gifts and what makes you feel most alive. Write, sit with it, and then rewrite. Ask people close to you who you trust if this mission statement seems right for you. Work with it for a while and be ready to change it in the future (it’s a living document). And let it guide the way you live your life.

[Personal Mission Statement: Examples, Definition, and Writing Tips - The Berkeley Well-Being Institute \(berkeleywellbeing.com\)](https://www.berkeleywellbeing.com/personal-mission-statement-examples-definition-and-writing-tips)

[How to Write a Personal Mission Statement \(40+ Examples\) | Indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/finding-a-job/how-to-write-a-personal-mission-statement)

Community Exercises

Exercise Four: Find Your Tribe

Once you have your mission statement, great! Now you know what your purpose is in the world and this life, right? But what if it’s a big vision, maybe bigger than one person could ever do on their own? Fortunately, you don’t have to do it alone. The big problems of this world are so vast they will only be solved by many people each taking their own small actions. You need to find people who share a similar vision and are also working toward similar ends to your own. Find

your tribe! Start with some internet research. Meetup.com and Facebook have a lot of groups to search through, for instance. There are also big organizations, like Just Transitions or the Charter for Compassion that might be a good starting place. Many large organizations may have local chapters. And if you really can't find what you're looking for, perhaps that means you should create a group. Just remember, you really don't have to do this alone. Somewhere, there are others who want to do this kind of work too.

Resources

Articles:

[10 Ways To Uncover Your True Calling \(mindbodygreen.com\)](http://mindbodygreen.com)

[How to Thrive When the World's Falling Apart | by umair hague | Eudaimonia and Co \(eand.co\)](#)

[Five Steps to Finding Your Life Purpose | Psychology Today](#)

Websites:

[Work That Reconnects Network](#)

[Charter for Compassion](#)

[Just Transition](#)

Books:

Let Your Life Speak by Parker Palmer

Who Do We Choose to Be? By Margaret Wheatley

Radical Joy for Hard Times by Trebbe Johnson

Man's Search for Meaning by Viktor Frankl

Guided Meditation:

Yoga Nidra to Hear Your Inner Truth <https://youtu.be/X10FF3azKmw>

Reflection Questions

1. When have you felt most alive and energized in your life? What were you doing then?
2. What gifts and talents do you have that you want to share with the world? How do you go about sharing those?
3. Has your sense of purpose or mission changed throughout your life? What "season" of life are you in now and how does that affect your sense of purpose now?

4. When you look at the world and all of its problems and needs, what are the issues you feel most passionate about? What need is your heart calling you toward?
5. What gets in the way of you living a life of purpose? What distractions and obstacles do you experience?
6. What is your mission and how do you live it out? Are there changes you need to make to align your life with your mission?

What Now?

It is my sincere hope that completing these twelve movements has left you feeling more grounded, resilient, and ready to face the needs and challenges of this world and this life. But the journey doesn't end here. You can continue to use these movements to check in with yourself and your life, periodically returning to each for a simple check-up and reminder. It can be a tool of ongoing self-care.

You can also take each movement and go deeper or reach out farther with it. In this metaphor of a tree, trees that stand alone are not as resilient as those who stand with other trees. Trees form networks of mutual support, as do so many other species – including humans! If you are resilient and secure in any of the areas we've explored with the movements, you can reach out to help those who are less so. Direct aid and systems change are both needed.

The ultimate goal, for me and I hope for you as well, is a world where we can all thrive and live well, deeply connected to the whole living system. There can be enough for everyone, if we learn what "enough" is and how to share and care for one another. Even in the face of unavoidable (at this point) climate chaos and loss of life on this planet, there is still a choice to live as well as possible and to do the good that we can do. So please tend to your own tree of resiliency. Be well rooted, sturdy in the winds, and receptive to the gift of sunlight. And then know that you are not alone. Others surround you, connected in so many ways.

May we all live, resiliently, together.

Optional Final Spiritual Exercises

Exercise One: Find an Image of a Resilient Tree

Find a tree image that inspires you and place it somewhere you will see it regularly and be reminded of the resiliency work you have done. If you simply do an internet search for "resilient tree" you will find many powerful pictures of trees surviving what look like very hard

situations. Or you may like to get a more traditional tree of life image, which is very popular and available in a variety of formats.

Exercise Two: Get to Know a Tree

We've used the tree as our metaphor, but there could be a lot of wisdom left to discover from an actual tree. Choose a tree and spend some time with it. Get to know it in a non-human way. Sit with it, observe it, meditate with it, talk to it. Ask it what you can do for it. Say thank you to the trees for all they have given us. Recognize our relationship to each other.