



The Heart
of
Healing
*Discovering the Secrets
of Self-Care*

REGINA ROSENTHAL, PT, MA

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INTRODUCTION

How to Use This Book

If one advances confidently in the direction of his own dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.

—Henry David Thoreau

As a child, I often gazed up at the night sky, studded with a vast array of captivating, brilliant stars. I was filled with awe. I felt small amidst the beauty and magic, yet knew on some level that I was also connected with it. I can remember praying at these times, with the innocence of a child, “Please let everyone be healthy and happy.” During these moments I became one with the ***Great Mystery**** within the life force that animates the universe, the life force that also animates ***healing***. Though I did not understand the depth and breadth of this until much later, it fascinated me from my earliest days.

* Please consult the glossary at the end of this book for definitions of words in bold italics.

Spiritual study, *meditation*, *yoga*, and work in the healing arts as a physical therapist deepened my awareness, and I realized that nothing exists in a vacuum. Everything in the universe occurs in relationship within a vast grand design. My personal and professional experiences with healing enhanced my conscious connections within this grand design and revealed:

- We all have an innate ability to respond to healing challenges, an ability that is activated when we connect to the wisdom in our *authentic Self*, heart, and *soul*.
- Healing paths traveled are unique to each individual.
- Healing involves collaborative ventures with ourselves, others, and a power greater than ourselves. This power is described in many ways: G-d, Spirit, Divine presence, universal life force, *Source energy*, and so on. I write G-d in this manner out of respect and reverence for the Divine nature, attributes, and essence of what is nameless, as described in Judaism. I continue this usage throughout the book to remind myself and you, the reader, of the sacredness that surrounds and inhabits each of us.

The Heart of Healing describes the heart-and-soul journey and evolutionary process that occurred as I witnessed and experienced healing. It led me to write this book now, when learning to consciously and actively participate in our healing is so vital. I invite you to join me on a healing journey as you read through these pages, participate in the Self-care practices, and discover what is at the heart of your experiences and healing. Like the constellations above, we are all interconnected and interdependent; we are all conduits of healing for ourselves and one another. Please note that whenever Self is capitalized I refer to your Higher Divine Self, your eternal and unlimited *true nature*, which exists beyond your thoughts and beliefs. I use lowercase *self* to refer to the human self and its associated qualities. This is done merely to help you, the reader, differ-

entiate between the two. Direct, personal experience of the Divine within occurs each time you connect with your authentic Self, heart, and soul. This connection was pivotal to awakenings and healing I have witnessed, and is a core concept within this book.

On your journey you will observe, listen to, and be present with a wondrous source of healing that awaits you within yourself. You will also plug into the limitless source of life and power within the Great Mystery, which interconnects and animates all living things. Healing will challenge you to remember and reestablish your internal and external connections within this grand design. As this life force flows through your whole being, it will endow you with the ability to engage the paradoxes of life and healing – the sorrow and the joy, the efforting and the effortless, the doing and the being. With each reconnection to it, your sense of purpose, aliveness, joy, and inner peace will be renewed and energized.

Why Did I Write *The Heart of Healing*?

The Heart of Healing stems from a desire, a promise, and a prayer.

The desire to participate in healing journeys originated during the earliest years of my life, whenever I stood in wonder amidst the Great Mystery.

The promise emerged during my years as a physical therapist. Clients often urged me to write about our sessions in order to help others. This book is a response to their requests and the promises I made to each of them to bring this forth.

The prayer is for you. *The Heart of Healing* is your story as much as my own. I wrote this for anyone who has been on, or is beginning, a journey of healing. It is not only for those who seek personal healing; it is also for those who seek greater

understanding of the healing process as they serve in the healing arts as physicians, surgeons, dentists, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, therapists, holistic practitioners, nurses, clergy, friends, or family members.

May your awareness, strength, compassion, insight, and wisdom be enhanced personally and professionally. May your understanding and presence deepen and help establish partnerships in health care with those you serve. We all need continuing education about healing to best support ourselves and one another. This will help us meet life and health challenges with a whole heart, described by cultural anthropologist Angeles Arrien as a four-chambered heart, one that is full, open, clear, and strong.¹

Begin with me, then, with a desire to heal, a promise to share the journey, and a prayer that your way is illuminated. The journey will be challenging, but remember this: The Latin derivation of *desire* is “from the stars.” The world of healing is a vast and often mysterious universe, approached through science yet also needing heart-and-soul presence. Each of us who participates in the process, in any way, are like stars that inhabit the realm, shedding light amidst the darkness, in service to everyone and everything.

What is The Heart of Healing?

The Heart of Healing describes the lifelong journey home to our heart and authentic Self that occurs through healing. It reveals how this journey and Self-care practices guide us to empowering discoveries at the heart, or core, of our being. Healing is a continuous *process*, not a single life event, and it is stimulated each time we commit to showing up, being present, and connecting with our heart’s pathway. Healing begins with the heart, and all paths lead back to the heart. During my early years as a physical therapist, I came to a realization about healing that

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has stayed with me to this day – we will experience many healing journeys from the moment we are born. This book is based on a core belief that developed from this awareness – *healing is a lifelong process of growth and development.*

Healing begins with the journey back to our hearts, often initially encountered when we face a health crisis, pain, distress, or *dis-ease* – a lack of ease in our physical, mental, emotional, and/or spiritual being. Too often, our hearts are torn because we have fallen into dualistic thinking and living. Guided by either/or choices, we perceive individuals and situations as good or bad, right or wrong, this way or that way, rather than being open to both options. Returning to our heart transports us to a multidimensional world with beginnings and endings, joy and grief, pain and possibility, love and loss, beauty and the beast.

The healing journey is challenging. During moments of insight, light illuminates the darkness. Comedian Betty Davis stated, “Old age ain’t no place for sissies.” When I think about the courageous journey that healing is, I am reminded of a client who said, “My tears are like rain . . . they water my soul and enable it to grow.” She helped me envision the path that leads to the heart of healing.

The Heart of Healing is written for anyone who finds life turned upside down and difficult in the face of:

- *physical* illness as a result of shock, trauma, dis-ease and/or disability
- *emotional* challenges such as shock, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, or anxiety
- *mental* stress from overload, exhaustion, and *burnout* related to daily living and/or unchallenged attitudes, beliefs, and habits that no longer serve
- *spiritual* dark nights of the soul – an overall sense of emptiness, aloneness, disconnection, loss, and lack of purpose and meaning

The Heart of Healing is written for anyone seeking to learn more about healing, and how to be more active in their healing process. The clients I worked with for more than twenty-five years were empowered through this educational process.

The Heart of Healing is designed to expand awareness about healing as a lifelong journey of Self-discovery and empowerment. Each of us encounters seven universal themes as we explore healing. The return to our heart is at the center of each theme:

♥ **Theme One: Healing Involves Showing Up and Being Present**

This theme describes how our heart influences showing up and being present during life and healing. As we awaken to our heart, the ongoing heartbeat and pace of our lives and healing shift.

♥ **Theme Two: Healing Is a Journey versus a Single Event**

This theme describes healing as a process in which life experiences continuously unfold and evolve over time. The heart's pathway is our compass, indicating true north every step of the way. As our heart energy circulates through our body, mind, emotions, and life force, or soul, we will encounter pathways that flow, as well as detours and obstacles.

♥ **Theme Three: Healing Involves Self-Healing and Coming Home to Your Heart and Your Authentic Self**

This theme describes three aspects of *Self-healing*: the return journey home to your heart; reconnection with your authentic Self, or true nature; and awakening to your unique heart-and-soul wisdom.

♥ **Theme Four: Healing Is a Lifelong Process of Growth and Development**

Our hearts reside at the central hearth of our home, our being. This theme describes the continuous process of education healing takes us through, and how heart intelligence illuminates the way. As this intelligence touches and awakens our body, mind, emotions, and soul, the flame that keeps our hearts whole is reignited.

♥ **Theme Five: Healing Involves Change and Movement**

Our life and whole being changes as we heal. Theme Five relates how healing involves change, movement, endings, beginnings, and many transitions. The journey may necessitate a change of heart and movement along different pathways in our life and relationships. Wise listening, courage, and compassionate presence help integrate heart-and-soul wisdom as we move through change.

♥ **Theme Six: Healing Is Stimulated by Life-Affirming Qualities of the Joyful Heart**

Creativity, play, laughter, beauty, and *gratitude* are vital to healing. Theme Six illustrates how these life-affirming qualities support easeful, abundant flow of heart energy and provide nourishment for growth, development, wholeness, and healing.

♥ **Theme Seven: The Common Denominator in All Healing Is Love**

The heart's essence is love. Theme Seven shows how love supports and births us into new dimensions within the Great Mystery, from birth through death on our human journey. Healing involves coming full circle and returning, through love, to our authentic Self, heart, and soul.

Each theme within *The Heart of Healing* will guide you on an individual journey that is about heart and meaning, and a path to your authentic Self. As you learn, grow, and gain insights on this journey, you will find answers to several questions:

- What is healing?
- How does healing impact my whole being?
- Which theme(s) do I encounter during healing challenges?
- How can the themes, expanded awareness, compassion, and *mindfulness* benefit and enhance my healing process?

Your awareness will also deepen as you read, reflect, journal, and consistently participate in Self-care practices at the end of each chapter. These practices will help you discover ways to ground, integrate, and practically apply new insights. Your ability to use internal and external guidance, resources, and support will also be enhanced and will empower you and your healing process.

You will prepare for your journey to the heart of healing in chapters one through three, where you will be introduced to healing stories and three aspects that flow through all seven themes:

- connecting to your authentic Self and others through your whole heart
- self-awareness, seeking answers within, and honoring passages and triumphs on your journeys
- discovering wisdom in ancient practices and traditions, which helps you recover *reverence for life*

In chapters four through seven, you will explore the seven themes through client stories and my personal journey. I have highlighted these narratives throughout the book with headings

that signal a call to action relating to each theme, as noted in Table 1. Self-care practices at the end of each chapter will help you apply these actions to your healing journey.

Table 1: Calls to Action & Related Themes

ACTION	THEME
Awakening	♥ One: Healing involves showing up and being present.
Processing	♥ Two: Healing is a journey versus a single event.
Returning	♥ Three: Healing involves Self-healing and coming home to your heart and your authentic Self.
Illuminating	♥ Four: Healing is a lifelong process of growth and development.
Changing	♥ Five: Healing involves change and movement.
Life-affirming	♥ Six: Healing is stimulated by life-affirming qualities of the joyful heart.
Loving	♥ Seven: The common denominator in all healing is love.

At the end of this book you will find further support for your healing journey and Self-care practices. There is a glossary to clarify concepts; glossary words appear in ***bold italics*** when first used. Reference details appear in the endnotes section, followed by a bibliography with additional resources you can consult. Appendix A contains a worksheet for Tool 20 found in the Tools and Reflections section of Chapter Nine. Appendix B contains helpful Internet resources. Appendix C is a questionnaire I used when interviewing individuals in preparation for writing this book. Your responses to this questionnaire may help you begin to map out your journey and guide you to inner wisdom and resources.

Why Does *The Heart of Healing* Work?

The themes, process of Self-inquiry, awareness-tracking tools, and Self-care practices in each chapter are simple, easy to follow, and build upon one another. They can be used independently, in groups, and in self-directed or counseling formats. These supportive and educational strategies expand body-mind awareness and enhance Self-love, confidence, trust, and inner peace. A more purposeful and meaningful life will be manifested as you practically apply and integrate experiences and lessons learned during any healing process.

Practical application and use of Self-care tools will help you remember who you are, why you are here, and what has heart and meaning in your life. My life is renewed each time I use Self-care practices, create time for stillness, and consciously embrace and open to whatever arises within my life and healing process. In these moments, when I reconnect with my heart, soul, and the Great Mystery, I feel nourished and whole. I return to life afterward more centered and grounded. Everyone and everything in my life benefits when I use these practices.

More important than the messages in this book are the powerful questions and answers that will emerge in *your* heart and soul as you read. You will ask yourself:

- How can I remember to listen to my authentic Self during healing challenges?
- How can I integrate and practically apply insights?
- How can I maximize *health* and *well-being* through Self-care?

It is my hope that this book helps to create a bridge for all of us, from where we are now to where we seek to be in our healing process, growth and development, and human evolution. The bridge will be formed from what we discover during archaeological digs and scavenger hunts on our healing journeys, where understanding, answers, and meaning are sought.

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As you explore healing, clues will be presented to you through three questions:

- Who am I?
- What do I want and/or need now?
- Where am I going?

These clues are like *Zen* koans, teaching riddles for which no solutions can be attained through logical reasoning and cognition. As with koans, clues temporarily jam cognitive processing to allow deeper awareness to emerge.

As you begin, commit to a clear, compassionate, sturdy, and loving presence with your conscious, aware, wise Self. Know that this presence is supported each time you catch a glimpse of and recollect the Divine presence within you, seen through your heart, soul, authentic Self, and the special, unique gifts you bring into the world. The answers you seek will be found within, as you deepen these connections.

In *As a Man Thinketh*, James Allen states, “A man sooner or later discovers that he is the master gardener of his soul, the director of his life.”² We are each gardeners in our lives. As we till the soil of our inner being, we reinforce our connection with the natural world and our true nature, our authentic Self. This will help us to harvest and thrive on what nourishes us. Applying the Self-care practices and reflection tools in *The Heart of Healing* will help you tend your life’s garden. May you uncover compassionate support and peace within during healing challenges, when chaos and turmoil arise. May your garden be bountiful with life force, your own and that which you discover. May the resources, gifts, and talents you bring forth be blessed, and a blessing for others, during abundant seasons of life and healing. May love touch and heal you as you make and manifest your own healing miracles!





CHAPTER ONE

The Whole Heart

To put the world in order, we must first put the nation in order; to put the nation in order, we must put the family in order; to put the family in order, we must cultivate our personal life; and to cultivate our personal life, we must first set our hearts right.

–Confucius

A Yiddish proverb states, “The heart is the organ which sees better than eyes.” After I graduated from physical therapy school, I sent notes to family and friends who supported me, with a quote from Helen Keller: “The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart.”¹ My heart and mind, working in collaboration, have proved to be a great partnership for life and my personal healing journeys.

Like many of you, I was not always aware of this collaborative process. I needed to recover heart-centered awareness, Self-compassion, and wholeness as part of my healing journey. My

return to wholeheartedness involved rediscovering what and who kept my heart open, full, clear, and strong. This became lost to me, as it does to many others who seek healing, when I followed a busy, head-centered lifestyle. As a result, I became disheartened and lost sight of other life options. I closed my heart to survive the chaos, confusion, and uncertainties I faced in daily life. I lost the love of life and sense of play I knew as a child, and participated half-heartedly in my life. I lost connection with my heart and my authentic Self, my true nature, and I doubted my ability to change things. Like many others, I lost touch with what had heart and meaning in my life. I became weak-hearted, and the light from my soul dimmed. Each time I returned home to my heart during rigorous and challenging healing journeys, I realized my heart contained the foundational key from which all healing would begin and evolve.

By the time I completed traditional physical therapy training in my late thirties, a kaleidoscope of life experiences had imprinted on my heart. I had faced challenges such as miscarriages, illness, and the premature deaths of friends and family members. In the years that followed my professional training, my heart was again challenged as I faced two marital separations and trauma after a life-altering automobile accident. Daily stresses accumulated – raising a family, returning to school, and running a private physical therapy practice. My challenge was to learn how to live consciously and joyfully in a complex world. To remain awake, aware, and present, I needed to apply Self-care and healing practices on a consistent basis, while I engaged in “full catastrophe living,” as described by mindfulness meditation teacher Jon Kabat-Zinn. I needed to use and embody the heart-centered lessons I was learning, in order to ground my healing process.

In this chapter you will read about the heart’s innate wisdom. This wisdom awaits your discovery on your healing journeys and flows through each of the seven themes.

Discovering Our Heart's Wisdom

In today's world we often neglect our heart's wisdom, so vital to life and healing. Unlocking that wisdom and uniting our heart and mind has been at the core of virtually all healing I have witnessed or experienced. In *The Heart's Code*, psychologist Paul Pearsall describes results of experiments that measured electromagnetic fields around the human body. These showed that the heart generates the largest electromagnetic field of any body organ, several thousand times more powerful than that of the brain.² Like binary stars, the mind and heart orbit together, the mind around the heart, the heart around the mind. What is most important for healing is understanding how they serve each other in this binary relationship. Our natural inclination is to see the mind and heart as a hierarchy, in which the mind rules the heart or the heart dominates the logical-thinking, rational-acting mind. This is not the map of healing. One does not rule the other. Rather, our hearts and *higher minds* need to be in partnership.

My everyday mind, working mechanically in linear time, has the capacity and intelligence to think and reason. Mind is a dutiful, highly effective source that I can count on to bring plans and goals to fruition in everyday reality. It can also draw me out of focus when my "monkey mind" takes over through attachment to external distractions, emotional upheavals, and/or everyday life and drama. When this occurs, I can use Self-care practices and Self-compassion learned during healing to engage my heart and higher mind, referred to as *HeartMind* in Oriental medicine.³ My challenge has been to ensure that wisdom from my HeartMind informs my everyday mind, versus having everyday mind, conditioning, and defensive ego take charge of and run my life. Heart and mind are both needed, in service to living a full and on-purpose life.

In Oriental medicine, integration of the thinking and feeling self, or *xin*, resides in the heart as HeartMind. It is here that

the intelligence and *consciousness* of both the heart and mind are respected and valued. The heart, in Oriental medicine, is considered the emperor or empress of the kingdom, holding the *shen*, or spirit, of the individual. It creates harmony between body, mind, and spirit. When the heart and mind dissociate, and mind becomes head of state, reasoning powers take charge. We disregard feelings and intuitive knowing, see bodily dysfunction and distress as pathology, and treat what arises as the enemy. This split is defined and treated as deficient Heart Spirit in Oriental medicine. In Western medicine, by contrast, the anxiety and depression that results from this are too often treated with drugs that alter physiology and brain chemistry. We seldom recognize the loss of Heart Spirit, and what we don't recognize cannot be addressed.

For a long time, I developed and lived from a conditioned belief that my everyday thinking mind directed my life, with my head versus my heart taking over and running the show. This created a split and dissociation between my body, mind, and heart. The body-mind split did not begin with me, but centuries ago when French philosopher Descartes stated, "I think, therefore I am."⁴ In conversation with a Native American chief, Swiss psychologist Carl Jung became aware of the Western world's denial of the heart. The chief demonstrated how his people thought with their hearts versus their heads – the reverse of the norm in Western society. Jung recognized how unconscious he and Westerners had become about the heart-mind split.⁵

I realized this heart-mind split was present one night at work years ago after concluding my final client session for the day. Alone in my office I was dutifully writing up daily patient notes when I suddenly became aware of being amidst a profoundly alive silence. I glanced around the room – bookcases filled with books, walls holding professional certificates, plaques with philosophical sayings, a stack of client charts on my desk. I suddenly and unexpectedly heard an inner voice saying, *None of this will keep you warm at night*. My husband and I were

separated at the time, and I had moved out of our home. As I sat in stillness, I became aware of how living from my head, following unconscious habits, and strategizing had disconnected me from my heart. My heart was out in the cold. I became aware that my ego had taken charge while my heart barricaded itself behind physical and emotional armor, in order to survive betrayal (including Self-betrayal) and the loss of a dream. In order to survive, my ego put a lid on unexpressed fear and rage after the breakup of my marriage.

At the time, my ego tenaciously clung to survival behaviors, though in retrospect I see these no longer served. Through therapy and *bodywork*, it became apparent that my mind alone could not handle the stress and overload I experienced. Another language and presence was needed – that of my heart. I had ignored body symptoms such as weight gain and insomnia, pushed through mental exhaustion, ignored feeling depressed, buried rage, and kept busy to avoid any encounter with parts of me that felt overwhelmed or deadened. At the time, I believed life was a huge cosmic joke with no ultimate meaning or purpose. I cast aside my heart, unable to touch upon its painful messages. I was unaware of the wealth of intelligence it also contained, which could serve me.

I closed the door to my heart, which had become inundated with unresolved fear, anger, and grief. It was this rage and grief that would later serve me during therapy and bodywork sessions, and bring me to *edges* where I began to explore and process dark and ominous *shadow* places within. An essential prerequisite, however, involved developing patience and letting go of self-judgment, before HeartMind wisdom could begin to soften and reopen my heart. As I called upon this intelligence during daily living and healing, a more vibrant life force gradually returned.

Today I consider the heart a kaleidoscope that collects, contains, and holographically reveals the many dimensions where change affects our lives. In a purely physical and physiological dimension, the heart is an organ that receives and sends blood

to every part of the body. Central to our physical body, the heart pumps blood, oxygen, and life force to every cell, as it guides the flow and integration of this essential energy through our whole being. Our physical hearts are the central, core part of our being, vital for life to continue. When our hearts die, life as we know it ends. By contrast, people may remain alive after being declared brain dead, as their hearts continue to preserve life.

In an emotional dimension, our hearts are the central source of feelings and often nonrational, nonlinear intelligence. This is in contrast to our heads, or minds, being a source of intellect. Emotion, or *e-motion*, can be described as the energy of our hearts in motion. When we engage in something “with all our heart,” or when something is “near to our heart,” or “touches our heart,” we are moved and influenced through this connection with our heart’s energy and intelligence.

Psychologists Daniel Goleman and Howard Gardner expanded my awareness of the emotional dimension. They emphasize the need to recognize and include emotional and other intelligences (artistic, musical, emotional, intrapersonal, linguistic, kinesthetic, spatial, and logical) in learning and social interactions. The Institute of HeartMath® has studied links between emotions, heart-brain communication and physiology, and cognitive functioning. Their scientists identified a physiological state that optimizes learning and performance. In this state, emotions are calm and harmony exists between our brain, body, and nervous system. This state facilitates enhanced focus, attention, reasoning, and creativity, which are all vital for learning, achievement, and social interaction. Their work is helping to reduce stress, enhance health and well-being, and strengthen connection with our hearts.⁶

In a mental dimension, what we “take to heart” we consider seriously. Our feeling, sensing, and intuitive natures all bring information to our minds, for our minds to filter and process. This often involves transcending ego mind, which causes us to defend ourselves to avoid pain and suffering. When we are able to

use life experiences as vehicles for growth and development, our consciousness expands and embraces HeartMind intelligence.

In a spiritual dimension, we connect with heart intelligence each time we consider what has heart and meaning in our lives. When we bring consciousness to both doing and being aspects of our lives, we are better able to sense when our intentions are clear, when our “heart is in the right place,” and when we are in sync with our life path and purpose. One of the longest journeys I have taken in healing has been from my head to my heart. This process involved continuous *lab work* – the practical application and integration of new experiences and insights with current body, mind, heart, and soul wisdom.

Over the past fifteen years, I have been most fortunate to meet and study with cultural anthropologist Angeles Arrien, an award-winning author, educator, and consultant in medical, academic, and corporate settings. Because of the extensive time and respectful relationship we have shared, I refer to Angeles Arrien in this book as Angeles, versus the traditional way of citing sources by last name. Her workshops expanded my awareness relative to my life and heart. Learning to witness and consciously interact with the current state of my life and heart, a process referred to by Angeles as *tracking*, proved invaluable. Tracking helped me develop a more aware, nonjudgmental ego and enhanced connection with my observer, or witness self. Tracking the state of my four-chambered heart helped me realize where I was (or was not) being full-hearted, open-hearted, clear-hearted, and strong-hearted in my life.

You, too, will discover that what you can name and track you can interact with and integrate more consciously into your whole being and life. Tracking is an essential Self-care tool. It develops objectivity, discernment, a sense of safety, and deeper *intimacy* with your authentic Self and your relationships. It brings curiosity versus judgment to what arises and what you focus on, and supports the creation of beneficial change within you and in your life. Using tracking and an Awareness Journal

will help you draw wisdom and wholeheartedness from your *wise-hearted spiritual warrior*. This part of you embodies and expresses heart-and-soul wisdom through your visions, commitments, discipline, courage, integrity, and service. It will empower you to become the hero or heroine of your life.

The Awareness Journal, presented as a tool at the end of this chapter, was created by Betsy Baker, acupuncturist and senior instructor of *Process Acupressure*. She developed it to help others explore Self from a place of nonjudgmental, compassionate presence; and to facilitate the healing of pain and suffering that may have occurred from habits, beliefs, and conditioning we accepted as truth. Observing our conditioned minds in the moment, being present, allows us to see what is real. This brings choice to our actions. Betsy's holistic approach to journaling uses all available senses and body-mind signals to deepen awareness. This approach enhances connection with our authentic Self, our heart, and our soul. It helps us become aware of how our thoughts and language often become our biology. The Awareness Journal will empower you to connect with and use your internal GPS in everyday life and on healing journeys. It will also help you set clear *intentions* and *goals*.

In *Molecules of Emotion*, Dr. Candace Pert points out how the body is often treated medically with no regard for the mind or emotions. She notes that psychologists have also treated the mind as separate and disconnected from the body.⁷ Through researchers such as Dr. Pert we are reminded of the need to consider healing the body through the mind and the mind through the body. Our heart is always present as the bridge between the two. Healing begins to occur as we come home to our hearts, when we grow from either/or duality thinking (mind *or* heart) into holographic thinking that combines HeartMind intelligence and wisdom. The whole is more powerful than the sum of the parts in this model.

Coming home to your heart and making the trip from everyday mind to your heart is key to enhancing your *response*

ability, your ability to respond. Although you may not be able to change what happens to you, you can choose how you react or respond. Response ability is enhanced as you learn and grow through health challenges. This expands your ability to thrive versus merely survive and helps you deeply appreciate moments of renewed meaning and inner peace.

Austro-German poet Rainer Maria Rilke suggests we “be patient toward all that is unresolved in our heart, and try to love the questions themselves.”⁸ May your heart and mind open to the wisdom within your HeartMind as you read *The Heart of Healing* and experience discoveries in yourself and your life. May this bring renewed Self-love, trust, and compassion to your as yet unanswered questions.



Tools and Reflections

*The road of life twists and turns and no two directions
are ever the same. Yet our lessons come from the
journey, not the destination.*

—Don Williams, Jr.

American novelist/poet

Max De Pree, author of *Leadership Is an Art*, reminds us: “We need to give each other the space to grow, to be ourselves, to exercise our diversity. We need to give each other space so that we may both give and receive such beautiful things as ideas, openness, dignity, joy, healing, and inclusion.”⁹ May you discover and walk this path through the tools and practices in each chapter that follows.

As you creatively and playfully follow your heart during Self-care practices, you will uncover powerful secrets for health and well-being. These will help you shift perceptions, integrate insights, and bring your inner and outer worlds into harmonious alignment. As you focus on your journey, your heart and soul will reveal guidance and resources during Self-care practices.

Plan for a one-month commitment to using the Awareness Journal that follows. This will stimulate healing and connection with your authentic Self. Devote a minimum of thirty minutes daily to journaling and Self-care practices. Be sure to add a tincture of Self-compassion, love, and joy to bring a lightness of being to your journey. *You* are the gift you have been waiting for.

Tool 1: Awareness Journal*

When one is a stranger to oneself, then one is estranged from others.

–Anne Morrow Lindbergh

Keeping an Awareness Journal will help you slow down, listen to, and compassionately witness yourself and your journey.¹⁰ The process will help you develop a way to plug into your built-in directional system, your GPS. It will enable you to access guidance and wisdom within your authentic Self and will deepen awareness on your Self-healing journey. You will then be able to update your “owner’s manual” and wisely bring your unique gifts and talents into the world.

Step 1: For the first two weeks make entries in your Awareness Journal a minimum of four to five days per week. Gently go within as you bring your awareness from outer space to inner space. “Check in” and scan your body, mind, emotions, and soul three times daily: morning before getting out of bed or shortly after you arise, midday, and in the evening before you retire. Use various channels (visual, emotional, auditory, physical sensations, movement, *intuition*) to gather information. Briefly describe what you experience as follows:

- *Scan your body* for sensations and movements. Witness what, where, and how intense these are on a scale from one to ten. Note this in your Awareness Journal.
- *Scan your emotions*. Witness feelings that are present, such as anger, joy, sadness, worry, grief, fear, or guilt. Note these feelings in your Awareness Journal.
- *Scan your mind*. Witness your internal self-talk, chatter, images, or stream of consciousness. Note what you witness in your Awareness Journal.

* Courtesy of Betsy Baker, M.Ed., M.Ac., Licensed Acupuncturist

- *Scan your soul.* Witness any inner knowing or guidance that arises. Note this guidance in your Awareness Journal.

Step 2: For the next two weeks check in daily and scan your body, mind, emotions, and soul. Notice what you witness. Make entries in your Awareness Journal four to five days per week. At the end of each week describe what you are now aware of in your journal. How has this inner guidance affected your daily living and choices?

Step 3: Reflect on your process and discoveries at the end of each day, week, and at the end of two weeks. What perceptions, conclusions, patterns, new awareness, or insights did you uncover? How do these serve your Self-healing process, or not? Notice anything that requires change for your highest healing.

Step 4: Continue this process of developing your witness self by scanning your body, mind, emotions, and soul throughout each day. Make entries in your journal as needed, describing what you witness and want to practically apply and embody. Use your journal to connect with and honor your authentic Self and your heart's wisdom, as revealed through your body, mind, emotions, and soul.

Tool 2: Mindfulness Meditation

Buddhist monk, teacher, and author, Thich Nhat Hanh, describes mindfulness as being in the here and now. The Dalai Lama describes mindfulness as “the practice of bringing our accumulated knowledge, wisdom and insight to bear upon the present moment.”¹¹ According to Rick Hanson, Ph.D., “Mindfulness involves the skillful use of attention to both your inner and outer worlds.”¹² Mindfulness is taught at many schools and centers. Appendix B will guide you to resources.

Mindfulness is an essential Self-care practice and a skill. As you develop this skill, your body-mind will become more congruent with your heart, soul, and your authentic Self. Begin with the following mindfulness practice. Take time afterward to reflect on your experience in your Awareness Journal.

Mindfulness Breathing Meditation

Start in a comfortable seated position, where you will be undisturbed for fifteen to twenty minutes. Select a time of day that works best and turn off phones and other distractions. Sit in a chair or on the floor. If you are on the floor, make sure your hips are higher than your knees; use a bench or cushion and cross your legs if comfortable.

Breathe through your nose, and bring your awareness to your breath as it enters and leaves your nostrils. Notice the pace, depth, and temperature of your breath. Sense how your abdomen rises and falls with each breath, and how your breath flows automatically, outside of your direct control. If your mind wanders, or a noise distracts you, refocus on your breath. Let your breath be like a wave that washes in and out over whatever arises. Name and acknowledge any distractions, thoughts, images, and sensations, without reacting or attaching to them. Thich Nhat Hanh suggests we experience the miracle of our aliveness through each breath during mindfulness meditation stating:

*Breathing in I know that I am breathing in.
Breathing out I know that I am breathing out.*¹³

Slowly and gently bring yourself out of meditation when you are ready. Take a few moments to write about your experience in your Awareness Journal. Allow whatever occurred to be, and notice anything you label “good or bad” or “right or wrong.” Be

CHAPTER ONE: THE WHOLE HEART

patient with yourself and your process as you cultivate a more conscious presence with your authentic Self, your life, and others, through the Self-care practice of mindfulness.





CHAPTER TWO

The Journey

*The journey of a thousand leagues begins
from beneath your feet.*

–Lao Tzu

The healing journey manifests in a different pathway for each of us. We seldom control the timing, which remains part of the mystery of healing. A healing journey comes about suddenly or gradually, and may include physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects. The process can take you to great heights of joy and triumph, as well as great depths of sorrow and despair, when life as you knew it is forever changed. You may struggle with learning to trust your individual timing, inner wisdom, and the unique ways your heart and authentic Self guide you. Each of these becomes a compass for your journey. You may also encounter passages through which you travel alone, “places as narrow as a razor’s edge,” as described in the *Katha Upanishad*.¹

When you enter the realm of healing, you may find yourself in new and unfamiliar territory. Many clients described it like being on Mars without a road map. These places of solo passage are an essential part of your journey home to who and what you are in your authentic Self. I also refer to this as your *core being* or your true nature. I believe our soul, or essential life force, exists within our authentic Self, as does our link with the Divine. I believe connection to each of these can stimulate healing.

Coming home to your heart and soul is vital to healing. It occurs each time you consciously reconnect with your authentic Self. The process strengthens your resilience and helps you create a sustained response when you face challenges to your health and well-being. During each return visit home you will learn to transcend conditioning, roles, personality, attitudes, beliefs, and ego. When clients came home during sessions, it showed on their faces and in their bodies. Many had lost touch with their hearts and authentic Self. Coming-home tears often flowed as their minds and bodies relaxed and as they opened to and released into a process of deep healing.

In this chapter you will learn more about the healing journey. Two stories will highlight uniquely different paths taken, and how the wise-hearted spiritual warrior was awakened in each of these individuals as they encountered passages and triumphs. This enhanced their response ability and helped them integrate wholeness and their fullest potential during their Self-healing journeys.

Seeking Wholeness

As you seek wholeness on your healing journeys, you will be challenged to develop your ability to be strong and soft; open and cloistered; active and still; and have the discernment to know when each best serves you and your journey. On the healing path you will be strengthened and empowered as you

learn and develop characteristics, skills, and powers of the wise-hearted spiritual warrior.

Carl Jung sought to better understand human motivation and behavior. He believed there are instinctual, unconscious forces within us that have deep, primitive origins. Jung termed these forces *archetypes*. He defined archetypes as universally observed patterns of thought and behavior that represent positive and negative qualities within each of us. Archetypes can be recognized through images and emotions that arise.² Jung believed that awareness of our archetypes could enlighten us about unconscious behaviors and our shadow – the unexpressed or undeveloped aspects of our personalities. He concluded that behavior, emotions, and life could change through looking within, weeding out negativity, and planting seeds from which new archetypes can grow. Jung felt this process enables us to embody wisdom, *grace*, and beauty through our life experiences and relationships.

Today we see archetypes in art, myths, and even advertising. You may identify with thought and behavior patterns of archetypes such as the hero, heroine, magician, guru, healer, lover, teacher, visionary, father, mother, child, warrior; or unconscious shadow aspects, such as the victim, martyr, servant, egotist, silent child, and actor/actress. Awareness of your current archetypal behavior patterns can help you identify ones that serve and ones that block you from your true nature. You will pass through stages of development and transcend behavioral patterns as healing and transformation occurs. When you understand, embody, and tend to who you are in your authentic Self, you will become your own wise-hearted spiritual warrior. You will flourish in creative ways, gain access to higher spiritual awareness, and free up vital energy.

My early understanding and heart opening relative to the warrior archetype began as I read *Way of the Peaceful Warrior*, by Aikido master, world-champion athlete, and teacher Dan Millman. I realized that heroes and heroines from myths and

history were noble warriors who battled tyrants and monsters. David fought Goliath, Luke Skywalker fought Darth Vader, Mother Teresa fought for the poorest in India, and King Arthur's knights protected the kingdom and its inhabitants. Each rescued others as well as themselves.

I also participated in an Empowerment Workshop with authors and human potential trainers Gail Straub and David Gershon. These wise leaders described and modeled the qualities and practices of a spiritual warrior. I realized that wise-hearted spiritual warriors are not macho men or women who fight for superiority and power over others. They stand up to unjust or corrupt external and/or internal authority and often confront their own demons. As I studied the teachings of American author and medical intuitive Carolyn Myss, I realized the healing power within archetypal awareness. I recognized my orphaned child and my magical child. Each needed parenting, self-expression, and healing through the Divine Mother/Father within me. I saw my saboteur using self-destructive behaviors when I feared Self-empowerment and the changes it could bring into my life. Each realization made me more aware of options and choices relative to my thinking and behavior. Each enhanced my spiritual awareness and taught me how to give and receive what we are each worthy of – respect, compassion, and love.

Through Process Acupressure bodywork sessions I discovered that my persona, who and how I presented myself to the world, was different from who and how I was in my authentic Self. My wise-hearted spiritual warrior also began to awaken as I recognized archetypal patterns that had shaped my thoughts, emotions, and behavior: the good girl, good mother, earth mother, seeker, teacher, martyr, prostitute, victim, perfectionist, orphaned child, playful child, jester, caregiver, and warrior. Do you recognize these or other patterns in yourself or others? You, too, will uncover more about your unique archetypes in exercises at the end of this chapter and through the resources in the Bibliography and Appendix B.

The Passage to Healing

For some people I worked with, the passage to healing was short and uncomplicated. They quickly returned to full daily activities. For others it was frustrating and confusing, because they could no longer return to the activities and life they once enjoyed. Many embarked on endless journeys, seeking answers to their “problem” and ways to “fix” it. Their continuous search for answers led them to multiple consultations with medical doctors, surgeons, physical and occupational therapists, pain management specialists, counselors, nutritionists, and complementary medicine practitioners.

For these people, the journey became long and arduous. Their choices for care were often costly and limited in approach. They gathered information and tried alternative or complementary therapies, but they were often unaware and unadvised as to how to combine these with inner knowing, wisdom, and internal and external resources during healing. I found it confusing and frustrating when comprehensive care plans did not take into account the mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects that affect physical healing. This is apparent today as veterans return from war and receive treatment for their broken bodies. The post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) that too many come home with is not sufficiently recognized and attended to when their plans of care are established and reviewed.

For many clients I worked with, the healing journey enhanced their response ability. Necessity became the mother of invention, and I observed that whatever brought heart and meaning into their lives – pets, grandchildren, family, friends, favorite songs or types of music, gardening, art, or nature – also stimulated their ability to respond. These experiences reminded them of what was still alive within. This touched their authentic Self and activated their wise-hearted spiritual warrior, as well as their will to live.

For individuals who sustained acute injury through sports or trauma, interventions involved repairing their bodies. They were strongly motivated to heal so they could return to full daily activities. Theirs was a passage of summoning determination. Other clients faced recurrent or chronic conditions such as spinal, head, neck, and facial pain; chronic pain; or the diagnosis of a life-changing illness such as Parkinson's, multiple sclerosis, or fibromyalgia. Their physical, mental, and emotional response ability drastically changed. They needed to summon new capabilities and strengths. Not everyone was able to meet the challenges that pain and dis-ease deposited on their doorstep. Some became addicted to drugs, alcohol, food, or work in order to numb the physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual pain they could no longer tolerate.

Lab work became part of all my clients' physical therapy "homework" and healing process; it included therapeutic exercise, *acupressure*, breathing, mindfulness, journaling, reading, and Self-care practices. Lab work stimulated awareness and helped integrate learning. It was essential that clients learned how to enhance their response ability. There was no automatic pilot on this journey. Learning and participation was the way. Backpacks for the journey needed to be filled with patience, Self-trust, Self-compassion, courage, and persistence, along with faith in themselves, their health-care team, and a force greater than themselves.

Clients who faced chronic pain or life-threatening illness were greatly challenged by this approach. However, I learned to assist in bringing forth their response ability at these times through a combination of listening to and following their body signals, emotions, and words, versus leading with my agenda. Doing and being were incorporated into their healing process. This involved active listening, waiting with compassionate presence, and providing space for silence and/or deep rest during hands-on therapy sessions. We listened and honored whatever emerged as grist for the mill: tears and laughter; chaos

and confusion; feeling lost and alone; and sacred moments of silence and peace. Everything served the journey. Following and trusting the process was especially challenging when individuals faced the end stages of life.

Life-threatening illness ushers us into a new landscape with slippery slopes and unfamiliar, frequently changing terrain. A struggle often begins when death becomes the enemy to be defeated at all costs versus recognizing this time as a sacred passage. This passage requires unconditional positive regard, listening, and support on many levels for the individual, family, significant others, and the health-care practitioners who serve them. Pioneers in the field of death and dying, such as Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, Dr. Bernie Siegel, and Stephen Levine have helped many to map out this territory. It is here that fear and anger often become our close companions.

The prospect of death is a stark reality, frequently filled with overwhelming situations and emotions. As a new therapist I was inexperienced in regard to death and dying. As I worked with patients facing terminal illness, I realized death is a mysterious passage that we face many times before our final physical passing. Throughout life we experience the loss of hopes and dreams, loved ones, financial security, and moments when life falls apart. Each death can help to prepare us for the ultimate letting go at the end of life when we again encounter the challenges of acceptance and surrender. Author Norman Cousins broadens our perspective on death, reminding us that “death is not the greatest loss in life. The greatest loss is what dies inside us while we live.”³

Individuals, families, and significant others who walked through the dying process showed me that death does not always indicate the absence of healing. For some people, dying was a time of struggle, as they faced what remained unsaid or undone in their life and relationships. Fear, pride, anger, and old habits, attitudes, and beliefs shaped their world. They encountered unpredictable steps and unstable bridges over huge chasms as they moved closer

to death and the ultimate unknown. The wise-hearted spiritual warrior within helped them touch upon peace during moments of acceptance and surrender. I, too, met these passages as my mother was dying. It was here I learned how necessary it is for our soul to be midwifed as part of the dying process.

We are all terminal. Some of us know it sooner than others. When end stages of life are faced, I am reminded that dogs get fixed, fish get cured, and people heal. However healing manifests, we find ourselves seeking greater physical, mental, emotional, and/or spiritual balance and harmony on our journey to the heart of healing. From our first to our last steps, we are guided home and supported as we discover what has heart and meaning in our life and relationships.

Mom's Story

The healing journey may take you on detours with unexpected side trips or discouraging impasses. When I walked through Pick's dis-ease (a type of dementia) with my mother before her passing, I was also separated from my husband. Each situation took me on a healing odyssey. I learned much about compassion in the face of suffering and separation – my mother's and my own – during the harsh reality of dementia and the seemingly endless days she lived at a nursing home. The wise-hearted spiritual warrior was awakened in the process for each of us.

To know my mother was to love her. Within the innate goodness of every action and step she took, every word she spoke, even amidst her faults and limitations, was the grace of a woman of valor. Mom began her final, solo voyage home when dementia took her from our family while she was still here. After my father retired, my parents lived in Florida during the winters and came back to New Jersey for the summer/fall seasons. I became concerned about changes in my mother's health status during several phone conversations with her, but I

was not physically present to observe these changes while they were in Florida. The information I received from my father was confusing, and his comments often contained mixed messages. At his breaking point, Dad admitted Mom to a nursing home, informing my siblings and me about this after the fact.

I brought Mom back to New Jersey with the help of my husband, Stanley. He remained a heart-centered, grounding influence through Mom's passing, during a time when we were still separated. Stanley often spoke of how much he loved my mother, whose presence brought him what he never received from his own mother. The light that beamed out from his heart was like a lighthouse. It kept me aware of home shores as I traveled unfamiliar waters in my role as Mom's caretaker. About four weeks after we brought Mom back to New Jersey she was admitted to a facility for evaluation. She was eventually diagnosed with Pick's disease. During her stay, the fog, confusion, and bewilderment of dementia lifted during a few rare moments. My mother shared precious, poignant, and fleeting seconds with my siblings and me, which we recorded in a small pad by her bedside so that we could update one another. The recordings grew fewer and farther apart as we encountered the shell that my mother formerly inhabited.

Within two months Mom was transferred to a nursing home, something I initially swore I would never do. As seasons changed and fall approached that year I went through the motions of preparing for Thanksgiving. I arranged to take Mom out of the nursing home on that day and bring her to our family gathering, her first outing. We filled moments with laughter and song when nothing seemed funny, as our voices met Mom's silence and withdrawal. She was in a place we could not go to with her, a place where she seemed to remain alone and confused. We filled our bellies with food, as our unnourished, empty hearts and souls ached with separation. Mom picked at her food as her eyes stared vacantly. She looked around the room as if she were asking, "Where am I? What is going on?"

Dread filled me when it was time to take Mom back to the nursing home. I felt I had failed her. I had sworn I would never put my mother in a nursing home, as my father had done. We walked down the long hallway taking us to the Alzheimer's unit, stopping to ring the bell by the door, which was locked for the safety of residents who wandered. Mom glared like a cornered rat, a riveting and piercing stare on her face as her floating mind captured the realization that she was back in this foreign territory. I wrapped my arms around her. "I'm here, Mom," I said. "I'll stay with you and keep you safe until you fall asleep. I'll be back tomorrow and every day, I promise." I desperately scrambled to surround her with protection, as if she were one of my children who had awakened from a nightmare. Mom looked at me, looked back at the door, and again looked at me. Her angst was palpable.

That moment is forever etched on my heart. Only in retrospect, many years later, have I been able to appreciate how it brought insight and wisdom to me through my wise-hearted spiritual warrior. Like sand within an oyster, this once incomprehensible experience created a pearl of compassion in me for my mother's solitary journey and suffering, and for my own journey and challenges alongside her.

As my mother's journey took her through dementia, I put my emotions on the back burner. As her primary caretaker and guardian, it was my job to act and make decisions objectively. I had learned and developed this skill during training and work as a physical therapist. Denial served me at times during my mother's illness, when it helped me function effectively on my mother's behalf. However, I paid a price and disconnected from my heart each time I went into my thinking mind without also connecting with and consulting my heart.

Years later, through counseling and bodywork sessions, I became aware of and began to process emotions I had separated from during this time. I left these emotions untended in order to cope and survive, but they remained behind a closed, locked

door to my heart, awaiting my compassionate presence. Each of us needs to honor times when we need to stay objective and put our emotions on a back burner. However, when we do not revisit and process these emotions we betray and abandon these parts of ourselves. Our issues become stuck in our tissues. Healing is promoted as we journey home to our heart and authentic Self, through listening to, witnessing, and processing body-mind signals and emotions. This awakens the wise-hearted spiritual warrior within and enables us to grow wholehearted again on our healing journeys.

Being together with my mother during her passing was a gift she gave our family at the end of her life. She showed me, through our shared journey, how to gracefully support and be with others at the conclusion of life. My mother lived her life as a wise-hearted spiritual warrior without fanfare, in her own quiet way. Mom taught me firsthand about life and death. Through her courageous example and journey, she demonstrated how vital it is to be midwifed in our passing from this world, just as our birthing and entry are midwifed, with heart-centered presence.

Response Ability and Participation: Charles's Story

Time after time I watched people become tenacious, persistent, and mindful as healing journeys took them into deeper passages within themselves. Layers of conditioning unraveled and brought forth enhanced awareness, insight, and enlightenment. Healing journeys limed and tilled their interior soil, and enriched their connection with their heart and authentic Self. This helped them live wholeheartedly through phoenix-rising experiences. Their unique gifts, talents, and contributions emerged, and they came into new, unimagined ways of being.

Of all the clients who have graced me with their individual healing journeys, I will always remember Charles. I met him when he was nineteen and in the early stages of his healing journey.

Charles was at an age where he was becoming independent when a car in which he was a passenger went out of control. The car crashed into a tree, leaving him with a spinal cord injury that left him paralyzed and wheelchair-bound with only limited use of his arms and upper body. Charles's healing journey began at the moment of impact, during those irrevocable minutes that took him from independence to dependence. Charles and I started a new course of physical therapy, and a long, arduous process of physical healing, eighteen months after he had completed extensive rehabilitation. His story reveals a real-life re-enactment of the phoenix-rising myth. Charles's wise-hearted spiritual warrior courageously guided him through rebirth, regeneration, and rising from the ashes of a former life into a new one.

Physical therapy sessions with Charles centered on relieving and reducing recurrent muscle pain and spasms in his neck and shoulders. When we first met, I was struck by his indomitable spirit, sense of humor, and his presence. This immediately brought a sense of ease and collaboration to our work. Charles never perceived his physical, mental, or emotional healing as anything special, merely something he did with the help of his family. "I had no choice," he said, sharing poignant moments about how the love of his family brought him through early challenges.

I grew to learn from and respect Charles's motivation, perceptions, beliefs, vision, and journey, which was one of victory and joy versus victimization. We became heart-and-soul friends during physical therapy sessions, as well as during off-the-table conversations about life and healing. Charles rose above limitations. He graduated with a bachelor's degree and started his own business. He now coaches school-aged children about the dangers of drinking and driving, how to prevent head and spinal cord injuries, and the importance of using seatbelts. Charles also understands how vital recreation and sports activities are to a happy lifestyle. He continues to share his passion, positive attitude, and information during speaking

engagements and through Beyond Wheels, Inc., his nonprofit organization. Charles has participated with friends in activities such as white-water rafting, skydiving, bi-skiing, and climbing pyramids in Mexico. He continues to demonstrate his beliefs, motivation, and visions for people with disabilities; he shows how to make the impossible possible using inner resources, power, and strength, along with external resources and support. Charles lives the path of a wise-hearted spiritual warrior daily.

Your Relationships on the Journey

A healing journey is like an odyssey, an epic voyage home to our authentic Self and a life lived “on purpose.” My healing odyssey began with miscarriages and marital separations. I faced the loss of a dream and my personal identity, an inability to create union with a life partner, and the loss of what held heart and meaning in my life – being a mother and having a family. Your journey may begin with physical pain that dominates your daily life and becomes your entire identity, limiting how you stand up and walk through your life. Or it may begin with an emotional crisis that overwhelms and forever crushes the heart of everything that matters in your life. Perhaps a financial crisis bankrupts you and calls into question all you have put your faith in, especially confidence in others and your coping and life-management skills. And you may also face the raw challenge of sudden or unfathomable loss, perhaps of a child, which may set in place a rift with G-d and the spiritual beliefs that once provided a foundation for meeting life’s challenges.

No matter how you arrive there, your healing odyssey will lead you, again and again, to awareness of one of the most important relationships you will have – with yourself. As this relationship grows and deepens, you will understand the value of integrating your experiences physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. This may involve deep rest after stress and exhaustion; Self-compassion and forgiveness; the development

of curiosity and creative ways to walk through these times; and play and laughter. Though it may seem unthinkable, play and laughter can ease your journey when grief or strong emotions feel all consuming.

As I consciously engaged with healing and experienced the tears and the pain, I kept coming back to this relationship with myself. The more patience, Self-compassion, and awareness I brought to the process, the more I was able to embody and apply insights gained during the healing journey. Acceptance did not come easily or all at once, but through repeated application of three principles:

- Witness and gain insight from all aspects of life: the good, the bad, and the ugly.
- Remain compassionately present versus going into judgment, drama, or reaction.
- Honestly acknowledge the truth of what is as you seek insight and understanding.

Of equal importance to me was having a relationship with a force greater than myself. Being an independent woman, I needed to continuously remind myself to connect with and honor G-d's relationship with me, along with my relationship with G-d. I was humbled each step of the way, but as I committed to both relationships many paths opened. I became willing and able to manifest my creative gifts, talents, and life potential more often. This proved invaluable during the writing and publishing of *The Heart of Healing*. Both relationships needed conscious tending daily to help me steer through stormy, dark passageways as well as peaceful waters.

My healing journey occurred through the grace of everyday angels, helpers, and messengers who walked beside me to support and enrich my experiences. They came in the form of teachers, mentors, friends, books, pets, music, art, and especially Mother Earth. Some chose to remain invisible and

anonymous. These angels guided my enlightenment, deepened my faith and trust, and taught me how to walk the mystical path with practical feet.

Between Heaven and Earth

In Chinese medicine, human beings are considered the bridge between heaven and Earth. As such, we need to develop roots for grounding and wings that allow our visions and dreams to take flight. Our hearts contain the “glue” or cohesiveness that grounds heaven on Earth. Heart connection transforms our entire being as we reconnect with a force greater than ourselves.

Every step of your journey will serve and support healing for yourself and others. Your body will provide the vessel for embodying learning. Healing will stretch you beyond your physical body, perhaps on the mat during yoga *asanas* or off the mat when beliefs, perceptions, relationships, and life situations shift. When your reach exceeds your grasp, you will also be reminded not to stretch yourself too thin. Pain and suffering will sit alongside Self-compassion and Self-love. Each will help you develop the strength and courage of a wise-hearted spiritual warrior. Rather than becoming stoic and resigned to life’s trials, this warrior lives resiliently through your heart and authentic Self.

Awareness, mindfulness, and Self-care practices are your empowerment tools for your healing journeys. Heart connection provides the key that opens doorways to healing and soul wisdom. As you heal, you, too, become part of a transformational process that brings heaven to Earth. Initially, when unanticipated processes and events arise, this may feel like opening Pandora’s box. However, at the bottom of Pandora’s box was hope – a hope that will aid our struggling individual and collective humanities.



Tools and Reflections

*Knowing others is wisdom,
Knowing yourself is enlightenment.*

–Lao-tzu

Congratulations on your commitment to continuing your Awareness Journal and willingness to use physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual insights and Self-care practices to support your healing journeys. Please continue this journal and use it for all end-of-chapter exercises.

Many of us look externally for cues, clues, and resources. You will now begin to also look for these within. Please remember to use professional resources as needed – physicians, therapists, counselors, and bodyworkers – with credentials and experience. None of us is meant to go this route totally alone.

Tool #3, Your Autobiography, involves taking a journey from birth to present time. You will explore this process during three separate sessions. Witness what you recall as you honestly and nonjudgmentally review your life. Notice what lights up and comes forward. I encourage you to learn from and use the past to serve your life and healing today. This will anchor your individual journey and enhance relationships with Self and others. Above all, remain gentle and compassionate with yourself as your journey unfolds.

Begin this session with several breaths to center and ground you. Feel each inhalation and exhalation as they move into, through, and out of your body. Sense the sacred sanctuary within you, which sets you and this time apart from the rest of your day and world. Light a candle, say a prayer, and if you desire, play soft music. Create a space that serves your inward journey. Have a pen and your Awareness Journal nearby.

Tool 3: Your Autobiography

Session One:

While in the sacred space you have now created, begin to review your life in chronological intervals by decades (birth to age ten, ten to twenty, and so on). In your Awareness Journal draw a horizontal time line, on which you will now list significant relationships and events you recall (family, siblings, friends, relatives, teachers, mentors, lovers, colleagues, pets, school, work, vacations, ceremonies, graduations, sports, books, music, art, and so on). As you do so, explore the following:

- What were the major experiences, highlights, crossroads, and transition points?
- What events and individuals touched your heart and influenced who you are today?
- When and how were you physically, mentally, emotionally, and/or spiritually present, or not, from your heart space? How did this impact you during times of transition?

Session Two:

Create a collage with photos or pictures from magazines that depict your life. Give it a title. Take a few moments, in silence, and be with this overview of your life. Notice where and with whom you traveled on journeys to the heart of healing.

Session Three:

Explore, reflect, and respond to the following in your Awareness Journal as you review your autobiography:

- How did conditioning and roles you took on affect how you presented yourself to the world? How did this serve you, or not?

CHAPTER TWO: THE JOURNEY

- What specific thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors developed from roles and conditioning? How were these impacted by your heart connection? Which still serve you, and which do not?
- Explore Table 2 below, which contains a partial list of archetypes. Carolyn Myss’s website can also be used to assist you further.* Which archetypal patterns or roles do you wish you embodied more or less of? Who or how were these demonstrated to you?

Table 2: Archetypes

addict	father/mother	monk	seeker
alchemist	fool	mystic	seer
artist	gambler	nature girl/boy	servant
avenger	goddess	olympian	shaman
beggar	healer	politician	slave
bully	hermit	prince/ princess	storyteller
caregiver	hero/heroine	prophet	student
child	innovator	prostitute	teacher
clown	judge	puritan	trickster
crone	lover	rebel	vampire
dictator	magician	saboteur	victim
diva	martyr	sage	visionary
dreamer	masochist	scapegoat	warrior
earth mother	matriarch	scribe	witch

- When and how did your wise-hearted spiritual warrior show up? What internal cues or signals (sensations, images, Self-talk) announced this? What enhanced or prevented your warrior from emerging?

* www.myss.com/library/contracts/determine.asp

Take a few moments to return to center within your inner sanctuary. Bring your awareness to your heart space, and let the stillness embrace and restore you. Welcome home!





CHAPTER THREE

Recovering Reverence for Life

There is only one valid way to partake of the universe – whether the partaking is of food and water, the love of another, or, indeed a pill. That way is characterized by reverence—a reverence born of a felt sense of participation in the universe, a kinship with all and with all matter.

—Larry Dossey, M.D.

Watching the night sky as a child became the first of many experiences that filled me with awe and connected me with universal life force. I took in these priceless moments like a sponge filling up with water, not having or needing words to ground them in my heart and soul. As an adult I discovered and more fully comprehended the riches deposited there. These memories became gold mines to revisit and explore, personally and professionally. They helped me unearth my authentic Self and took me to the heart of healing. Here I rediscovered reverence for life through Self-care practices that encompassed ancient wisdom and the natural world.

This reverence, at the heart of my childhood fascination with the universe, established an inner pathway to my heart and soul early on. It enabled me to recognize a core element within healing experiences – heart-and-soul connection. This alliance is a wellspring; a source that provides insight, wisdom, and guidance; a port in a storm; and a lighthouse beacon that reminds me where home is. This partnership is a source of comfort and safety when healing and life challenges feel overwhelming. Healing involves a process of rediscovering this core connection, and with it reverence for life.

In my mid-thirties, while I was searching for what brought heart and meaning to my life, I began to process awe-filled childhood memories during bodywork sessions. Through practices that originated in ancient ways, I tapped into my body's natural wisdom. A startling, unexpected revelation arose: Everything that existed in the external universe also existed within my internal universe. I discovered that, as Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, "what lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us."¹ During sessions I uncovered realms and routes of healing throughout my being, which I began to travel and investigate: the *meridians* of *acupuncture*; the arteries and veins, which circulate nutrients and cleanse the organs; the lymphatic system, which protects and restores. Organs became planets to explore, and I discovered they often housed unprocessed emotions – anger within my liver, fear within my kidneys, grief within my lungs, and joy within my heart. My heart's wisdom provided sustenance, support, and guidance, which kept me on target during these sessions. I found myself again in awe of the life force I was discovering within me and the built-in mechanisms and resources for healing that we are graced with.

My intuition and insight deepened as I participated in Self-care practices on a regular, consistent basis. They became tools with which to meet the unknown. My intuition was not grounded in my analytical, rational mind. During bodywork and

counseling sessions, my intuition tapped into conscious and unconscious memories stored in my body. As I began to use and trust my intuition, I encountered the defensive stronghold my ego and rational mind had erected. I needed to differentiate and disengage from this – not an easy proposition. I discovered what Albert Einstein described: “The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift.”² Trusting my process became easier when intuition and soul guidance came forth as I groped in the darkness on unfamiliar pathways.

I was like an astronaut going from outer space to inner space, using meditation, prayer, bodywork, and counseling to access and explore my inner worlds. Some journeys were beautiful and filled with awe. Some were scary and filled with erupting emotions, and many provided way stations along the route. T. S. Eliot wrote, “We shall not cease from exploration. And the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.”³ Thus began a journey of healing experiences that led me home to my authentic Self and reverence for life.

Obstacles on the Path

In the busy, highly technological world I inhabited, it was easy to consciously or unconsciously disconnect from nature, my authentic nature, my life path, and reverence for life. During precious moments spent alone in nature I touched upon the interconnectedness within everything and everyone. However, each time I returned to my everyday world I experienced an internal tug of war. I desperately craved the stillness I found in solitude while in nature, yet I was repeatedly drawn more to external commitments than to commitments to my life and well-being.

I found it hard to be patient and compassionate with myself when life stood still and I wasn't busy. This was the case after

two miscarriages, two lost babies. I was afraid. I was angry. These feelings built up within me over time. I felt ashamed, angry, and confused about my inability to bear a child. It felt like punishment.

When I became pregnant for the third time, my doctor suggested I stop working as a high school teacher, strongly recommending bed rest for the first trimester. It was late autumn, when nature was giving up life, and the long, dark days of winter approached. I spent months at home in bed. There was extensive, seemingly endless time to reflect and be present with my life – the new life growing within me and the memory of two lives my body miscarried. My fear of miscarrying resurfaced. I brooded incessantly. I felt overwhelmed.

One day, as I again faced my brooding, something snapped inside me. I was no longer willing to be held captive by my fears. I needed to uncover and consider other possibilities. An unconditional attitudinal shift occurred, like a seismic vibration shaking up everything within me. I vowed to myself that if this pregnancy did miscarry my husband and I would immediately look into adoption. This decision strengthened my willpower and commitment to go the distance instead of becoming morbid, stoic, and resigned.

That winter I came to respect how, during stillness, much was occurring beneath my conscious awareness. During those months nature provided many insights. Within winter's profound silences, and long periods of hibernation, new life and beginnings awaited opportune moments to birth in the spring. I learned the importance of slowing down and centering myself through my breath. I learned to be present with my changing physical body through gentle yoga, mindfulness, and other grounding practices. I began focusing inward to commune with new life germinating within me. As I participated in my healing first-hand, I discovered a transformational process of living from the inside out, in addition to the outside in. As I integrated inner knowing and guidance with external medical care, I made more informed, discerning choices about my health and well-being.

During the snowstorms, I watched as gusts of wind tore through trees, bending their trunks into almost inconceivable positions without breaking. Winter storms came and went, depositing icicles on bowed branches, which glistened during rare moments of sunlight. Much-needed beauty came to my world – a world that previously seemed dark and unknown. The natural world now taught me about developing flexibility; weathering change and storms with grace, and finding beauty amidst the cold, biting winters of my life. In retrospect, I now realize how everything in my life has been interconnected. Each situation and relationship enhanced my return to reverence for life. Seasonal changes have occurred in nature, and my human nature has changed as well during the seasons of my life. Endings have always been followed by new beginnings. Everything has served the grand design, or larger plan, often beyond human understanding and my rational mind.

Challenging situations left priceless insights for me to discover during subsequent bodywork and process sessions, such as great appreciation for our two children born after two miscarriages. After two separations I was more inclined to let go of Cinderella beliefs about being rescued by a handsome prince. I learned that blaming my husband shifted my being responsible for my life to him, serving no one, especially me. I grew to appreciate that heart connection and love, like bread, needs to be made fresh daily through open and honest communication with our Self and significant others.

My challenge has been to remember that my individual healing is connected to and part of the grand design, which I initially witnessed as an innocent child. When expanded awareness returns me to this place, I am reminded that I do not need to control life. At these times my process tends to unfold easily and organically, like the change of seasons.

At various crossroads on my journey, I understood the truth in what Albert Einstein stated, “The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at

when we created them.”⁴ I had accumulated a heavy backpack of conditioning over the years, filled with attitudes, beliefs, and “shoulds.” Emptying the backpack required honest, astute awareness and discernment, made possible through guidance from my heart and my authentic Self.

In order to change my thinking and expand my awareness, I began to explore my resistance to change. This took many forms: procrastination, busyness, and lack of commitment to and accountability for daily Self-care practices. Making life changes required giving up resistance, setting clear intentions and goals, and implementing a plan for practically applying learning and insights. You, too, will explore this in Chapter Seven.

I was afraid of change. I wanted to keep things as they were, which often led to denial and self-deception. When I separated from my husband, I married my physical therapy practice. Staying busy was easier than facing betrayal and loss of a dream. Problem solving for others was easier than touching on the immense pain, grief, and rage in my heart. It was easier to help clients solve their problems than face my own. All this led to more pain and suffering. Unexpressed rage and fear consumed me. Soon my lower back was in great pain and spasms. I gained weight. I was depressed.

As my awareness expanded, I realized that while I brought my car in for regular servicing I often left the vehicle I traveled through life in unattended – until a healing challenge, pain, or a crisis arose. To change this pattern, I reached out to others and created a health-care team, taking responsibility for guiding my healing process. Bodywork and counseling sessions became ways to support my whole being through regular and consistent checkups. These provided opportunities to oil, grease, and restore my body; reconnect with my authentic Self as I cleared and refreshed my mind; balance my emotions; and renew my spiritual connection via spiritual “tune-ups.”

I became more accepting and less judgmental of myself as I awakened and healed. Checkup sessions showed me that shadow aspects within my personality were places needing the light of awareness and the touch of compassion from myself as well as others. I continue to appreciate how this process unfolds and evolves in its own way and time. It is something I cannot rush or superimpose my will and ego upon, though at times I still try.

Each time I committed to remaining awake and mindfully present through Self-care practices, I appreciated how they expanded and strengthened Self-awareness. Each practice helped me cross uncharted waters toward healing. They revealed and clarified several aspects that occur on healing journeys:

- returning home to our heart and our authentic Self
- embracing our response ability through commitment to our healing process
- developing our wise-hearted spiritual warrior
- recovering reverence for life

Walking the path of healing is often vigorous for me. It requires that I choose conscious presence over going back to sleep; stark honesty over denial and self-deception; patience over impatience; Self-compassion over self-judgment, and living *with* versus *from* my emotions. This unfolding series of choices builds and empowers my response ability, discernment, and acceptance of what I cannot change. I have realized that resistance and what I termed my ignorance frequently stemmed from lack of awareness and feeling extremely vulnerable.

The Path of Reverence

The more I enhanced my ability to respond, the more Self-acceptance, forgiveness, and healing flourished. Today, when I observe clients pushing themselves beyond limits, judging

themselves harshly, or going through life at breakneck speed, I am reminded of how conditioned and vulnerable we all are. I also realize how similar we are in our pain and suffering. Through our interconnectedness we support healing for one another during every heart-centered encounter.

Each of us is being called to awaken to our own power and wholeness now. Answers to questions that arise during healing and during the reading of this book must be sought within. No one knows better than you what serves your highest good in any situation. Unfortunately, this is the last place we look, or have been taught to look, as a patient/client or health-care practitioner.

Our ancestors understood and used Mother Earth and the elements to devise formulas and a natural pharmacy. Though not yet fully destroyed, nature's resources are frequently devalued, cut down, or overlooked as our civilization advances. We have evolved into a highly mechanized culture, governed by our heads first and foremost. As a result, less priority is given to heart-and-soul wisdom, so vital to health, healing, and our quality of life as human beings.

The practice of seeking answers from within is not new. Mothers, grandmothers, shamans, healers, and indigenous cultures have followed this for centuries. Through lessons passed down from elders, rituals, connection with nature, and silence, we can reclaim inner pathways to enlightenment. These authentic paths teach us about strength, trust, patience, hope, grace, and honesty, as well as how to combine these with love and prayer during healing. You will begin this process of connecting with inner wisdom and guidance through the seven theme chapters and Self-care practices that follow.

The path to reverence is not the easy or obvious way. However, I have experienced that this is the way to flourish wholly, in body, mind, emotions, and soul. I have come to believe it is the deepest and most abiding way to uncover what awaits us at the heart of healing.



Tools and Reflections

The heart has reasons that reason does not understand.

–Jacques Benigne Bossuet

Before you journey into the seven theme chapters, it will be beneficial for you to explore additional ways to use mindfulness practices in daily life. These practices will open and soften your heart. They will pave the way to developing compassion for yourself and others, and will help you realize the beauty and reverence in both pleasant and unpleasant aspects of your life. Before you begin, reaffirm your commitment to participate in honest Self-reflection, journaling, and Self-care practices as you journey through this book and your life.

Author Michael Nolan reminds us: “There are many things in life that will catch your eye, but only a few will catch your heart . . . pursue those.”⁵ The Self-care practice of tracking will develop your ability to observe and interact consciously with your four-chambered heart. This will strengthen your wise-hearted spiritual warrior’s ability to recognize who and what brings heart, meaning, and reverence for life to your healing journey.

Tool 4: Mindfulness Practices in Daily Life

Mindfulness practices bring us into the present moment. They help us gain perspective and reduce anxiety. These practices provide a break from stressful thoughts, experiences, and relationships, and enhance our ability to manage life. You will now take your mindfulness practice from sitting meditation to daily activities, such as eating.

Begin to breathe slowly, mindfully, and deeply as you enter your sanctuary. Notice how your chest expands and contracts with each breath and how your body settles in or has difficulty with this. Be compassionately present with any distractions and concerns. Bring your attention back to your breath when your mind wanders. Count each inhalation and exhalation to help you focus, making your exhalations slightly longer than your inhalations. Take time to read the following practices, and decide when and how you will implement them this week.

1. Mindfulness and Eating

Thoughts occupy much of our time, especially when we are eating. As a result, exploring, savoring, tasting, and taking pleasure from food and eating is missed. In this practice, you will apply mindfulness to your senses as you prepare and eat a meal.

Begin with several mindful breaths as you sense and listen to your whole being and your internal and external environments. As you prepare your meal, notice and become present with the color, feel, and aromas of your food. As you begin to eat, slowly bring food to your mouth. *Before* any food enters your mouth, take in the sight and aroma of what will bring you nourishment and pleasure. Chew slowly. Enjoy the different flavors and textures. Listen to any sounds. Notice when you feel hungry and when you feel satisfied. What foods please you? What foods don't please you? Do memories, aromas, tastes, and textures stimulate your awareness while you eat? Write your discoveries in your Awareness Journal.

2. Daily Mindfulness Practices

Now that you have experienced mindfulness relative to eating, you can apply this to other daily activities such as walking, showering, shopping, cleaning, gardening, listening to music, doing crafts, and spending time with pets. As you walk, bring your awareness to what you see, hear, feel, and sense internally

and externally. Notice how you move throughout your whole being. What draws your attention during these activities? When you shower or bathe, feel your whole being connect with water, and listen to the sounds around you, including your breath. Feel and become present with the warm, soapy water as you wash dishes; take in the warmth of laundry just out of the dryer; and enjoy releasing clutter as you give things away. Bring mindfulness to any activity, and notice how your whole being responds in the now. Write about your discoveries in your Awareness Journal.

3. Mindfulness in Relationships

How can you bring mindfulness to your relationships over the next few weeks? Bring your hand to your heart at these times as a physical reminder of your intention. Start by becoming aware of what you notice in friends and family when you listen to them – gestures, facial expressions, words. Notice your own body-mind responses, gestures, and emotions. How does mindfulness impact you and your relationships? Write about your discoveries in your Awareness Journal.

Tool 5: Tracking

Bring your attention to your breath, and move your hands to your heart. Embrace the amazing life force contained there, which circulates throughout your being. What does your heart look and/or feel like? Do any emotions or images surface as you connect with your heart? Breathe into whatever arises as you compassionately witness this world within you. Slowly enter your heart's realm, where you will gather insights as you see and hear through the eyes and ears of your heart. Great wisdom resides there and eagerly awaits your presence.

Take as much time as you need, perhaps several sessions, to explore and reflect on the questions that follow. Each inquires about a different aspect of your four-chambered heart, described

by Angeles Arrien and referenced in the Introduction. Remain open and nonjudgmental. Let your heart reveal honest answers and insights, versus mentally trying to grasp for them. Trust your process as it unfolds and as it stimulates reverence for your life and the universe in which it manifests. Write your responses in your Awareness Journal.

- Where in my life am I, or have I been, open-hearted versus closed-hearted?
- Where in my life am I, or have I been, full-hearted versus half-hearted?
- Where in my life am I, or have I been, clear-hearted versus doubtful within my heart?
- Where in my life am I, or have I been, strong-hearted versus weak-hearted?

As you conclude each tracking session with the above questions, take time to return to center in your sanctuary. Give gratitude for all that has come forth from within and for what is yet to be discovered. Listen for wisdom that emerges from your wise-hearted spiritual warrior during Self-care practices. This will strengthen healing and your body-mind connection with your authentic Self.

