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# A NEW BEGINNING WITHOUT END

## PARTICIPANT MANUAL

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### INTRODUCTION:

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The model of Whole Person Care supports physical, emotional and social needs, but too often spiritual needs are not acknowledged or met. In our secular society, many people feel that their spirituality is not fully supported, whether through organized religion or other means. Our intention with this program is to create a safe community where discussions about death and dying, spirituality, and anything else that is important to members is supported and welcomed. The intent is to explore the essence of WHO and WHAT we are in the context of changing bodies, the roller coaster of hope and grief and the shift in our relationships as we need more care.

We offer non-denominational spiritual teachings from a respected Indigenous Elder and Doctor of Divinity, Dr. Duncan Grady, who draws from early mystical teachings of Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism and Indigenous peoples. These teachings are intended to stimulate conversation while honoring and respecting everyone's experiences and beliefs. We welcome all perspectives as an opportunity to broaden our views together and enable us to personally reflect on the meaning of our own lives.

Our program also offers teachings in mindfulness and meditation as well as a good dose of self-compassion. As we practice mindfulness and meditation together in our meetings, and as you practice on your own at home, our hope is that you forge and strengthen skills which will support you in gently turning toward what is difficult, and in bringing kindness and compassion to yourself and your experience.

We are committed to creating and maintaining safe spaces in this community. We understand that this does not necessarily mean that people will always *feel* safe. You are invited, but not expected, to participate in facilitated discussions in the group. Some

conversations may feel uncomfortable. If, at any time, you feel unsafe, or if you are feeling other emotions such as scared, worried, anxious, angry, ashamed, or embarrassed, we want you to know that is ok and we are here to support you. You can share this with us during a session, or you can reach out to your facilitators in between sessions.

This manual is divided into 8 Chapters: one for each week of the program. Within each chapter you will find the outline for that week's meeting, notes about the topics discussed, a link to the poem that was read and suggested resources. There is a meditation diary at the end of the manual to help you keep track of your mindfulness practice.

We welcome any comments or suggestions on the course, the course outline and this manual.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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- Chapter 1 Introduction
- Chapter 2 It's not what you think. Introduction to mindfulness.
- Chapter 3 Remembering - rejoining the truth that is always there
- Chapter 4 Suffering from our beliefs. The second arrow.
- Chapter 5 Acceptance. Letting go.
- Chapter 6 The stages of soul's release
- Chapter 7 Self compassion and forgiveness
- Chapter 8 Response and responsibility

## WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION SESSION

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1. Welcome and Intentions
2. Introductions of team members
3. Grounding
4. Program design
  - Why spiritual teachings?
  - Why mindfulness?
  - Why community of practice?
5. Flow of weekly sessions
6. SATA Centre Website: <https://www.satacentre.com/>
7. Participant Manual
8. Group chat
9. Intentions and Agreements

### **15-minute break**

10. Small Groups:
  - Intentions and agreements – questions, concerns?
  - Participant introductions - Who are you? Why are you here? What is your diagnosis?
  - 3-minute breathing space

## GROUP INTENTIONS:

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- To co-create a community that models unconditional positive regard.
- To practice compassion for others and ourselves.
- To care for and support others.
- To have fun!

## GROUP AGREEMENTS:

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- I agree that everything shared and discussed within this circle is confidential, including the identities of all group members.
- I agree to practice listening empathically, and to share from a place of "I want to hear" rather than "I want to fix".
- I agree to be on time for meetings. If I will be late, I will email [info@sata.com](mailto:info@sata.com) to let the group know what time I will arrive. No need to know why, just what time.
- I agree to attend 6 out of the 8 meetings.
- If unable to attend a meeting, I agree to email [info@sata.com](mailto:info@sata.com), or inform one of the group leaders in person, at least 2 days in advance of the meeting.
- I agree to not dominate a conversation and I will include everyone.
- I agree to not attend a meeting intoxicated.

## WEEK 2: IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK

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### Large Group

1. Intention
2. Grounding
3. Poem/Blessing: "For a New Beginning", by John O'Donohue
4. Duncan Grady
5. Introduction to meditation – body scan

### **BREAK - 15 minutes**

### Small Group

1. Check in
2. Prompts for consideration:  
*These are questions for you to think about, but you are not obligated to speak to them.*
  - What does Spirituality mean to you? What is your understanding of spirituality? How do you enact your spirituality or not? What are ways that you experience a connection to spirituality, however you define that?

### **OR**

- What caught your attention from the poem, meditation, or Duncan's share?
3. Sharing using Unconditional Positive Regard and Compassionate Witnessing
  4. Reflection of Themes
  5. Poem: "For a New Beginning"
  6. 3-minute breathing space

### **Unconditional positive regard:**

(Carl Rogers, 1959)

- Means simply to accept another for who they are.
- Positive regard is not withdrawn if the person makes a mistake or if they show up in an irritating way. It's not about approving or disapproving of another's behaviours.
- It is respecting each other as human beings with free will and operating under the assumption that we are all doing the best that we can with the tools we have. Unconditional positive regard involves knowing we all carry varying resources and capacities that inform the conscious and unconscious choices we make.

### **Compassionate Witnessing (the basics)**

(Dr. Kaethe Weingarten (2003) Common Shock

We are not here to judge, compare or to fix. We are here to *hear with our bodies and hearts*.

- Listen non-judgmentally and accept where the other person is.
- Be fully present.
- Notice what is happening in your body as you hear someone's share – physical sensations, emotions. Share how the other person's share lands in your heart, what you felt physically and emotionally as you listened.
- Reflect back something you heard that is deeply important to the speaker's heart/spirit.
- I heard you say ... I felt (physical sensation/emotion)...
- Listen deeply. Write down words that resonate with you personally.
- Recognize what the feeling is that is not articulated or spoken.
- Reflect back to the speaker what you have heard using their words.

What to avoid:

- 1) Giving advice
- 2) Minimizing
- 3) Sharing own problem
- 4) Interpreting the meaning or purpose or "silver lining" for someone else
- 5) Problem Solving

## **Meditation Diary:**

Mindfulness meditation is a practice. Much like playing an instrument, knitting, cooking, sports, the skills required to derive benefit from mindfulness takes practice. When we are a beginner, it's difficult to stop the continual narrative of our mind. Sometimes starting with three breaths is all we can do to start, but with daily practice, it will become easier. Simply noticing our thoughts, for example, nervousness or anxiety, helps us to become aware, and we can begin to recognize the ebb and flow of our emotions. We can begin to choose what we want to think and how we want to feel. We will all have days where we will find it difficult to focus, but with practice, we will start to develop the ability to live in the present moment.

To help you keep track of your practice of meditation, we have provided a calendar at the end of this manual where, if you want to, you can sign off each day you practice – even if it's only 3 minutes.

On our website under the members area, we will have videos and audio recordings of the meditations that were offered during the sessions for you to refer to if you wish.

Feel free to use meditations from other sources, including websites, apps, books, etc. or to continue your current meditation practice if you already have one.

The Insight Timer app or website is an excellent source for meditations:

<https://insighttimer.com/en-ca>

We encourage you to experiment to find a practice that resonates with you.





## WEEK 3: REMEMBERING - REJOINING THE TRUTH THAT ALWAYS WAS THERE

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### Large Group

1. Intention
2. Grounding
3. Poem/Meditation: "I used to believe my body contained my soul", from Embers, by Richard Wagamese
4. Duncan Grady
5. Meditation – Cloud meditation/thoughts and emotions, essence of self

### **BREAK - 15 minutes**

Small Group – Facilitator prime the discussion: Why grief? Why tend grief? Grief tending – our own and each other; undoing aloneness.

1. Check in
2. Prompts for consideration:
  - What needs grieving? What doesn't need grieving? What losses have you acknowledged and grieved? What has yet to be acknowledged? What are your losses related to your diagnosis/illness?

OR

- What caught your attention from the poem, meditation, or Duncan's share?
3. Sharing using Unconditional Positive Regard and Compassionate Witnessing
  4. Reflection of Themes
  5. Poem: "I used to believe my body contained my soul"
  6. 3-minute breathing space



## WEEK 4: SUFFERING FROM OUR BELIEFS

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### Large Group

1. Intention
2. Grounding
3. Poem: "Now is the Time", by Hafiz
4. Duncan Grady
5. Meditation – The Second Arrow

### **BREAK - 15 minutes**

### Small Group

1. Check in
2. Prompts for consideration:
  - Where are you experiencing a "second arrow" of suffering? What are your thoughts and beliefs that are adding suffering to your pain/situation? Where might your suffering be optional?

OR

- What caught your attention from the poem, meditation, or Duncan's share?
3. Sharing using Unconditional Positive Regard and Compassionate Witnessing
4. Reflection of Themes
5. Poem: "Now is the Time"
6. 3-minute breathing space



## WEEK 5: LETTING GO, SURRENDER

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### Large Group

1. Intention
2. Grounding
3. Poem: "The Guest House", by Rumi
4. Duncan Grady
5. Meditation – Letting go, release from suffering

### **BREAK - 15 minutes**

### Small Group

1. Check in
2. Prompts for consideration:
  - Tell me about a time when you were holding on tight/holding onto control and what was that like for you? What happened? Tell about a time when you did surrender, accept, let go of control - did you do so willingly? What supported you? What did you learn from that experience?

OR

- What caught your attention from the poem, meditation, or Duncan's share?
3. Sharing using Unconditional Positive Regard and Compassionate Witnessing
  4. Reflection of Themes
  5. Poem: "The Guest House"
  6. 3-minute breathing space



## WEEK 6: STAGES OF THE SOUL

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### Large Group

1. Intention
2. Grounding
3. Poem: "Wild Geese", by Mary Oliver
4. Duncan Grady
5. Meditation – Release and Rejoining- one essence

### **BREAK - 15 minutes**

### Small Group

1. Check in
2. Prompts for consideration:
  - As you pay closer attention to your thoughts and emotions and the sensations in your body, are you getting to know yourself at a deeper level? What have you discovered?

OR

- What caught your attention from the poem, meditation, or Duncan's share?
3. Sharing using Unconditional Positive Regard and Compassionate Witnessing
4. Poem: "Wild Geese"
5. 3-minute breathing space





## WEEK 7: SELF-COMPASSION AND FORGIVENESS

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### Large Group

1. Intention
2. Grounding
3. Poem: "It's OK", by Matt Haig
4. Duncan Grady's teaching
5. Meditation – Metta meditation

### **BREAK - 15 minutes**

### Small Group

1. Check in
2. Prompts for consideration:
  - How does it feel in your body and emotions when someone is compassionate toward you? Can you imagine that someone being yourself? How does that feel?

OR

- What caught your attention from the poem, meditation, or Duncan's share?
3. Sharing using Unconditional Positive Regard and Compassionate Witnessing
  4. Poem: "It's OK", by Matt Haig
  5. 3-minute breathing space



## WEEK 8: RESPONSE AND RESPONSIBILITY

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### Large Group

1. Intention
2. Grounding
3. Poem: Haiku poems ('Issa's Cricket' and 'Leaves')
4. Duncan Grady's teaching
5. Meditation – Wave Meditation – back to source

### **BREAK - 15 minutes**

### Small Group

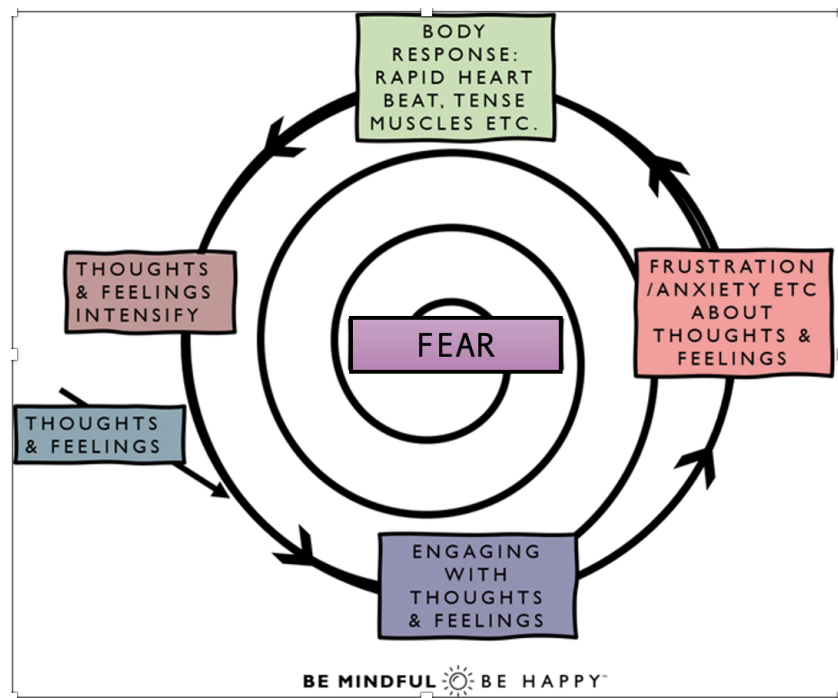
1. Check in
2. Prompts for consideration:
  - Can you think of a time when you were able to choose your response instead of reacting to a challenging experience or difficult thoughts or emotions? What happened? Do you remember how that felt? Can you think of a time when you reacted instead of choosing a response? What happened? How did that feel?

OR

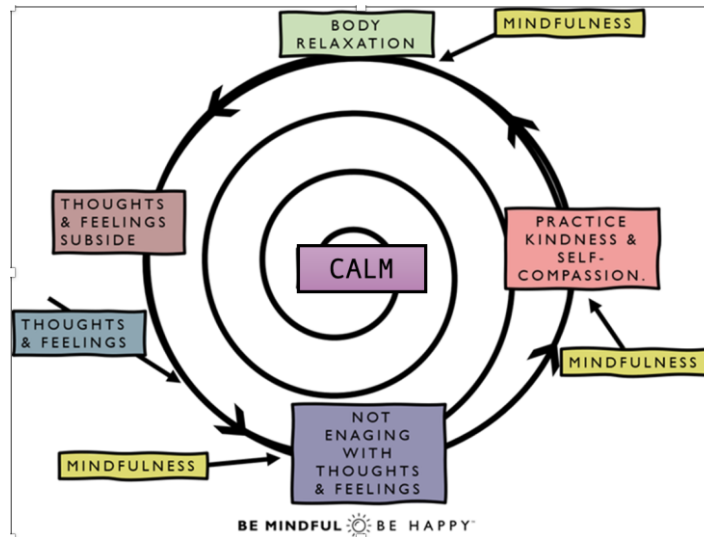
- What caught your attention from the poem, meditation, or Duncan's share?
3. Sharing using Unconditional Positive Regard and Compassionate Witnessing
  4. Poem: Haiku poems
  5. 3-minute breathing space



When we are feeling overwhelmed, afraid, worried, or anxious we can get trapped in a negative thought loop. Our thoughts can make us feel more anxious, agitated, and worried, which causes our body to respond by tensing or feeling restless. The important part to remember is that it is not the thought alone which causes these feelings and sensations but our engagement with these thoughts which results in them intensifying.



To break the vicious cycle of 'feeding' our thoughts by engaging with them, mindfulness can be used as a "circuit breaker" at three points in the spiral.



### Three ways mindfulness can break the vicious cycle of ANXIETY

#### 1. Not engaging with thoughts and feelings

In mindfulness meditation, we shift our attention to the present moment in a kind and non-judgmental way. We practice becoming the observer of our thoughts – knowing that thoughts will come and go, and we can observe them floating by like clouds in the sky. We can resist reacting to and engaging with our thoughts by returning to our breath in the present moment. When our mind drifts again to thought (which of course it does), we gently lead it back to the breath again and again.

#### 2. Practicing self-compassion and kindness

The way we talk to ourselves is especially important. It's easy to get annoyed and blame ourselves for our reactions and think "what did I do wrong?" "why am I like this?!". If we talk to ourselves with frustration, anger, we will feel our body going into a stress response with muscles tensing and our heartbeat increasing. By practicing mindfulness, with compassion and non-judgement, we change the way we speak to ourselves. When you remember to be kind to yourself, instead of blaming yourself, your mind will no longer be fed with frustration and your body is more likely to relax and move towards a more restful state.

#### 3. Relaxation

You might also find it useful to practice a guided meditation or body scan which help to relax the body and calm the mind.

## **All three together is your best chance to LIVE well, despite cancer**

If we practice mindfulness at a stressful time when we feel under pressure (like during a medical procedure or treatment) we are likely to feel frustration and impatience, which will feed our spiral further. The mind is like a muscle, so what we practice grows stronger. We really don't want to practice at an already stressful time if it is going to cause us to grow more frustrated and stressed.

It is best to put aside a time to practice mindfulness earlier in the day when you are feeling relaxed; see this as training, just as if you were going to the gym.

It has been shown that practicing mindfulness for 20 minutes a day for 6 weeks can decrease insomnia, fatigue, and depression. The important thing to remember is to practice, so when you're waiting for tests or treatments or experiencing body changes, you can break the cycle of anxiety and bring yourself compassionately back to the moment.

As your practice develops you will find it easier not to engage with your thoughts, and to speak to yourself with kindness, and this will stop you from feeding your thoughts and getting back into the vicious spiral.

This also applies to your relationships, by not engaging in thoughts about "if only they had...", "why don't they.." but introducing mindfulness and compassion about others allows you to move out of reacting into a space of *responding* in mindfulness.



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## BREATH WORK EXERCISES:

### THE 4-7-8 BREATH, BOX BREATHING, AND THE PHYSIOLOGICAL SIGH

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#### **The 4-7-8 Breath:**

A simple breathing exercise where you inhale for four seconds, hold your breath for seven seconds, and exhale for eight seconds. Repeat four times for an effective relaxation session.

#### **Box Breathing:**

A breathing technique where you inhale for four seconds, hold your breath for four seconds, exhale for four seconds, and hold for four seconds. Repeat this cycle four times for a total of one minute.

#### **The Physiological Sigh:**

A breathing exercise where you take a deep breath in and hold it for a few seconds before releasing it with a long, slow exhale. This exercise triggers the parasympathetic nervous system and relieves stress and tension in the body.

#### **If you are having shortness of breath:**

Try inhaling through your nose as if smelling roses and exhaling through your mouth, pursing your lips as if you are blowing out birthday candles.

Try using the tripod position:

- Choose a sturdy chair and get seated in a comfortable position.
- Lean forward, using your arms and elbows as support.
- Try to achieve an angle of about 45 degrees as you lean forward.
- You can rely on your arms or use a tabletop or pillow to help you hold this position.
- Take slow and steady breaths, focusing on using your belly (diaphragm) to breath.

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## CONTINUING YOUR MEDITATION PRACTICE

### A FEW SUGGESTED RESOURCES:

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#### Apps:

- Insight Timer
- Buddhify
- 10% Happier
- Headspace
- Waking Up

#### Websites:

- Tara Brach, <https://www.tarabrach.com/>

Meditation in the community (online or in person)

Meditation retreats (Gulf Islands, elsewhere)

#### Books:

- Jon Kabat-Zinn - "Everywhere You Go There You Are"
- Pema Chodron - "When Things Fall Apart"
- Tara Brach - "Radical Acceptance"
- Christopher Germer - "The Mindful Path to Self-Compassion"
- Thich Nhat Hanh - "The Miracle of Mindfulness", "Peace is Every Step", and more

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## POEMS

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***For a New Beginning***, by John O'Donohue

In out-of-the-way places of the heart,  
Where your thoughts never think to wander,  
This beginning has been quietly forming,  
Waiting until you were ready to emerge.

For a long time it has watched your desire,  
Feeling the emptiness growing inside you,  
Noticing how you willed yourself on,  
Still unable to leave what you had outgrown.

It watched you play with the seduction of safety  
And the gray promises that sameness whispered,  
Heard the waves of turmoil rise and relent,  
Wondered would you always live like this.

Then the delight, when your courage kindled,  
And out you stepped onto new ground,  
Your eyes young again with energy and dream,  
A path of plenitude opening before you.

Though your destination is not yet clear  
You can trust the promise of this opening;  
Unfurl yourself into the grace of beginning  
That is at one with your life's desire.

Awaken your spirit to adventure;  
Hold nothing back, learn to find ease in risk;  
Soon you will be home in a new rhythm,  
For your soul senses the world that awaits you.

***From: Embers One Ojibway's Meditations***

by Richard Wagamese

I used to believe my body contained my soul.  
That was fine for a while. But when I started  
thinking about oneness with Creator, I came to  
believe that it's the other way around. My soul  
contains my body. It is everything that I am. I am  
never separate from Creator except within my  
mind. That's the ultimate truth, and I need to be  
reminded, to learn again, to learn anew in order  
to get it. When I do, I know the truth of what my  
people say: that we are all spirit, we are all energy,  
joined to everything that is everywhere, all things  
coming true together

***Now is the Time,***

by Hafiz (14<sup>th</sup> century Persian poet)

Now is the time to know  
That all you do is sacred

Now, why not consider  
A lasting truce with yourself and God

Now is the time to understand  
That all your ideas of right and wrong  
Were just child's training wheels  
To be laid aside  
When you can finally live  
With veracity  
And love

My dear, please tell me,  
Why do you still  
Throw sticks at your heart and God

What is it in that sweet voice inside  
That incites you to fear?

Now is the time for the world to know  
That every thought and action is sacred.

This is the time  
For you to deeply compute the impossibility

That there is anything  
But Grace.

Now is the time to know  
That everything you do  
Is sacred.

## ***The Guest House***

by Rumi (13th Century Mystic and Poet)

This being human is a guest house.  
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,  
some momentary awareness comes  
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!  
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,  
who violently sweep your house  
empty of its furniture,  
still, treat each guest honorably.  
He may be clearing you out  
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,  
meet them at the door laughing,  
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,  
because each has been sent  
as a guide from beyond.

## ***Wild Geese***, by Mary Oliver

You do not have to be good.  
You do not have to walk on your knees  
for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.  
You only have to let the soft animal of your body  
love what it loves.

Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you  
mine.  
Meanwhile the world goes on.  
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the  
rain  
are moving across the landscapes,  
over the prairies and the deep trees,  
the mountains and the rivers.  
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue  
air,  
are heading home again.

Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,  
the world offers itself to your imagination,  
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting –  
over and over announcing your place  
in the family of things.

***It's Okay,***

by Matt Haig

It's okay to be broken

It's okay to wear the scars of experience

It's okay to be a mess

It's okay to be the teacup with the chip in it. That's  
the one with a story.

It's okay to be sentimental and whimsical and cry  
bittersweet tears at songs and movies you aren't  
supposed to like.

It's okay to like what you like.

It's okay to like things for literally no other reason  
than because you like them and not because they  
are cool or clever or popular.

It's okay to let people find you. You don't have to  
spread yourself so thin you become invisible. You  
don't have to be the person always reaching out.  
You can sometimes allow yourself to be reached.

As the great writer Anne Lamott puts it:

Lighthouses don't go running all over an island for  
boats to save; they just stand there shining.

It's okay not to make the most of every chunk of  
time.

It's okay to be who you are.

It's okay.

***Issa's Cricket,***

by Issa (Japan, 1763-1827) [*translated by Jane  
Hirshfield*]

On a branch  
floating downriver  
a cricket, singing.

***Leaves (Author unknown)***

Letting go

Leaves pass leaves

Hanging on

## RETREAT DAY

### THE ANATOMY OF PEACE

(by John Roedel)

my brain and  
heart divorced  
a decade ago  
over who was  
to blame about  
how big of a mess  
I have become

eventually,  
they couldn't be  
in the same room  
with each other

now my head and heart  
share custody of me

I stay with my brain  
during the week  
and my heart  
gets me on weekends

they never speak to one  
another  
- instead, they give me  
the same note to pass  
to each other every week  
and their note they  
send to one another always  
says the same thing:  
"This is all your fault"

on Sundays  
my heart complains  
about how my  
head has let me down  
in the past

and on Wednesday  
my head lists all  
of the times my  
heart has screwed  
things up for me  
in the future

they blame each  
other for the

state of my life  
there's been a lot  
of yelling - and crying  
so,  
lately, I've been  
spending a lot of  
time with my gut  
who serves as my  
unofficial therapist

most nights, I sneak out of  
the  
window in my ribcage  
and slide down my spine  
and collapse on my  
gut's plush leather chair  
that's always open for me  
~ and I just sit sit sit  
until the sun comes up

last evening,  
my gut asked me  
if I was having a hard  
time being caught  
between my heart  
and my head

I nodded  
I said I didn't know  
if I could live with  
either of them anymore  
"my heart is always sad  
about  
something that happened  
yesterday  
while my head is always  
worried  
about something that may  
happen tomorrow,"  
I lamented

my gut squeezed my hand

"I just can't live with  
my mistakes of the past  
or my anxiety about the  
future,"  
I sighed  
my gut smiled and said:

"in that case,  
you should  
go stay with your  
lungs for a while,"

I was confused  
- the look on my face gave it  
away

"if you are exhausted about  
your heart's obsession with  
the fixed past and your  
mind's focus  
on the uncertain future  
your lungs are the perfect  
place for you  
there is no yesterday in your  
lungs  
there is no tomorrow there  
either  
there is only now  
there is only inhale  
there is only exhale  
there is only this moment  
there is only breath  
and in that breath  
you can rest while your  
heart and head work  
their relationship out."

this morning,  
while my brain  
was busy reading  
tea leaves  
and while my  
heart was staring  
at old photographs  
I packed a little  
bag and walked  
to the door of  
my lungs

before I could even knock  
she opened the door  
with a smile and as  
a gust of air embraced me  
she said

"what took you so long?"

***The Summer Day***, by Mary Oliver

Who made the world?  
Who made the swan, and the black bear?  
Who made the grasshopper?  
This grasshopper, I mean—  
the one who has flung herself out of the grass,  
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,  
who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down—  
who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.  
Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.  
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.  
I don't know exactly what a prayer is.  
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down  
into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,  
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,  
which is what I have been doing all day.  
Tell me, what else should I have done?  
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?  
Tell me, what is it you plan to do  
with your one wild and precious life?



*MONTH:* \_\_\_\_\_

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT

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*MONTH:* \_\_\_\_\_

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT

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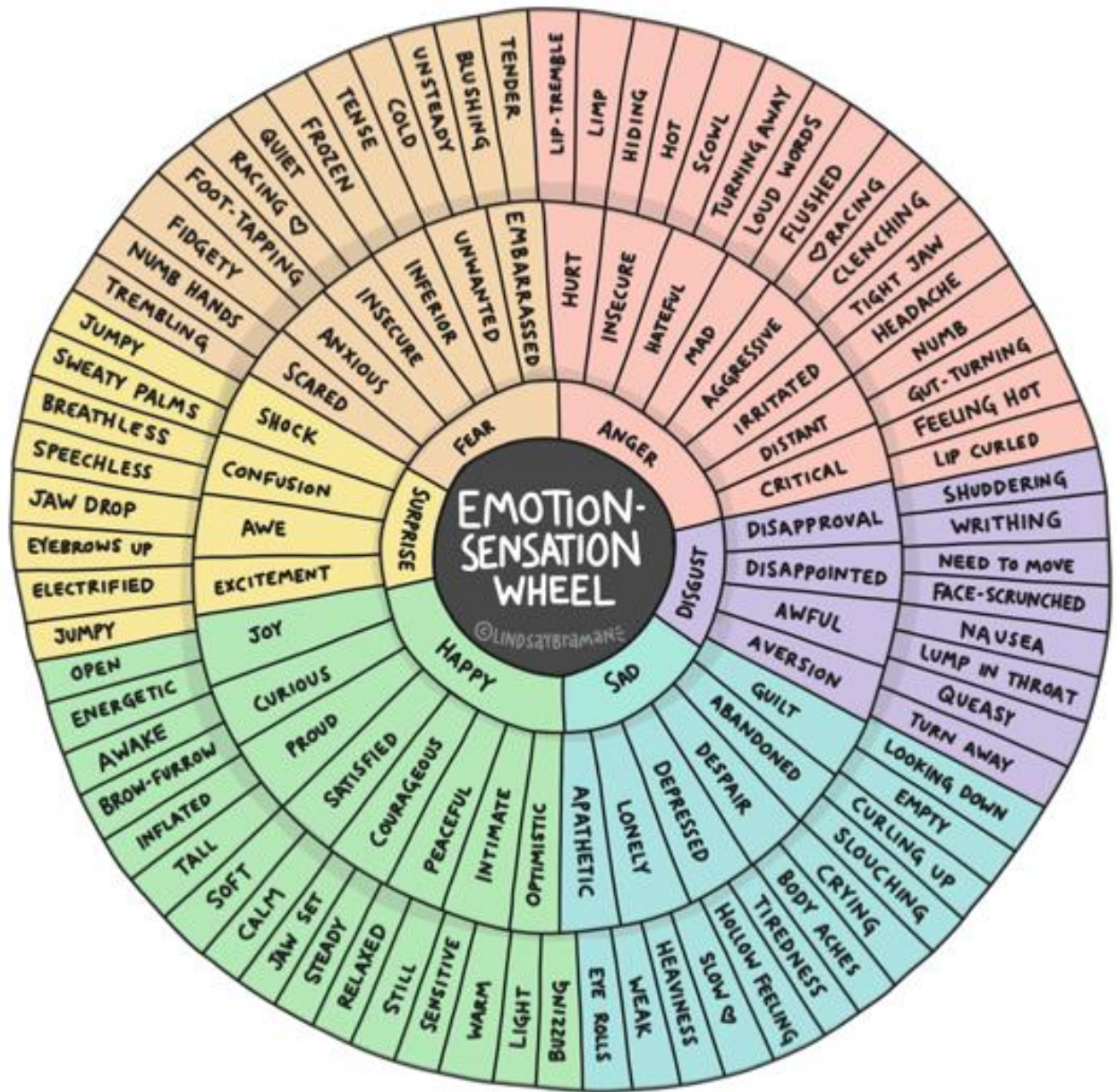
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