



an illumined life



realize your potential

A PERSONAL YEARLY RETREAT & REFLECTION GUIDE

BY MELANIE MCGHEE

“If you want the latest and best program for learning more about yourself and understanding how to become the best ‘you’ you can be, here’s the real deal. Melanie walks you through the steps to self-awareness with a gentle, loving touch. You can’t help but benefit.”

Annie Wills, Ed.D., Life Coach and Licensed Psychologist

“Melanie McGhee’s done the world a great service here. She’s created a definitive retreat guidebook to lead you to the doorstep of the life you’d always hoped you could have.”

Marie Miyashiro, founder of Elucity Network, Inc.

“At every stage of my life I have yearned to know myself better, to grow, and to refresh my spirit. I’m glad to now have *An Illumined Life* to help me move through the transition empty nest and the challenges of growing older, but I wish it had been available to guide me through the early days of marriage, parenting, and career. Be good to yourself, too, and take it with you to the beach or the mountains -- or just to the spare room.”

Terri Combs-Orme, Ph.D., author of *Social Work Practice in Maternal and Child Health*

“...walks you through
the steps to self-
awareness with a
gentle, loving touch.”

Annie Wills

“It is a
brilliant
retreat
guide.”

Carol Tuttle

“Being on retreat with *An Illumined Life* created a space to totally concentrate on my self-development. I feel a greater sense of connection to myself and to others. I also have a stronger sense of my individuality and value to the world.”

Terri Click-Sloan, Realtor

“Melanie has created a wonderful, thoughtful guide for examining our lives – where it is now and where we want it to go. She urges us to pay attention to all areas of our lives and create a plan that comes from total self-acceptance. What a change of pace from most self help programs which encourage us to fix something broken!

The flow of exercises moves slowly and steadily towards oceans of opportunities. Her poetic style of expression helps us to settle in, calming our daily mind and turning inward to examine our lives. This is a process I’ll look forward to sharing with my clients and doing myself at least once a year!”

Linda Pucci, Ph.D. Psychologist & Life Coach

“An Illumined Life helped me see my habit of hiding from myself and gently showed me how to be more connected to myself and other people. Going on retreat with friends gave me a chance to do inner work and have fun with a fantastic bunch of women!”

Jamie Bass, Homemaker

“With hectic schedules and responsibilities, most of us have lives that fly by every day without notice. This workbook is the perfect tool to help you learn to reconnect and rediscover who you really are and what you want for your life. Taking An Illumined Life on retreat is a wonderful way to slow down, take time to get to know yourself again, and focus on how to live each day so that you can be your best self in your best life.”

Judy Jones, Retiree and Volunteer

“...An Illumined Life created a space to totally concentrate on my self-development.”

Terri Click-Sloan

an illumined life

A PERSONAL YEARLY RETREAT & REFLECTION GUIDE

by

MELANIE MCGHEE



published by

HICKORY HILL PRESS

An Illumined Life

A Personal Yearly
Retreat & Reflection Guide
by Melanie McGhee

Published by
Hickory Hill Press
Maryville, TN

<http://www.retreatandreflect.com>

The author gratefully acknowledges those who have given permission to reprint excerpts from personal communications:

Nathaniel Branden, page xii, "Living consciously entails self-examination," personal communication, 2005;
Swami Anantananda, page xii, "Self-reflection changes people," personal communication, 2005;
Annie Wills, page 60 "Perfectionists (Ones) are motivated by the need to be right," personal communication 2005.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by an information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the author, except for the inclusion of brief quotations in a review.

The author and publisher exert all efforts to insure that the information provided in this book is accurate. However, the author and publisher does not warrant or guarantee the accuracy of this information and expressly disclaims any liability and damages arising out of the use of this information by the reader. The author affirms that she has not been engaged by any of the reader to be their psychotherapist, coach, counselor and the like unless there has been a written contract signed by the publisher, author and reader.

Copyright © 2006 by Melanie McGhee

ISBN 978-0-9789699-0-5

FOR MY MOTHER

Mavis H. McGhee

1932–1996

Your brilliance shines still

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My family will not often let me say grace because once I start saying “Thank you” to God, I tend to go on for a while! After all, there is much to appreciate!

With the completion of this book, there are many people to recognize, without whose support, insight, and inspiration this book would just have been a figment of my wild fantasy world. First and foremost, I give my heartfelt gratitude to my husband David Patterson, whose great good humor brings me joy every day and whose unconditional loving support is ever my refuge, and to our daughters, Kaitlyn and Hannah Patterson, whose presence in my life lights my heart and moves me to become a better version of myself. To my father, Raymond McGhee, and my in-laws, Georgell and Douglas Patterson, who are unfailing in their belief in me. To my beloved sister Tammie McGhee who remembers details and asks great questions. To my brother David McGhee for suggesting the title of this book. To my friend Annie Wills for her willingness to make time for our friendship. To Jeff Brunson for our long phone conversation about values. To Terri Combs Orme, Marie Miyashiro, Peggy Bendet and Linda Pucci for their friendship and insightful readings of early drafts. To my spiritual study group: Carol Helsel, Marcia Deleonard, Cheryl Brownlee, and Sara Galpin, whose wisdom, joy, and love are steadfast anchors in my life. To Mark Perry and Kris Nelson for decades of friendship and laughter. To my clients and especially the Tuesday Evening Women’s Group: Jamie Bass, Bobbie Beckmann, Nicole Brabender, Terri Click-Sloan, Judy Jones, and Susie Robertson, whose courage, honesty, and willingness to trust me inspired the idea for this book. To Ellen Porter, editor extraordinaire, who kept me going with her relentless encouragement, tutored me in details of the craft, and held a luminous vision of what this book could be. To Cheryl Crawford whose gifted design input helped me hold the vision. To Denton Lesslie who came to the rescue, took the vision and brought it to fruition in record time. To Cynthia Briggs for her penchant for copy detail and willingness to just “jump in.” To Michele Hatcher and Terri Jenkins for keeping my house sparkling so I could write. To Swami Vasudevananda for pushing me to articulate my understanding of the value and power of safe group exploration and learning. To Nathaniel Branden and Swami Anantananda for granting me generous interview time.

Special thanks to my teacher, Gurumayi Chidvilasananda, who illumines my life each day with the gift of her love and teachings.

contents

Acknowledgments	v	Living from What We Choose	39
GETTING READY	xi	Behind the Looking Glass	42
Introduction	xviii	Understand Your Purpose	53
		Understand Your Enneagram Personality Type	59
		Balancing It All	64
Chapter One			
<hr/>			
Map Your Course	I		
Setting Your Agenda	7		
Creating Your Intention	13		
		Chapter Three	
		<hr/>	
		Lay Out Your Gear	69
		Environment	71
		Personal Development	79
		Spirituality	87
		Work and Career	95
		Health and Well-being	103
		Money and Finances	112
		Relaxation and Recreation	119
		Family and Friends	126
THE RETREAT	21		
Chapter Two			
<hr/>			
Starting Out: Making Friends with your River	23		
Holding a Mirror to the Past Year	25		
Turning the Light on the Present	29		
Nature Lessons	36		

Chapter Four

Drift and Dream	137
Entering Dreamtime	138
Gazing into the Past, into the Future, and into the Heart	146
Creating an Intention for the Upcoming Year	153
One-Year Vision	158
Creatively Express Your Vision	182

Chapter Five

Keeping Your Boat Balanced	187
Setting Meaningful Goals	188
Taking Responsibility	189
Cultivating Virtues Along with Your Goals	194
Setting Your Three-Month Goals	196
Three-Month Review	199

Chapter Six

Return from the Journey	210
Closing Your Retreat	210
Easing Back In	213
Staying in the Current	215

POST-RETREAT RESOURCES 219

Chapter Seven

Bring It All Back Home	221
Regular Reflection	222
Set Up an Illumined Living Circle	228
Forgiveness and Letting Go	238
Getting on Common Ground	244
Intention Worksheet	247
How to Mind Map	252
Suggested Reading List	253
Appendix: Exercises and Envisionings	257

getting ready

INTRODUCTION

An array of possibilities exists as to how we spend the time we are given to live our life. Many of us meander from the mundane busy-ness of daily activities to the dream days of time well spent with family, friends, and colleagues without ever taking a pause. The unfortunate truth is that most of us move through our days and nights on automatic pilot.

In the autumn of 1988 when my two daughters were still in diapers, I was beginning to feel like a robot on autopilot. I told my husband that I needed a retreat. I felt overwhelmed by my life and out of touch with myself. At that time, I was new to the idea of retreat and didn't spend a lot of time planning my time away. Things in my life had reached a tipping point. I just knew that I needed to be alone for a while.

My criteria for a retreat site were pretty simple: it had to be no more than a two-hour drive, affordable, and a place that would feel soothing to my soul. Mostly, I craved simplicity. Based on the recommendations from a couple of friends, I found a remote getaway in the mountains outside of Salt Lake City, Utah. With my journal, inspiring books, colored pencils, and a sketchpad in hand, I headed out a week later.

I drove up the canyon to Heber, Utah, with the windows down and Joni Mitchell's voice streaming from the car stereo. The cool, crisp air of the mountains began to blow away the tension and guilt I felt for leaving my family. For the first time, I began to anticipate the next couple of days with enthusiasm rather than the desperation that had been the catalyst for this sojourn. After what seemed like a short drive, I arrived at the hotel and settled into my room. I looked around and thought, "Now what?"

I'd chosen a site with outdoor hot springs. On the first day, I donned my robe and bathing suit and headed out for the warmth of the various-sized hotpots beneath a brilliant turquoise sky. Billows of steam were rising from the surface of the hotpots. There weren't many trees around — just the steamy water, the blue sky, and me.

Happily, the resort was not very crowded. It was an old funky hotel with delicious food. People came and went to the hot springs all day and all evening in their bathrobes. I'd purposely chosen a resort with no televisions. As soon as I arrived, I basked in the feeling that I'd found the perfect place to be truly alone. I could come and go by myself whenever I felt like it and eat when I wanted.

I still remember the exact moment I stepped into my first hotpot. You know how it is when your feet are very cold and you step into really hot water? I love that feeling of being really cold and suddenly warming up. Immediately you feel pinpricks and you wake up.

After basking in the steamy water for some time, I began sensing how to make the most of this time away. The retreat took shape in my consciousness. I knew that I wanted to spend some time in quiet reflection about what was currently going on for me, as well as a bit of time focusing on the future and what I wanted for myself in the next several months.

Like lots of other women, I tended to put caring for others first. I wanted this to be a time about caring for me. When this became clear, I was able to settle into a comfortable rhythm. My chosen agenda consisted mostly of wandering between my room and the pools, with time for meditation, journaling, drawing, and reading scattered throughout my time away. I napped whenever I felt like it and pretty much followed whatever I wanted to do in any given moment.

I also asked myself plenty of questions that had to do with what kind of woman I wanted to be, articulating what was important to me and identifying ways I could stay centered in my daily life. I spent some time writing poetry, set up still-life subjects, and drew a lot. Drawing was a way for me to become totally present. I also spent lots of time in contemplation and meditation.

Basically, I learned how essential simplicity and ease are to me. I like to feel that I'm at ease, and for me, ease is the willingness to uncover whatever I want in every unfolding moment. This brings me into the present very naturally. "What do I want to do now?" I would ask myself. "Oh, I'm hungry," or "now I feel like soaking in the hotpot." And I would do it. It was uncomplicated and the resulting satisfaction very direct.

I went on retreat because I wanted to get back to myself, and while rediscovering myself, I reaffirmed to myself the importance of my relationship with my husband. While still on retreat, I also found myself thinking about the ways I could bring my retreat home when I rejoined my husband and our daughters.

For instance, about three years before our daughters were born, I had begun practicing meditation twice a day. I'd taken a class in graduate school called Clinically Standardized Meditation. For this practice, I repeated a mantra that I made up. I found its sound comforting and quieting.

As a young mother, I had not been able to figure out how to keep up with my daily meditation. I usually fit it in while the girls were napping. Or my husband, David, and I would take turns watching our daughters and meditating. While on retreat, I realized that I could simply resume my daily practice. I just had to do it at a different time of the day and ask for more help from my husband. "Ask for help." That was a huge "A-ha" gained from my time in self-reflection. I was used to giving help. On retreat I learned the value of asking for help and what a gift it is for others to let them help.

When my retreat ended two days later, I came home to my husband and daughters refreshed. I had reconnected with my husband, David, by reconnecting with myself. I knew more about who I was and who I wanted to be. While away, I saw what a good friend David really is. I saw what beautiful beings my daughters are. I even found myself hearing my husband riff on things and joke about things. To reconnect with him, I had to go away from him and reconnect with me.

I felt renewed with a greater sense of clarity. It became crystal clear to me that I needed to regularly have time to myself. This time for me didn't have to be for long stretches, but I saw that I needed to go on a regular basis. On retreat, I reflected on my life and tuned in to myself.

Dr. Nathaniel Branden, a renowned psychotherapist and author, articulates the power of self-reflection beautifully. He says: "Living consciously entails self-examination – a process of nonjudgmental exploration of the inner world of the self, aimed only at heightened awareness. Awareness of thoughts, feelings, aspirations, longings, fears, reactions to events and so forth. No one can be said to be living consciously, or mindfully, who exempts self-examination from the agenda."

Before my retreat, I felt unconscious, disconnected, and completely carried away with the routine and busy-ness of running my life. "Running" is the operative word here. Because I was always running, I no longer felt the inherent joy of living life consciously. I felt lost, living my roles as a new mom, psychotherapist, wife, and friend unconsciously. After my retreat, I felt totally present. I started showing up for my life in a new way.

I devised a retreat that taught me a lot. Nearly every year since that first getaway, I've made time for personal retreat. These retreats have taken many different forms and each has served me at the time. Some have been filled with unstructured time where I "followed my nose" throughout my retreat, just doing what seemed to please me in the moment. Others have been filled with spiritual practice, study, and contemplation. And many have been like that first retreat – times of self-reflection and relaxation. Having practiced psychotherapy for more than twenty years, I've seen the power of self-reflection as a means of learning to live more consciously. Retreats are the perfect way to engage in focused self-reflection.

Swami Anantananda, author of *What's on Your Mind*, once told me, "Self-reflection changes people because it is by this means that people see themselves in a new light, and objectively ('from the outside'). Otherwise, they never learn that they are not their habits of thought and feeling, their routines of action. They never see the roots of their repeated patterns of

behavior in relationships, from beginning to end. Without self-reflection, a person doesn't have a chance to really transform. The person moves – like a stone skipping across water – across life in the same ways repeatedly, until he or she sinks like a stone at the end of the run.”

I never want to feel like I'm sinking like a stone at the end of my run. I want to make the most of the time I've been given in this life and help others do the same. We all have latent dreams and secret wishes about how we want to live our lives. Retreat and reflection can be ways of accessing those dreams and revealing those wishes.

It's now been several years since I took that first retreat. Not only do I still believe in the power of retreat, but I've also seen this power at work repeatedly in my own life and in the lives of my clients.

These days I watch my young daughters blossoming into beautiful young women. They are on the cusp of adulthood and as I listen to them, their dreams bring me both delight and awe. I've seen my nineteen-year-old daughter off to college and begun helping my seventeen-year-old daughter with her college search. When and how did they grow into such beautiful young women? Was I really paying attention? I thought I had.

Nonetheless, time has suddenly begun to feel like sand slipping through my fingers. I now find that watching my children, being present with them and the ways they are growing and changing, makes me thankful that I gave myself time for me so I could be more present for them.

How This Guidebook Took Birth

My older daughter's high-school graduation took place on a freak-freezing day in late spring. While I sat huddled in my winter coat, all the girls were dressed in white summery dresses. I was struck with the power of youthful enthusiasm about to enter and change the world.

I remember sitting at that graduation ceremony and pondering, “How can a person make the impact of their life more conscious and heighten it?” The answer came to me in a flash: “By taking care of and listening deeply to ourselves.”

I truly believe that when people take good care of themselves, they can more easily and genuinely give to others. This guide, *An Illumined Life*, feels like one way I can give my skills and experience to others. I’ve seen from my personal experience and my work with other people that if we take protected time to reflect on our lives, we refresh our ability to approach life with the natural ease, abundant generosity, and sweet kindness that live youthfully inside each of us. We can more easily take care in life, not just of others, but of ourselves as well.

In this guide, I have drawn on my years of experience helping people to live more fulfilling lives. I designed this retreat and reflection workbook as a means to reflect on life, dream about life, and ground those latent dreams in solid planning.

I am hoping that this book helps you do just that – give to yourself, create a fulfilling, conscious life, and joyfully give to those around you. My hope is that you will use *An Illumined Life* and go on retreat to reflect on your life, dream about your upcoming year, and discover how to make your dreams come true.

My Wish for Your Retreat

For thousands of years and in most spiritual traditions, retreat and reflection have been honored and celebrated as two vital means of reconnecting with oneself and with a Higher Power. Retreat is also a time of refuge and seclusion, a time to withdraw from daily routines and reflect on life. We need only remember the story of Christ heading into the desert or read about a Native American’s vision quest to reinvigorate our sense of the power of retreat. Alchemy takes place on retreat and forever changes us.

My hope is that with this retreat guide as your companion, you will become more attuned to who you are and more accepting of yourself. In this way, may you remember what’s most

important to you while cultivating a more friendly relationship with yourself and Time, giving yourself the means to create your own personal heaven on earth.

My intention for you with this retreat guide is to unplug you from automatic living and plug you into your own inner energy source by living consciously.

I want this guide to help people of all ages, and from all walks of life, to create lives illumined by what truly matters to them. If you are a person seeking such changes in your life, perhaps our meeting in these pages was meant to be. May your face soon be lit by a smile and your heart touched by the recognition, “I am creating and living the life I have chosen and am meant to live.”

How to Use This Guide

There are several ways you can use *An Illumined Life*. You can either make a solo journey or go with friends. Some people enjoy traveling through the guide in partnership with just one other person, a trusted friend. Others prefer to go it alone. It is completely your choice. And the choice you make is perfect for you at this time in your life.

I encourage you to respond to the questions in the guide from a place of curiosity and compassion. They may be questions that you don’t often ask yourself. You may find it helpful to share your thoughts about what is unfolding in the retreat with another person. Or you may want to be more private with your revelations, marking the territory on your own.

Another option is to respond to the guide in segments and later talk about your responses with a friend. You can set aside some retreat time each week to engage with the guide, gradually working through one section at a time.

Whichever you choose, take the time to carefully read the first chapter, “Map Your Course,” before you leave on retreat. Reading this section will help to support and clarify your goals, as well as prepare you for your retreat.

Consider finding a retreat place that is away from your normal surroundings and that feels nurturing. It is surprisingly easy to locate a personal retreat site. Ask yourself, “Which type of location brings me joy? Simple, pure, unadulterated joy?” For example, you may decide to stay at a local hotel with all the creature comforts, a local bed-and-breakfast, or a spiritual retreat site, or even explore vacation rental homes (at a website like www.vbro.com). You could also go to a spa. A great resource for finding a perfect spa for you is *Spa* magazine. One useful resource for finding a spiritual retreat site is the book *A Place for God* by Timothy Jones.

Creating a Retreat Space at Home

It may be that your life circumstances are such that you cannot “get away.” If that is the case, you can create and set aside retreat time at home. Turn your own home into a retreat site. Buy yourself flowers, unplug the phone and disconnect the television. Set up a part of your home as a retreat corner, a place where you feel inspired. What other things would help turn your home into the ideal retreat site? Give it some thought and then manifest your vision.

The value of regularly giving yourself personal retreat time is an immeasurable gift both for you and those you love. Many people even enjoy taking two retreats a year. One retreat serves as a time to reflect on life using *An Illumined Life*, while the second retreat could support you in exploring a more specific topic for personal or spiritual growth including, for example, a generous schedule of spiritual practices.

I designed *An Illumined Life* to be used as a retreat and reflection guide primarily for women of all ages and from all walks of life. However, men may also find the guide great support for exploring the inner landscape of their lives. These days, men and women tend to have complicated lives, wearing many hats, serving many people. In these roles, we tend to lose touch with ourselves and forget what’s important to us. It doesn’t have to be that way.

A Final Word of Encouragement

The truth is, very few people give themselves the gift of time to sort out what truly matters to them – not to mention putting their understanding of what matters into practice.

Imagine yourself after having had the space of a two-day retreat. Given time alone, I've seen that most people discover anew what matters most to them, what their priorities are, and what they would most like to create for themselves in the coming year.

An Illumined Life can be used year after year, and at any time during the year. Choose a time that works for you. If you wait for a “convenient time,” you will be waiting for a very long time. Therefore, look ahead a month or two and just do it! Create space in your life and plan to spend at least a couple of days on retreat. If you've never done it before, do it for the first time as an experiment. Be curious and see what happens!

Going on personal retreat is a boon for anyone. It is a way to reconnect with your heart about how you most want to live. It is a way of refreshing your life. Remember, it's the everyday moments of daily life that make up your life, and this is also the place where most of us lose track of ourselves, slipping into autopilot.

Recent studies conducted at the University of California in Los Angeles suggest that when stressed, women, unlike men, release oxytocin, the “tend-and-befriend” hormone, naturally encouraging them to seek out other women. You can take advantage of this research and ensure your success on retreat by joining or forming an Illumined Living Circle. You can take advantage of this natural tendency and indulge in the giving and receiving of ongoing support. There is more information about forming extended Illumined Living Circles in the “Resources” section at the end of this book.

An Illumined Life also offers suggestions and questions aimed at helping you to connect with your spiritual life. Please insert Love, Holy Spirit, Christ, Divine Presence, God, Sophia, Lord Shiva, Buddha or Allah . . . the name for the Beloved Friend that most speaks to you.

Above all else, remember that you are elaborately unique. Trust your own uniqueness. Trust that you will have your own approach to using this guide. Some parts of it may jump out for you more than others, and other parts may jump out to you on subsequent retreats. You may feel drawn to spend more time in one section. This guide is a palette upon which you can mix your own colors. The end result will be a piece of art you've only imagined – up to now! Allow the unique approach you take to your retreat and self-reflection to manifest and serve you in the perfect way that speaks most clearly to you.

May each of one of us create a life of joy, peace, and great love.

map your *course*

As a teenager, I joined a group of girls who did the things Boy Scouts do like camping, canoeing and community service. We were called Explorer Scouts. Our intrepid leader was Withers, a man who looked just like his name. He was indeed withered, like a winter apple, from many years of being in the outdoors and teaching adolescent boys how to enjoy and respect adventuring into nature. We were his first group of girls.

Our inaugural exploration was an autumn canoe trip down the Edisto River in the lowlands of South Carolina. Withers prepared us well, telling us about all the snakes and bugs we were likely to encounter. At that point about half the girls dropped out. Withers then tacked a large map of the Edisto on the grayish wall of our meeting room and said, “Know as much as you can about where you are going.” That seemed like a good idea to me. He showed us the source of the river and the point where it met the ocean. “All rivers lead to the ocean,” he intoned solemnly, “and they know how to get there.” There was something about Withers’ faith in the river that gave me a boost of faith in myself.

The night before we were to launch, Withers had us lay out our gear on tarps for his inspection. With narrowed eyes, he looked over the items we’d brought with us, picking out all the things we should leave behind while pointing out those resources we would need to bring along. After hearing his brief lecture on the importance of packing a balanced boat, we loaded our boats and settled into enjoying our first evening beside the river.

The next morning, the first of our five-day trip, a cool mist swirled on the river’s surface as we lined up beside our boats. Before we pushed off, Withers checked each of our boats in turn.

He made sure that the gear ropes were secure and inspected the boats for proper balance, his steely gaze warning us to hold off our high-school giggling. In the morning silence while the sun slowly burned away the mist, I listened to the river lapping at the water's edge and watched the steady persistence of the current. It was a sweet moment, charged with anticipation.

His inspection finished, Withers pointed to the water's surface as it began to dance in the morning sunlight. "This river will change you," he said, "if you let it." Then, like a drill sergeant in some old movie, he paced back and forth before us offering words of inspiration. "For these five days, you are retreating from the world you think you know. Become friends with the river, and let it teach you." A man of few words, he pointed his long sinewy arm downstream and then to our boats. With that, Withers and his motley crew of ten teenage girls shoved off on an adventure with each other and with the Edisto River. It was my first voyage into nature and also my first retreat. I discovered beauty in the winding bends of the Edisto River, and the lovely Edisto gave me sorely needed glimpses of my own beauty as well. I returned from this first retreat feeling strong and confident in the knowledge that I could navigate just about any challenge high school might send my way.

The river became my teacher and my friend, and the relationship profoundly changed me. The principles I learned on that first trip still serve as the foundation for much of my life's work and for this retreat and reflection guide in particular.

It seems to me that life itself is much like a river. There are moments when the river is calm and clear and times when its depths are hidden by a murky darkness. There are times when we must scout the river to better navigate rapids, and times when we pull into the still of an eddy to enjoy a drifting daydream. The trip becomes more satisfying when we learn to make friends with the river of our own life. Learning how to pack a balanced boat before we push off and knowing where we are going allows us to recreate in our lives the easy joy of being in the river's current.

An Illumined Life is designed to serve as a map on your life's journey, guiding you through self-reflection, self-assessment, visioning, and actualizing. Throughout your retreat, you will be invited to examine your life through these eight lenses:

- Environment
- Personal Development
- Work and Career
- Money and Finances
- Family and Friends
- Relaxation and Recreation
- Health and Well-being
- Spirituality

These areas are the basic cargo of our life, for most of us the major concerns. Ideally, we can learn to pack a balanced boat by being conscious in the way we deal with this cargo. Then we can stay centered as we flow in the current of our own life.

There are six guiding principles that structure the main sections of *An Illumined Life* to help you set the course for your retreat:

1. **Make Friends with Your River:** This section is designed to support you in becoming a better friend to yourself by reflecting on your life, your values, and what is important to you.
2. **Lay Out Your Gear:** In this section you actively examine the cargo you currently carry, by considering and assessing your life through the eight lenses outlined above.
3. **Drift and Dream:** Here you begin visioning – starting in this moment and imagining your next year. You consider which of your dreams you might move to the forefront in the months to come.
4. **Keep Your Boat Balanced:** On any river trip, you have to pack and repack your boat each morning and again after lunch. Life is much the same: we are continually tuning in to what we must do to stay balanced. Learn more about balancing, goal setting, and creating ongoing and meaningful three-month goals for your life.

5. **Stay in the Current:** How do you stay in the current of your life after the retreat? Regular reflection is a way for you to do just that. Reflecting on your life is like using the paddler's oar: it helps you to stay in the ever-changing current of your own life.
6. **Use Your Resources:** Each of us has many, many inner and outer resources. Some of them we use; some we forget we have; some we even forget how to access. Here you will find supportive suggestions for using all of your resources such as guidelines for setting up an Illumined Living Circle, Forgiveness and Letting Go, and Getting on Common Ground, a Communication Worksheet.

Practice Self-Acceptance

Ideally, both on retreat and in life, we give ourselves time to reflect, to play, to be quiet, to dance, to be with friends, and to just be. On retreat, remember to approach yourself with gentle compassion and relentless honesty. Allow yourself to be truthful with yourself without judging, evaluating, or criticizing your responses. And if you find yourself engaging in self-criticism, you may have discovered a personal development goal – to become more self-accepting.

My mentor, Dick Olney, considered self-acceptance to be an ongoing exercise – something that must be practiced throughout our lives as we are forever faced with new and evolving life experiences. He defined self-acceptance as experiencing oneself without the inhibition of self-judgment, self-criticism, and self-evaluation. Consider allowing your experience with this guide to be such an opportunity – to practice steady, continuing self-acceptance.

The river moves at its own speed. Try as you might, pushing the river won't change the river; it's better to practice accepting the river. In the same way, it is better to practice accepting yourself. You can do this with the same compassion and caring that you offer to a friend. With self-acceptance as your keel, you can become your own friend.

Trust Yourself

As you move through *An Illumined Life*, trust your initial responses. You needn't spend a great deal of time contemplating the questions and other exercises you will find in this guide. Just trust your initial responses. If a question seems not to apply to you, no problem – skip it and move on to the next question. And if you don't have an immediate response, again, move on. Trust that whatever issue is important for you at this time in your life will emerge, will make itself known to you. You will feel drawn to it. You can always revisit the items you've skipped to see if something else comes up for you on a second reading; if not, no problem. Be kind to yourself. This may be the first time you have looked this deeply into your life for such an extended period. So be a good friend to yourself.

It may take you a while to move into the flowing rhythm of this exploration. That is just fine. There are suggested timelines for exercises scattered throughout the text, as well as in the suggested agenda to structure your retreat schedule. You may use the timelines if you like, or you may ignore them and follow your own rhythm. Again, trust yourself and this journey on which you've embarked. Remember, this retreat is your own time. You have created it completely – and your creation will naturally take a unique shape. Use this time to look at your life through honest and kind eyes. Take this time to practice treating yourself with gentleness and compassion.

Paddling Down the River

Respond to the key questions and exercises in whatever way appeals to you. Feel free to write incomplete sentences, bullet points, or even poetry. Draw pictures and symbols to express yourself. If you prefer, create mind maps (you will find instructions for mind mapping in the “Resources” section of your retreat guide). The bottom line is this: answer with abandon and with unswerving honesty. Trust whatever comes to you.

Throughout the book, you will find blank pages for journaling and jotting down your thoughts, questions, and experiences. Each time you come to the symbol of the sun, use it as a

cue to stop and take a few deep breaths. If you like, you may stretch and open your eyes to the beauty around you. Take ample breaks throughout your retreat, pausing in your exploration and letting yourself be.



SETTING YOUR AGENDA

Creating an agenda for your retreat will help you move through your time with ease and grace. Consider what you want from your retreat. Below is a suggested sample agenda. Fashion your own agenda to suit your personal needs and the intention you have made for your retreat. This is the first brush stroke of your retreat. Allow your agenda to be filled with a sense of ease.

FRIDAY AFTERNOON

TIME	INDIVIDUAL (IF ALONE)	GROUP (IF WITH A GROUP)	PAGE
PM 2:30	Orient yourself to your retreat site and to being on retreat. Read and reflect on your selected reading	Same as individual; also connect with each other as a group, sharing the reading and your reflection on the reading	12
3:00	Create your retreat intention	Create your retreat intention	13
3:30	Engage with the "Make Friends with Your River" section	Using the "Make Friends with Your River" section, interview each other in pairs (one hour for each person)	23
4:30	Stretch, relax, and go for a silent walk	Continue with the second interview	
5:30	Read, draw, paint, and dance your intention	Share with each other your intention and your experience of the interviews	
6:00	Dinner	Dinner	
Evening	Relax, read, creative expression	Relax alone or enjoy each other's company	
10:00	Lights out	Lights out	

SATURDAY

TIME	INDIVIDUAL	GROUP	PAGE
AM 7:00	Morning stretch and meditation	Morning stretch and meditation	
8:00	Breakfast and personal care	Breakfast and personal care	
9:00	Read and reflect on selected reading. Reconnect with your intention	Together, read and reflect on selected reading. Reconnect with your intention	
9:15	Engage with first four sections of "Lay Out Your Gear"	Individually, work with first four sections of "Lay Out Your Gear"	68
11:15	Walk, stretch, manicure, pedicure, facial, or massage	Walk, stretch, manicure, pedicure, facial, or massage	
PM 12:00	Lunch	Lunch	
1:00	Engage with second four sections of "Lay Out Your Gear"	Engage with second four sections of "Lay Out Your Gear"	102
3:00	Read and reflect on selected reading. Reconnect with your intention	Together, read and reflect on selected reading. Reconnect with your intention. Share your experience of the reflections	
3:30	Pause and snack	Pause and snack	
4:00	Engage with the "Drift and Dream" section	Interview in pairs or personally engage with the "Drift and Dream" section	135
4:30	Walk, stretch, and relax	Second interview	
5:00	Engage with "Gazing into the Past"	Engage with "Gazing into the Past." If you like, one person can read to the group	144
5:30	Walk, stretch, manicure, pedicure, facial, massage or exercise	Reconnect with intention and reflect on selected reading. Walk, stretch, or engage in some other form of exercise	
7:00	Dinner	Dinner	
Evening	Relax, read, creative expression, or call a friend	Relax, read, creative expression, or enjoy each other's company	
10:00	Lights out	Lights out	

SUNDAY

TIME	INDIVIDUAL	GROUP	PAGE
AM 7:00	Morning stretch and meditation	Morning stretch and meditation	
8:00	Breakfast and personal care	Breakfast and personal care	
9:00	Reconnect with intention and reflect on selected reading	Together reconnect with intention and reflect on selected reading	
9:15	Engage with One-Year Vision. Create your intention for the upcoming year	Individually, engage with One-Year Vision. Create your intention for the upcoming year	156
11:15	Walk, stretch, manicure, pedicure, facial, or massage	Walk, stretch, manicure, pedicure, facial, or massage	
PM 12:30	Lunch	Lunch	
1:30	Create a collage representing your One-Year Vision. Post your collage on the wall	Create a collage representing your One-Year Vision. Share your collage with your interview partner. Post collages on wall	
2:30	Review "Keeping Your Boat Balanced" section. Create first set of Three-Month Goals	Review "Keeping Your Boat Balanced" section. Create first set of Three-Month Goals	187
3:30	Create "I AM" frame	Create and share "I AM" frame	199
4:15	Reconnect with intention and reflect on selected reading	Together, reconnect with intention and reflect on selected reading	
4:30	Make notes in the regarding thoughts for next year's retreat	Make notes in the regarding thoughts for next year's retreat	210
4:45	Thank yourself and close retreat . . . until next year	Discuss continuing as an Illumined Living Circle (see "Resources"). Thank yourself and each other and close retreat . . . until next year	

If you are on retreat with a friend or a group, use the interview times to practice listening deeply to each other. Remember that your listening to another with full attention is a gift of priceless treasure. Listen and record your partner's answers in her book. Take turns interviewing each other. As an interviewer you can help the exploration go deeper by asking questions that may veer off from the guidebook a bit, but nonetheless encourage a deeper and more profound understanding to emerge. Trust yourself.

An Early Word about Your Reentry

As you are planning your retreat, remember to also consider what will best support your reentry into life. For example, most women prefer to ease back into their lives by making sure that they don't schedule events on the evening of their return. A gentle reentry may take the form of not overcrowding your schedule on the days following your retreat. It may mean scheduling some time with a friend, or it may simply mean taking a long hot bath.

When you return to your life, may it be with a renewed sense of self and personal vision.

Equipment to Bring on the Journey

Taking care of the details of your retreat ahead of time will contribute to the ease of your time away. For example, consider whether you prefer to have your meals where you are staying or whether you prefer to eat out. If going out to eat, consider the kind of atmosphere that will best support your retreat. One suggestion is to plan to eat in on Friday night, as it may help you settle more fully into being on retreat.

Below are a few suggestions of supplies you may want to have with you:

- Music you like: quiet and calming for writing and reflecting; lively and fun for collage-making and breaks
- Magazines for collage-making raw material
- Odor-free colored markers
- 3 × 5 index cards

- Incense if you like it
- Crayons, colored pens, colored pencils
- Sketchbook
- Glue
- Construction paper
- Scissors
- Large card-stock paper (2 for each person) or poster board you can cut
- Recent photo of yourself
- Healthy snacks and water
- Directions to your personal retreat site
- CD player
- 3M Post-It™ flip chart: post several together on a wall to make a “Graffiti Wall” of paper for creative self-expression. You can use this for big drawings, insights, or just doodling
- Supplies for self-pampering – pedicure, manicure, facial – or consider scheduling body care during the retreat
- *An Illumined Life: Personal Yearly Retreat & Reflection Guide*

What else would you like to have with you on your retreat?

Selecting Your Retreat Reading

Finally, select a short reading, a poem, or a prayer that you would like to use on your retreat. This reading will be something that you turn to over and over again. You will likely find that it reveals layer after layer of meaning as you move through the hours of your retreat.

Approach the choice of your reading with a lighthearted easiness. Trust that the reading that will best serve you will come to your attention easily. You might find yourself drawn to a particular book and discover a passage there. You may find that there is a song that comes to mind as your “reading.” Perhaps you feel pulled to bring along a quote you heard that you really like.

Whatever you choose, it will be perfect for you. Some people may want to bring along LOTS of reading material. Though that sounds appealing, it may distract you from really exploring yourself. This is a time for you to be with you and YOUR thoughts. Choose your reading materials thoughtfully and selectively with that in mind.



CREATING YOUR INTENTION

Imagine that you are part of a web of consciousness spreading out across the universe as a fabric of woven light. Articulating and contemplating your retreat intention radiates your heart's wish (thought plus feeling) into this fabric of consciousness. As you form your intention, imagine that you are sending a Morse-code message into the universe that articulates your heart's request. Imagine that divine consciousness receives that message and supports you in creating the experience you request in whatever form works for you. Just imagine.

We are creating intentions all the time. Most of the time, we are not conscious of them. An intention is like a whisper inside us, a whisper from the deepest part of us. We just need to hear our own heart's whisper.

In reflecting on how your life is unfolding, you may gradually become aware of some of the intentions that you've created that have been guiding your recent choices and life circumstances. Take a moment to bring these recent intentions to your awareness. Quite simply, conscious intention is the determined focus of thought to create a desired experience.

Beginning your retreat, projects, or other activities with a clear intention can facilitate an experience that supports you in actually manifesting that intention, creating what you want. Our intentions speak of the essence of the life experience that we wish to create. Intentions are one way of articulating what we are committed to and what's important to us. A friend of mine thinks of intentions as the beacon she creates time and again to illumine her life with clarity and direction, like a lighthouse.

Intentions are expansive. They have to do with the state of *being* you wish to bring to your life as well as what you hope to receive and give to a project or experience. There are no specifics, no measurable time or quantity limits such as you would find with articulating goals.

For some of us, intentions are like a quiet whisper, as delicate as a butterfly lighting on a blade of grass at the water's edge. For others, intentions take the form of concrete and potent language. For still others, an intention shows up as a vivid image, through a poem or short phrase. An intention can take many forms, because it is both subtle and alive. Whatever form your intention takes is perfect.

When you reflect on your intention, what is your feeling state? How can you tell when your intention is the Morse-code message you want to send out to the universe? The best intentions give us a feeling of expansiveness. They feel like a big "YES" inside. For me, I find a slight smile creeping to my lips when I remember my intention, like I've got a secret deal with the universe.

STEPS TO CREATE YOUR RETREAT INTENTION

Step 1: Connect with your inner self.

Become still inside by taking a few deep breaths. Connect with your inner self in the way that feels most natural to you.

Step 2: Claim the inner state you wish to cultivate.

Clarify the quality or inner state you wish to bring to your retreat. How do you want to be? Think about words like “joyful,” “peaceful,” “calm,” “loving,” “alert,” “focused” . . .

I intend to be . . .

Step 3: Clarify what you want or wish.

I intend to create/do/have . . .

Step 4: Ask yourself why.

Identify why you want what you want. For example, “I want to relax, I want to feel connected to God, because I want to get clear.” Doing this helps generate the feeling associated with the fulfillment of your intention. Give yourself room to ask plenty of questions about what you want and why. Keep asking yourself *why* for a few rounds and see what you find.

I want . . .

Because . . .

I want . . .

So that . . .

I want . . .

Because . . .

Step 5: Engage your imagination.

Articulate what you imagine your life will be like when your intention is fulfilled. What difference will your fulfilled intention make in your life? What do you imagine yourself seeing, feeling, thinking, hearing, touching with the fulfillment of your intention?

Some people like to use creative visualization. Others prefer to write an entry in a future diary or a future letter to a friend, describing their lives with the fulfilled intention.

A few hints to help you along the way: you will know that you are on track when you feel enthusiasm or peace, when you feel your version of “YES!” Indulge your imagination until you feel “Great! This outcome is a good idea! This possibility is a great thing!” Create details that generate positive feeling. Back off the details if you start to feel negative. Use the space below in the way that suits you best.

I imagine . . .

Step 6: Express your intention.

Extract the basic essence of what you've discovered in all of the previous steps. Express the heart of what you have discovered. Trust yourself. Allow your intention to take the form that most inspires you. You may want to close your eyes. Take a couple of deep breaths. If you like, take a physical break, walk outside, stretch, invite your body to relax completely as you lie flat on the floor. Ask yourself, "What is my intention?" Listen. Do any words or phrases come up? Look. Do any images float before your mind's eye?

Draw or write your intention in the space provided . . .

Step 7: Offer a blessing.

Reflect on what you are wanting. Imagine you have the power to give what you are wanting to yourself and others. Who comes to mind? What is the blessing you would offer to yourself? What blessing would you like to offer to the people who came to mind?

Step 8: Send the message to the universe.

Imagine the feelings associated with the fulfillment of your intention as sonar pulsing out of your heart into a radiant web of consciousness. Imagine yourself sending out your personal Morse-code message. Then do it! Send out your intention.

Step 9: Ask for help.

In the way that works best for you, ask God to send angels, or grace, and guidance to help bring your intention to fulfillment. Then, take a moment to listen to your intuitive impulses. Record your experience and remember to pay attention to your inner world, intuitive impulses, and coincidences as you go about your day.

Step 10: Give daily attention and appreciation to your intention.

As you go about your retreat, watch for evidence of the fulfillment of your intention. Actively practice appreciating the large and small manifestations of your intention's fulfillment around you or in your day-to-day life experience – including any evidence you see in the lives of others. On a separate piece of paper, express your intention from Step 6. Sing it, dance it, or post it somewhere you will see daily.

For the good of all, may it be so.

the retreat

REVISIT YOUR READING

As you embark on your retreat, turn to your chosen reading. What insights and lessons do you draw from this reading at this time? Record your thoughts below.

starting out: making friends *with your river*

As you paddle your way down a river, your ride tends to be smoother if you take the time to understand as much as you can about its nature. If you come to know the river, you learn to move with it as it moves. In the same way, adopting a friendly attitude toward yourself helps you slip more into the current of who you really are – free from the restraints of “must nots” and “shoulds.”

Approach this section as you would time with a trusted friend. Allow your answers and reflections to flow with ease. Feel free to skip the questions that hold no spark for you and come back to them later if you want. Or skip them altogether. This retreat is for you, so adopt a friendly and accepting attitude toward this time.

This section is designed to support you in understanding more about the foundation of who you are, your own personal “source.” A river has banks that contain it, and similarly, each one of us moves through life with notions, beliefs, and ways of being that makes up the “shores” through which our life flows. Becoming familiar with the movement of our life through understanding and acceptance allows us to float through life with greater ease.

Throughout this section, reflect on your experiences from the past year. Also consider aspects of your life that form the foundation of your present life experience. Remember to look compassionately and honestly at yourself at all times.

If you’re moving through this section with a partner, practice deep and generous listening. How do you do this? You can invite your partner to complete the sentences with her first

impression, or turn the sentence completion into a question for your partner. And vice versa. Work together through the section entitled “Turning Light on the Present.” If you and your partner like, you can continue working together through “Behind the Looking Glass,” then return to working solo.

One hint: trust your initial responses. Don’t work too hard by overthinking. Again, if a question or sentence completion does not seem to fit for you at this time, simply skip it. Come back to it later and see if something else springs forth. If not, no problem, move on. Enjoy yourself!

Suggested time: *2 hours with a partner – 1 hour if alone.*

HOLDING A MIRROR TO THE PAST YEAR

Taking the time to reflect on what you have experienced in the past year reveals insights and opportunities. Old lessons and new avenues become clear as you can see patterns that may be influencing your life. Such reflection also gives you the chance to acknowledge yourself.

As I reflect on this past year, I acknowledge myself for . . .

I have faced and overcome the following challenges:

Remembering the people whose lives have touched yours, here is an opportunity to recognize and express your acknowledgment of them.

I'd like to acknowledge _____ for . . .

As I reflect on this past year, I'd like to thank God for . . .

The real highlights of my year were . . .

This year, I visited (or traveled to) . . .

In this past year I have learned . . .

We all have favorite things, things we discover from year to year, and people with whom we would like to share these things. This year, my favorite things have been . . .

I would like to share them with . . .



T U R N I N G T H E L I G H T O N T H E P R E S E N T

Now that you have taken the time to reflect on the past year, it's time to step into considering what's going on in your life now. Reflecting on your life in the present can increase your awareness about how to make the most of your upcoming year. You can rest assured that there is plenty of time and space in later sections to go into more depth about the various areas of your life and specific goals for your life. Therefore, relax, reflect on these general questions and exercises for sentence completion, and remember to go with your initial responses.

In your life right now, what is calling most for your attention? What is most pressing for you right now?

What do you *love* about your life? What is most appealing about your life right now?

What motivates you? Do you currently have such motivators in your life?

How do you refresh or renew yourself?

What are your favorite pastimes or hobbies?

How would things be if your life were how you really wanted it to be?

What would be the simplest pathway to get where you *truly* want to be?

What obstacles have you run into while trying to get where you want to be?

What resources come to your mind that would be of help to you?

What takes up your time?

What would the shape of success look like in *your* life?

What are your unique talents and gifts? Think about what your friends say about you . . .

What are your primary life roles – mother, sister, wife, daughter, friend, business owner, lover, mother-in-law?

What would you like to change to improve the way you play these existing roles?

What roles would you like to play that are not part of your life right now? Be creative with this one . . .

When do you feel most connected with others? What efforts would you like to make to connect with others more?

In the past year, when have you felt most connected to God or the Divine Presence? What helps you stay connected on this level?

Remember a time during the past year when you accomplished or achieved something you thought was not achievable. Write down the details . . .

When you remember that experience, what do you feel about yourself?



NATURE LESSONS

Nature gives us many ways to connect with and discover more about ourselves. One is when we consider nature as a reflection of our own being – right here, right now. Just as nature changes, so do we. If we think of nature or look to her at any given moment, there's always something new we can discover about ourselves and our lives.

Breathe deeply and think about which aspect of nature draws you most at this time in your life. Look outside and notice what aspect of nature most attracts you most right in this moment.

What do you know about the aspect of nature that you named? What facts do you know? What does it evoke for you? What are the qualities of this facet of nature? For instance, wind can be changeable, strong, powerful, gentle, sometimes scary – and refreshing.

Look around you. Wherever you may be on your retreat, nature is there. It's with you – so look at it right now and invite nature to speak to you throughout your retreat. Nature makes bold statements when we ask for them. It may tell you to head in a certain direction to claim an aspect of yourself, an aspect of your own nature that you may not always accept or claim.

For a few moments, play with claiming the qualities of nature you listed above. For instance, with wind, I would claim, “I am changeable, strong, powerful, gentle and sometimes scary – or refreshing.” Or it may be that you only relate to a few of those qualities – though you feel very like the wind. Complete the following sentence using the qualities you listed about *your* chosen nature image.

I am . . .

When you are feeling stuck in life, looking toward nature can free you. “You could ask yourself, What qualities do I see in nature that may also be qualities I have and am not owning?” Or, What are the qualities that I could cultivate that would support me?

Let’s continue this exploration. Allow yourself to express all the wonderful qualities that you are. If you get stuck, what would your best friend say?

I am . . .

As you saw from what you discovered from nature, there are many facets to the beauty that you are. Many people tend to discount or put aside their own best nature. This happens gradually as you sacrifice your joy while seeking the approval of others as you go about life on automatic pilot. You allow your “doing” and “being” in life to be driven by conscious and unconscious “shoulds.”



LIVING FROM WHAT WE CHOOSE

What if each of us committed to living more from what we choose and find fulfilling rather than from the cloudy confusion of who we think we “should” be or what we think we “should” be doing?

The exercise that follows is adapted from a suggestion exercise posed by Marshall Rosenberg, the author of *Nonviolent Communication*. Remember, this exercise is simply to heighten your awareness of yourself. Later you can choose what – if anything – you wish to change.

In the space below, create a list of all the things you do on a regular basis that you detest doing. After each, write “I choose to do this because . . . ” Literally use the words *I choose* with each item. Notice what you discover about yourself in the process.

LOOKING BACK: A REVIEW

Review your responses thus far from this chapter. Circle items, words, images, or phrases that may suggest goals, or even become goals you would like to consider achieving in the upcoming year. Consider aspects of yourself or your life that you might want to change or strengthen during the upcoming year.

Remember, this is a first-glance impression of action you may be inspired to take. You are not committing to anything here.

Go with your initial impressions and jot down, mind map (see “Resources” section for instructions on mind mapping), or draw your ideas and thoughts about potential goals in the space below.



BEHIND THE LOOKING GLASS

Beneath the surface of life are the core values that steer your life like the steady energy of a deep current. Having an understanding of the values that are most important to you can help you make the choices that will bring you the most personal peace and contentment. This section is designed to help you learn more about values and discover *your* core values.

What Are Values?

Values are the personal principles or standards by which we consciously and unconsciously steer our life. When living in a way that engages your values, you feel most like who you really are: connected, in the flow and easeful.

Another way to think about this is this: values can feel like *your* most important human needs. That is not to say that values are to be held in a stiff, solemn or “holier than thou” way. Values are often surprisingly human and joyous.

Many of us lead lives that at time drift away from our values. However, your life doesn't have to be that way. You can *choose* to live in closer alignment with your personal values and truths. It's a choice that you can make over and over as you move through life.

Further, becoming aware of your values can be enormously helpful in decision making, goal setting, and understanding others. When you know and live from the standpoint of fully expressing your values in life, your life becomes filled with delight and joy. You feel like you are “on track.”

Decision Making

Most decision making involves weighing the pros and cons, the benefits and costs of various options. When you become conscious of and add the variable of your own values, your decision making becomes easier and more personalized. Simply asking “What would happen if I honored each of my personal values in any given decision?” can bring more clarity to any situation. If you look at the decisions you make from the perspective of your values, those decisions become much clearer.

Goal Setting

When you align your life with your values, you naturally feel more fulfilled and satisfied in life. Setting goals that reflect your values makes those goals not only more attainable but even more interesting to you.

Furthermore, the fulfillment of those goals brings you a stronger sense of well-being. This applies to the minutiae of daily living, as well as to the larger goals that we set for ourselves. Knowing your values frees you to plan life in a way that reflects what is most important to you. Personal satisfaction and fulfillment are most attainable when you live in ways that are aligned with your values.

Understanding Others

Knowing what your values are gives you a base for understanding others. Then you can begin to see how your interactions and also your disagreements and quarrels with others can often be traced to differing values. Moreover, you begin to notice that judging others often comes from your sense or feeling that their behavior doesn't match your values.

Most people tend to get angry or irritated with others for two reasons: (1) others are not behaving according to our values or (2) our wants are not being fulfilled by others, or by our interactions with them. Learning to more authentically accept and appreciate your own values opens countless doors to becoming more tolerant and appreciative of others.

DISCOVER YOUR VALUES

Tell the truth about what you actually value or love to do or how you would like to be. This may be the first time you have considered such questions and admitted the truth to yourself.

The questions below are offered to you from Jeff Brunson (www.basicapproach.com). Jeff is a master at helping today's leaders fully live their values or "walk their talk." These questions are designed to help you become more conscious of your values.

Though there is plenty of space for your response to each question, you need not try to fill up the entire space. Remember, this is *your* retreat

Step I: Answer the following questions.

Trust your initial responses. Be careful not to make this hard by overthinking. Practice self-acceptance.

What forms the core of my belief system?

Why do I do what I do? What motivates me?

What fires me up? What things do I feel most passionate about?

When am I most passionate personally?

When am I most fulfilled?

What outcomes assure me that I've done the right thing?

Step 2: Complete all of the following statements.

Remember, go with your first impression; no judgment, criticism, or evaluation. Practice self-acceptance.

Relationships are important because . . .

I take action when . . .

I work best when . . .

Step 3: Thoughtfully and carefully review what you've written above.

Stick your neck out a little for a better view of yourself. Review and listen with “giraffe ears” (a favorite expression of Marshall Rosenberg’s) – a giraffe is intelligent and has the largest heart of any land mammal. Listen with intelligence and a big heart. Listen also to learn something new.

What do you hear, perhaps for the first time?

What do you see more clearly than you've seen before?

Step 4: Review your answers for themes and action points.

Do this from a compassionate and honest distance, as if you were considering the writing of a dear friend. Complete the following:

List three recurring themes that you see emerging in your answers to the questions above:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What are three actions that you think are important to this person?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What do you think drives or motivates this person?

What seems to be most important to this person?

Step 5: Review what you have written.

Circle ten to fifteen words or phrases that may illuminate your important values. Do this without self-judgment, self-evaluation, or self-criticism. Write these words or phrases below.

Step 6: Identify five to eight core values.

Begin defining them – in language that is meaningful to you. Find the word, phrase, or image that succinctly articulates each value. Express each value in the space below, using words, phrases, images, or symbols.

In Conclusion

Know that your values are also your strengths. Genuine personal development happens because we focus on our strengths and not our weaknesses. Perceived weaknesses become apparent when you do not give attention to or honor a strength or value. Remember to give each of your values the attention it deserves.



UNDERSTAND YOUR PURPOSE

We live in a time when many of us yearn to know our life's true purpose, our reason for being. With our basic human needs met, what a luxury that we can even consider this question! Yet the question is so weighty that some people never even approach it. What if discovering our purpose and aligning our lives with that purpose is much easier than we think?

In this time of mythologizing celebrities, we may tend to think that our life purpose, our reason for being, must include huge achievements and superhuman heroism. What if our significance and life purpose is really simple? What if the answers are hidden in our heart's wishes and deeply held values? What if we could easily touch upon our reason for being?

It may be that we can never know the full reason we are alive until our lives are complete. In that case, imagine the peace and contentment that you can feel from delighting in what *is* in the present moment. Also, what if the bits of understanding that you are uncovering along the way are enough for now?

YOUR REASON FOR BEING

Consider the following questions and sentence completions as a means to illuminate greater self-awareness. Trust your first response and write quickly without judgment, without criticism, and without evaluation. Do not reject a response because you somehow think that it's not "enough." Listen to yourself.

Remember, it's fine to skip questions, knowing that you will be drawn to the questions and sentence-completion exercises that will best illuminate your understanding of why you are here.

What do you want to achieve before you die? Yes, it is enough:

Two of my exceptional qualities are . . .

When with others, I enjoy expressing those qualities in the following ways . . .

I am passionate about . . .

I could be best in the world at . . .

Imagine that the world is your version of “perfect.” What is happening in your world? What do you notice? How do people interact with each other? What does it feel like?

The most important thing in the world to me is . . .

I feel most expanded when . . .

If I weren't able to _____, I think my life would be less joyous.

What I really love about my life is . . .

Take a few deep breaths and ask your inner being, “What is my reason for existing?” Write with a stream of consciousness flowing through your pen.

LOOKING BACK: A REVIEW

Review what you have discovered above. Circle phrases and images that stand out to you. Write a single statement, or a short poem, or draw an image or symbol that expresses your current understanding of your reason for being.

If you would like to explore this further, consider using the Intention Worksheet in the “Resources” section of this guide to help you discover your reason for being. Remember: you don’t have to do anything with what you discover. Know that this discovery represents your most complete *current* understanding.



UNDERSTAND YOUR ENNEAGRAM PERSONALITY TYPE

The *enneagram* is an ancient approach to personality types that describes the underlying motivations and unconscious factors that determine how people see the world. In this system, there are nine basic personality types that, while being distinct, are related to and affect one another. Each type sees the world in a different way from the others. Each develops different coping strategies and personality characteristics.

Knowing our type allows us to better understand our worldview and how it is different from the views held by others. Such understanding helps us to be more accepting of ourselves and more understanding of other people.

Perhaps the most useful aspect of the enneagram is its ability to foster self-awareness. Such awareness permits us to change the habits of mind that are getting in the way of our spiritual expansion and emotional progress.

Although often cited to be an ancient personality system developed by Sufis, the enneagram as it is currently taught was developed by Oscar Ichazo. The information provided below is offered to you by Annie Wills, Ed.D. Annie is masterful at using the enneagram to help people better understand themselves and others. She is particularly adept at using the enneagram to help women learn to engage in “extreme self-care.” If you would like to know more about the enneagram, contact Annie at www.fullcirclecoaching.net.

Though the list below is but a glimpse into the enneagram personality types, you may find yourself recognizing various traits and characteristics. After you have read the list below, circle the type that feels most like you.

1. **Perfectionists** (Ones) are motivated by the need to be right, improve themselves, and avoid anger. They have high expectations of themselves and others. Their self-reflection is often critical and judgmental, focusing on what they did wrong in a situation, rather than their successes. “Planning” for them involves finding a strategy that will work with the fewest chances for mistakes.

Helpful tip: Spend time taking care of your real needs; let go of the “shoulds,” “musts,” and “have-to’s.” Know that it is okay to be “good enough” instead of “perfect.” Consider approaching self-reflection with a kind attitude and self-compassion.

2. **Helpers** (Twos) need to be needed, appreciated, and invaluable to others. Their focus is on what they think the other person in the relationship needs, rather than on their own needs. Their planning will be done with others in mind and how they can arrange their schedule to be available for others.

Helpful tip: Spend time alone so your awareness can be focused for a time on just you and your needs. Remember, good self-care gives you the energy to care for others and the knowledge of how much care is enough, rather than too much.

3. **Achievers** (Threes) strive for achievement, success, and recognition for their accomplishments. They are consistent, dependable, and goal oriented. Planning is about getting the goal accomplished and looking good while doing so.

Helpful tip: Remember that life isn't a competition. Pay special attention to your emotional needs and the health of your relationships.

4. **Romantics** (Fours) feel everything very deeply and need to believe they are special. They are often creative and artistic. Planning is important to prevent being overwhelmed by emotions. Self-reflection is automatic for them, and needs to be countered with “head information” – checking things out before getting caught up in feelings.

Helpful tip: Use a plan, schedule, and routines to stay on track, particularly when you find yourself getting overwhelmed by your feelings.

5. **Observers** (Fives) need to know everything and be self-sufficient. They usually have a lot of information stored in very organized files. Planning isn't a problem as much as following through.

Helpful tip: Take small steps toward your goals, rewarding yourself each time you follow through on part of your plan.

6. **Questioners** (Sixes) are prone to worry, doubt, and question. They want approval from others and are committed and faithful friends. All the doubts and questions that automatically follow a decision can derail planning.

Helpful tip: Routines and schedules that you can follow without having to think about them help cut down on the self-doubt. Spend time getting in touch with your own inner authority, and you'll feel less of a need to go to others for answers.

7. **Adventurers** (Sevens) need to stay happy and be on the go all the time. They are enthusiastic and usually very busy. They are all about what's happening next. Long-term planning isn't on their radar screen. They are more about "doing" instead of "being."

Helpful tip: Practice working on one thing at a time until it is finished. Practice being present for your life. Use short-range goal planning to your advantage.

8. **Bosses** (Eights) love to argue. They also have a need to be self-reliant and strong. They are straightforward and honest. What you see is what you get. They have a lot of energy and often take action impulsively. However, they can also make plans based on goals that are far in the future.

Helpful tip: Learn to recognize your impact on other people and the value of compromise. Evaluate your plans in consideration of their impact on others.

9. **Peacemakers** (Nines) avoid conflict and can see all sides of an argument. They are nonjudgmental and accepting, but have a hard time sticking to a plan – they let the less important things take up too much of their time.

Helpful tip: Learn to prioritize. Put the most important things at the top of your schedule and do them before going on to lower priorities. Eliminate the things you don't want to do or least want to do. Take the time to remember what's important to *you*.

What's Your Type?

What enneagram type do you think might best describe you?

What new insights do you have about yourself or others?



BALANCING IT ALL

Regardless of what enneagram type best describes you, we all live our lives in several arenas and are faced with the challenge of keeping our own life balanced. Just as imbalance in a boat can lead to unsteadiness, even flipping the boat over, imbalance in life can lead to ill health and rob you of your general well-being. Stress tends to accumulate when you consistently give more attention to one area of life, while neglecting other areas.

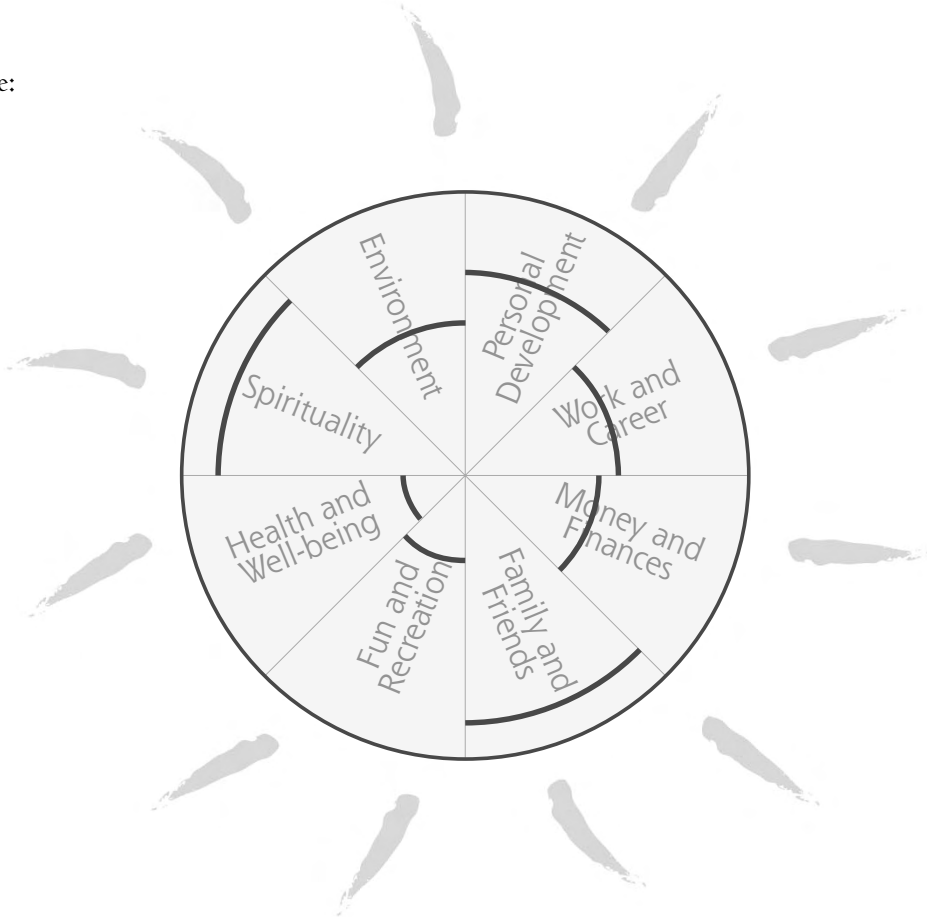
How balanced is *your* life? Are you creating a balanced life of joy and fulfillment today? This week? This year?

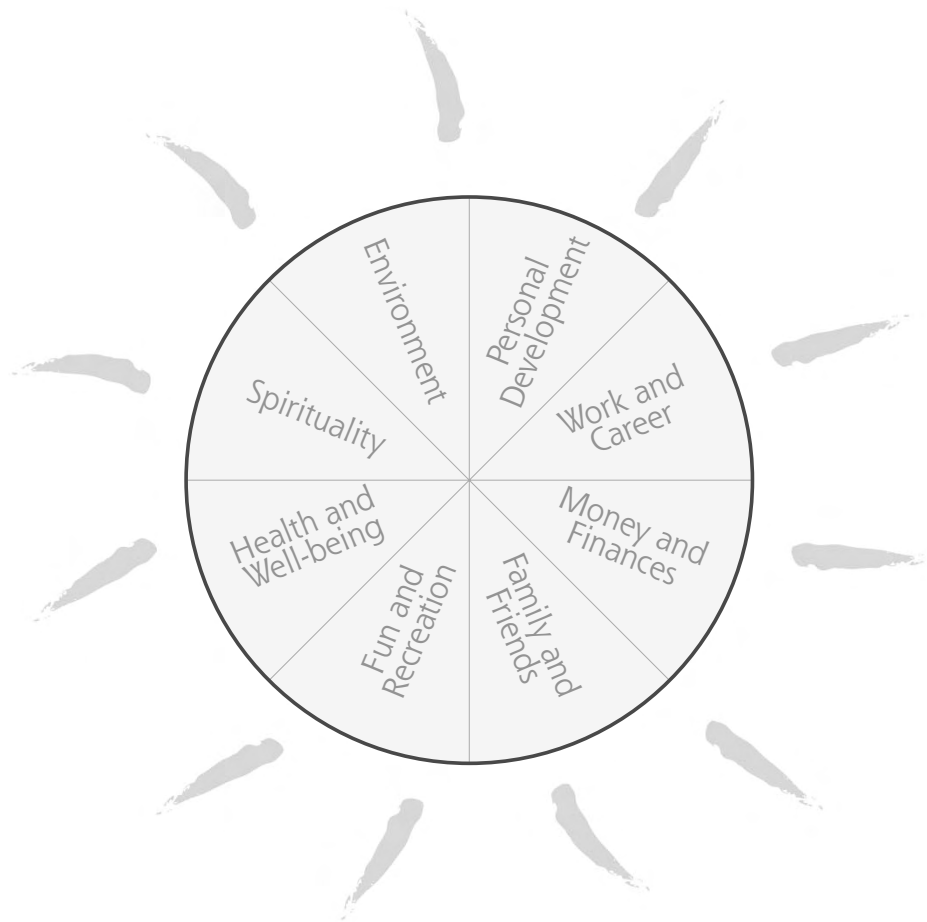
THE BALANCE WHEEL

Each section of the Balance Wheel below signifies an area of life. Imagine that the center of the wheel is a “zero” satisfaction level while the outer edge represents a “ten” satisfaction level.

Rate your level of satisfaction with each area of your life by drawing a line to create a new outer edge. The more closely your lines resemble a circle, the more balanced your life may feel to you.

Example:





Reflect on the following questions:

- How well are you rolling down the river of *your* life?
- What small changes would you like to make to create more balance?
- What small actions can you take this week?

REVISIT YOUR READING

Revisit the reading you have chosen for your retreat. Having begun your self-reflection, notice what you now see in the reading. Record your current thoughts on it below.

lay out your *gear*

Laying out your gear before a river trip allows you to get a good clear look at what you are taking and what you can leave behind. It can even show you what you might need to get in order for your trip to be more pleasant. On retreat and in self-reflection, you can pause at any time and assess your life. You can lay out the gear of your life, taking a compassionate and thorough look at what you are carrying in the boat of your life.

In this next section, you will have the opportunity to slow down and take a deeper look into every area of your life. For some this look can feel overwhelming, as both the tendency to jump into action and creating a “to do” list distracts you from being in the present. As much as possible, remind yourself that you are exploring – simply staying open to increase your awareness about your life. There is no need to jump ahead of NOW. Just be with this exercise in the moment – right now.

The Balance Wheel laid out the manifold areas of life for you. Each of these areas gives you the chance to experience your life more fully. Notice that if you’re too heavily loaded in one area, another aspect of life may suffer. This lack of balance also adds to life stress. Taking the time to lay out your gear, assessing where you are right now in each area, considering what to keep and what to let go of, is one way to ensure that you will be moving through your life with your boat very well balanced.

Gently remind yourself that all of the “to do’s” can be managed in small pieces as you decide what YOU really want to focus on THIS year. For the time being, take this exploration lightly. Don’t work too hard. Trust that what is most important to you will rise to the surface. For

now, you are just exploring. You are in a process of discovery. You are floating down a river.

Stay present to widening self-awareness rather than indulging in self-evaluation, self-criticism, and self-judgment about what you are discovering. Stay in your exploration, free from judgment. During this discovery, adopt an attitude of compassion for yourself. Remember to venture into this exploration with kind eyes. This journey can be a means for you to adopt an accepting, friendly attitude toward yourself.

There is truly no need to jump into feeling overwhelmed, thinking that you must immediately do something about what you are discovering. Later, you will have a chance to look at all that and make conscious choices about what YOU truly want to do. You will also have a broader perspective about the resources you can access to move those things around in your life.

Again – trust your initial impressions. Skip the items for which you have no initial response. You can return to them later to see if there is anything you would like to add.

Each area of life that you saw in the Balance Wheel is represented in the upcoming section. In this exploration, you will find questions and exercises in sentence completion along with various approaches toward self-assessment. Use this section as a guide as you uncover what is most important to you in each area of your life.

Remember – be kind to yourself. Be honest with yourself. Skip the questions that don't draw your attention or do not seem relevant. Trust that what you most need to focus upon will emerge. Take ample breaks, using the sun symbol as a reminder to stretch, look around for something beautiful, or simply take a small pause in your exploration.

Time suggestion: *4 hours*



LAY OUT YOUR GEAR ~ ENVIRONMENT

Trust your initial response.

Taking care of your environment – the physical space where you live, work and travel – is a fabulous way to unplug from distracting, wasted energy and create an environment that nurtures your well-being and joy. You want to have an environment where you can flourish. Consider the environments of your home, work, and vehicle or mode of transportation.

H O M E

What works for you in your home environment?

What is challenging for you in the space of your home?

What things would you like to explore or change in your home environment?

WORK ENVIRONMENT

(not the work itself, just the actual space in which you work)

What works for you in your work environment?

What challenges you there?

What would you like to explore or change in your work environment?

VEHICLE

(your car or other transportation vehicle)

What is working for you with your vehicle?

What is challenging for you?

What would you like to explore or change within your vehicle environment?

YOUR “ROOMS” AND THEIR “VIEWS”

Room with a View: The physical spaces of your various life environments influence you in a myriad of ways. Clutter or lack of clutter gives a feeling of restriction or expansion. Clean and pleasing environments provide mini-havens of rest and rejuvenation as you move through your days and nights.

Mentally visit the “rooms” in your life. If you don’t have the rooms listed, substitute the appropriate spaces in *your* life. Bullet-point the possible changes you might like to make during the coming year to give yourself a better view from each “room.”

Consider even the smallest change – such as cleaning out a drawer – to more dramatic changes, such as selling a house and moving. Trust yourself. Remember to respect the space of those who live with you. If something about their space is bothering you, a goal might be to have a conversation with them about it.

Vehicle	Work	Yard

YOUR “ROOMS” AND THEIR “VIEWS”

Living Room	Dining Room	Kitchen
Bedroom 1	Bedroom 2	Bedroom 3

YOUR “ROOMS” AND THEIR “VIEWS”

Bathroom 1	Bathroom 2	Home Office
Laundry Room	Entryway	Garage

LOOKING BACK: A REVIEW

Review your responses from this chapter. Circle items, words, images, or phrases that may suggest or become goals you would like to consider achieving in the upcoming year.

Remember this is mostly a first-glance impression for actions you may be inspired to take. You are not committing to anything here.

Go with your initial impressions and jot down, mind map (creative representation of ideas – see “Resources” section for “how-to”), or draw your ideas and thoughts about potential goals in the space below.



LAY OUT YOUR GEAR ~ PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Remember to trust your initial response.

You are responsible for your own personal development. It is up to you to change and move into the kind of person you most want to be – all with an eye toward self-acceptance and self-compassion.

When you are honest with yourself, you can see that you have some areas in which you can grow more brightly into the kind of person that you really want to be. It may be that you want to learn conversational French or you may want to become a better communicator. You may want to learn or develop some form of creative expression or take a computer course. Perhaps you would like to become more self-confident or cultivate greater self-acceptance and self-compassion. Explore these untapped areas of yourself right now.

What is working in how you are developing as a person?

What are your present challenges in the ways you are developing as a person?

What aspects of yourself would you like to change or explore?

To help you get clear on some specific areas, complete the following sentences with about three to five responses:

I have always wanted to know . . .

I would like my wardrobe to . . .

I would like to learn . . .

I would like to try . . .

I would like to experience . . .

I would like to become better at . . .

I would like to know how to . . .

I would like to read . . .

I have often thought about volunteering at . . .

I would like to develop . . .

I have always wanted to . . .

My environments would improve if I learned . . .

My work and career would improve if I learned . . .

My spiritual life would improve if I learned . . .

My health and well-being would improve if I learned how to . . .

My money and finances would improve if I learned . . .

I would enjoy greater relaxation and recreation if I learned . . .

My relationships with my friends and family would improve if I learned . . .

I would be a better friend to myself if I . . .

LOOKING BACK: A REVIEW

Review your responses from this chapter. Circle items, words, images, or phrases that may suggest or become goals you would like to consider achieving in the upcoming year. Consider aspects of yourself or your life that you might want to change or strengthen during the upcoming year.

Go with your initial impressions and jot down, mind map, or draw your ideas and thoughts about potential goals in the space below.



LAY OUT YOUR GEAR ~ SPIRITUALITY

Remember to trust your initial response.

Now consider the spiritual aspect of your life. It is in the minutiae of daily living that you discover what actually happens to connect you to all that is holy and sacred – for you. Few of us really look into the minutiae, much less question them. We feel comfortable staying in the status quo of our spirituality.

Raising these questions can give you an honest appraisal about whether your approach to spirituality is actually nourishing your soul. Is your spiritual life ultimately strengthening your personal spiritual connection as a source of peace, love, and joy in *your* daily life?

Approach this particular exploration with the strength and discipline of a warrior and the compassion of a saint.

How do you refer to the Divine Presence? How do you address the Divine Presence? Formally or informally?

What is working in your spiritual life?

What is challenging for you within your spiritual life?

What would you like to change or explore to make this facet of your daily life more vibrant?

From your experiences in the past year, recall an incident when you felt closest to Divine Presence. Describe that experience with words, images, or symbols.

As an experiment, if you were to consider your relationship with God as similar to a human relationship, what could you do on a daily basis to deepen that divine friendship?

Common spiritual practices include study, prayer, contemplation, meditation, service, charitable giving, worship, and integrating spiritual teachings into daily life. These practices have the common aim of supporting a spiritual aspirant in strengthening or improving her relationship with God. Check the practices in which you engage. Then circle the desired frequency of each practice:

<input type="checkbox"/> Study:	Daily	Weekly	Biweekly	Monthly	Yearly
<input type="checkbox"/> Prayer:	Daily	Weekly	Biweekly	Monthly	Yearly
<input type="checkbox"/> Contemplation:	Daily	Weekly	Biweekly	Monthly	Yearly
<input type="checkbox"/> Meditation:	Daily	Weekly	Biweekly	Monthly	Yearly
<input type="checkbox"/> Service:	Daily	Weekly	Biweekly	Monthly	Yearly
<input type="checkbox"/> Charitable giving:	Daily	Weekly	Biweekly	Monthly	Yearly
<input type="checkbox"/> Worship:	Daily	Weekly	Biweekly	Monthly	Yearly
<input type="checkbox"/> Integrating teachings:	Daily	Weekly	Biweekly	Monthly	Yearly
<input type="checkbox"/> Silence:	Daily	Weekly	Biweekly	Monthly	Yearly
<input type="checkbox"/> Retreat:	Daily	Weekly	Biweekly	Monthly	Yearly
<input type="checkbox"/> Pilgrimage:	Daily	Weekly	Biweekly	Monthly	Yearly
Add your own:					
<input type="checkbox"/>	Daily	Weekly	Biweekly	Monthly	Yearly
<input type="checkbox"/>	Daily	Weekly	Biweekly	Monthly	Yearly
<input type="checkbox"/>	Daily	Weekly	Biweekly	Monthly	Yearly

What else do *you* do to strengthen *your* relationship with the Divine Presence?

If you were to fully understand and integrate one spiritual teaching in the upcoming year, what would it be?

What might help you to more deeply understand and integrate that teaching?

If you could fully integrate one additional spiritual practice into your life during the upcoming year, what would it be?

What would help you integrate that practice?

What habits bring you closer to God?

What habits take you farther from experiencing God?

LOOKING BACK: A REVIEW

Review your responses from this chapter. Circle items, words, images, or phrases that may become or suggest goals you would like to consider achieving in the upcoming year.

Consider aspects of yourself or your life that you might want to change or strengthen during the upcoming year. This is a first glance at actions you may be inspired to take. You are not committing to anything here. Go with your initial impressions and jot down, mind map, or draw your ideas and thoughts about your potential goals in the space below.



LAY OUT YOUR GEAR ~ WORK AND CAREER

Remember to trust your initial response.

You are in charge of your work and career. Yes, it's true! You can discover what you really want to be doing, strategize about possible changes, access resources, and begin taking steps toward creating a fulfilling and satisfying work/career life that draws upon your unique talents and skills. Begin with asking yourself these simple questions:

What is working in your career?

What is challenging for you?

What would you like to explore or change in your work?

How do you personally define work/career success?

How would you spend your ideal day? Your ideal week?

Consider the work that you have performed in the past. What work has felt like the best match with who you experience yourself to be?

What was fulfilling and attractive about this type of work?

If you knew that you only had three to five years to live, what would you want to do differently in your work or career?

Consider previous career choices that you thought were beyond your reach, not possible, or that you put aside. What were some of those possible choices?

Of those possible choices, consider each one now and contemplate whether it is still attractive to you. Is there something that still draws you to this career, or to others you may have turned down in the past?

What talents, skills, and interests would you like to further cultivate in your work?

From what you've been exploring in your work life, what has surfaced for you as a means to use your skills, talents, and interests in ways that are most congruent with who you experience yourself to be and who you wish to become?

Who do you know that might be able to help you in pursuing this career or work choice?

What inner qualities would help you to pursue this choice of growing in your current work?

What personal behavior traits will help you actualize this change?

What thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs will help you?

LOOKING BACK: A REVIEW

Review your responses from this chapter. Circle items, words, images, or phrases that suggest or may become goals you would like to consider achieving in the upcoming year.

Consider aspects of yourself or your life that you might want to change or strengthen during the coming year. You are not committing to anything here. Go with your initial impressions and jot down, mind map, or draw your ideas and thoughts about potential goals in the space below.



LAY OUT YOUR GEAR ~ HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Remember to trust your initial response.

Within this single area of health, there are several subcategories to consider – such as sleep, rest, exercise, food and diet, body care and mental well-being. Look into this area as you did the others, approaching it with gentle self-compassion and relentless honesty.

In the area of your health, what is working?

What is a challenge for you in staying healthy?

What would you like to change or explore?

How would you know if you were living a life of good health and well-being? What would the markers be?

How would you feel different from how you do now?

CONNECTING THE HEALTH DOTS

Step 1: Reflect on the previous year. Consider your feeling of satisfaction in how you have cared for each area of your life. In the space beneath each area listed below, give yourself a score from 1 to 10, where 1 is the lowest score in self-care and 10 is the highest. Go with your initial impression. There is no need to stress over the score. Giving yourself a score gives you a reference point, a way to monitor your changes over time.

Step 2: Make note of any consequences regarding the choices you have made in this past year in terms of caring for your health and well-being.

CARING FOR YOU

Food Preparation, quantity, quality, environment, chewing, company, mindfulness, blessing	Rest Calm thoughts, rest stops, time in nature, personal (petting an animal, holding a baby, reading, music)	Exercise Core strength, flexibility, aerobic, strength training
score:	score:	score:
Sleep Amount of sleep you need versus amount you got, comfortable bed, approaching sleep, waking-up attitude	Body Care Personal hygiene, personal pampering (massage, pedicure, manicure, facial), skin care, medical checkups	Mental Well-being Positive thinking habits, ability for kind, realistic and compassionate self-talk (kind inner dialogue), self-accepting
score:	score:	score:

As you reflect on the health choices you have made over the past year, what do you notice about the consequences upon your health and well-being?

PRACTICAL STEPS

Complete the following sentences:

If I were to prepare and eat food in a way that is best for me, I would . . .

If I were to ensure that I rested each day, I would . . .

If I were to exercise to create a stronger and healthier body to carry me through this next year, I would . . .

If I chose to approach sleep with greater care, I would . . .

If I were to indulge in better body care this year, I would . . .

If I want to ensure that I had a healthy sense of mental well-being, I would . . .

EXPLORING THE STRESSORS

The ways we respond to stress have a tremendous impact on our health and well-being. Most people have little awareness about the life circumstances they may be experiencing that are stressful (stressors) and what they can do to mitigate that stress (resources). Explore the stressors that may be impacting you and the resources that are available to lessen their effect upon you.

STRESSORS	RESOURCES
Circle all that apply to your life.	Circle all that appeal to you or that you would like to explore. Trust your intuition.
Death of spouse Divorce Marital separation or separation from relationship partner Jail term Death of close family member Personal injury or illness Marriage Fired from work Marital reconciliation Retirement Change in family member's health Pregnancy Sexual difficulties Addition to family Business readjustment Change in financial status Death of a close friend Change to a different line of work Change in number of marital arguments	Exercise Massage Reading Hatha yoga Meditation Relaxation skills Journaling Time with friends Time in nature Time with animals Head massage Foot rub Helping someone Reading to a child Volunteer work Deep breathing Positive thinking Time-management skills Organization skills Hot bath/shower

STRESSORS cont.	RESOURCES cont.
<p>Mortgage or loan over \$30,000 Foreclosure of mortgage or loan Change in work responsibilities Trouble with in-laws Outstanding personal achievement Spouse begins or stops work Starting or finishing school Change in living conditions Revision of personal habits Trouble with boss Change in work hours or conditions Change in residence Change in schools Change in church activities Change in social activities Mortgage or loan over \$20,000 Change in sleeping habits Change in number of family gatherings Change in eating habits Vacation Holiday season Minor violations of the law</p>	<p>Acts of kindness Facial Pedicure, manicure Cleaning Gardening Short-term goal setting Personal coach Therapist Changing negative thinking habits Changing distressing events Adapting to distressing events Resolving stressors Personal pleasures Getting enough sleep Eating foods healthy for your body Overcoming procrastination Recognize and release unmet expectations Watch a laugh-out-loud movie Declutter in stages Wander around library or bookstore Watch a relaxing movie</p>
MY STRESSORS	MY RESOURCES
<p>Write down any additional stressors not listed above. Trust what comes to you.</p>	<p>Write down any additional resources not listed above. Trust your intuition.</p>

LOOKING BACK: A REVIEW

Review your responses from this chapter. Circle items, words, images, or phrases that may become goals you would consider achieving in the upcoming year. Consider aspects of yourself or your life that you might want to change or strengthen during the upcoming year.

Remember, this is just a first glance at the action you may be inspired to take. You are not committing to anything here. Go with your initial impressions and jot down, mind map, or draw your ideas about potential goals in the space below.



LAY OUT YOUR GEAR ~ MONEY AND FINANCES

Remember to trust your initial response.

Many women approach this area of life with trepidation, fear, or just plain denial. What if you looked into this area with a sense of adventure and discovery? What if you totally claimed your brilliance and good sense regarding money and finances? Perhaps you are one of those women who readily acknowledges her brilliance in this area and are ready to take the next step. Wherever you find yourself, discover your next step.

What is working for you in your financial picture?

What do you find challenging?

What would you like to change or explore so this area of your life flowed better?

TAKING STOCK

It's apparent to most of us, and well documented, that money and finances can be a major source of stress. The assessment below is designed to shine the light of your awareness on your financial life. With the brilliance of this light, it will become clearer to you where you want to direct your attention regarding money and finances.

FINANCIAL CHECKLIST

With compassion and relentless honesty, read each statement below and check the ones that are true for you:

- I am honest with myself about my financial state.
- I am debt free.
- I live within my means.
- I save at least 10% of my earnings.
- I do not compare my current financial status with the past.
- I do not compare my financial status to that of others.
- I have a “rainy-day fund” for emergency unemployment or disability.
- I have a retirement plan and make maximum contributions to my retirement accounts.
- I know my net worth.
- I have a “big-ticket” fund (money set aside for big-ticket items like car repair, vacation, medical bills, equipment purchases, courses or workshops, retreats).
- I regularly give to charity or those in need.

FINANCIAL CHECKLIST cont.

- My charitable contributions are in balance – they do not put an undue financial strain on me, and they express a heartfelt response to important needs.
- I have a holiday and gift savings fund.
- I have a financial plan with specific goals.
- I keep good tax records.
- I maximize tax-deferred and tax-deductible accounts.
- I pay my taxes on time.
- I have a current will.
- I review my health, life, auto, home, disability, and long-term care insurance needs every year.
- My income stream is stable.
- I know how much money I need to cover current expenses.
- My financial records are generally well organized.
- I know the balance in my checking account.
- I trust that there is enough to go around and enough for me to have an abundant and prosperous life.
- My spouse and I can easily talk about money and finances.

Score: _____ of 25 possible

Desired score: _____ of 25 possible

Complete the following sentences with the first thoughts that come to mind:

I hold myself back financially by . . .

I tend to make the following mistakes with money . . .

I could improve my relationship with money by . . .

With regard to money and finances, I would like to learn how to . . .

LOOKING BACK: A REVIEW

Review your responses from this financial section. Circle items, words, images, or phrases that suggest or may become goals you would like to consider achieving in the upcoming year.

Consider aspects of yourself or your life that you might want to change or strengthen during the upcoming year. Go with your initial impressions and jot down, mind map, or draw your ideas and thoughts about potential goals in the space below.



LAY OUT YOUR GEAR ~ RELAXATION AND RECREATION

Remember to trust your initial response.

Many of us are so busy ensuring that the needs of others are being fulfilled that we rarely stop to rest or have fun. In fact, some of us may have even forgotten the things we find restful or recreational and how to just have fun, or what creates happiness for us.

What is working for you in the arena of relaxation and recreation?

What do you find challenging about relaxing and creating recreation?

What would you like to change or explore to enhance your relaxation and recreation?

Complete the following sentences with three to five responses:

The last time I had a really good time was . . .

I find it very relaxing to . . .

I almost always have fun with . . .

I enjoy being outdoors the most when . . .

On my last vacation, I had fun when . . .

On my next vacation, I would like to . . .

I enjoy the small pleasures of life like . . .

I usually rest when . . .

I could have fun every day if . . .

I would love to take a weekend and . . .

I sometimes don't let myself have fun because . . .

I think I would find it fun and relaxing to . . .

LOOKING BACK: A REVIEW

Review your responses from this chapter. Circle items, words, images, or phrases that may suggest or become goals you would like to consider achieving in the upcoming year.

Consider aspects of yourself or your life that you might want to change or strengthen during the upcoming year. Remember, this is a first-glance impression of action you may be inspired to take. You are not committing to anything here. Go with your initial impressions and jot down, mind map, or draw your ideas and thoughts about potential goals in the space below.



LAY OUT YOUR GEAR ~ FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Remember to trust your initial response.

Ensuring that your relationships are strong and your social needs are met will ultimately lower your feeling of being overwhelmed and stressed. In fact, recent research suggests that when stressed, women release a hormone that encourages them to “tend and befriend” – tending to your home life and befriending those you care about. Engaging in this behavior actually minimizes stress. Further, creating healthy relationships that support you and give you the opportunity to support others leads to greater life satisfaction for most women.

What is calling for your attention in this area?

Regarding your relationships, what is working?

What do you find challenging in your relationships?

What would you like to explore or change about your relationships?

IMPROVING RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

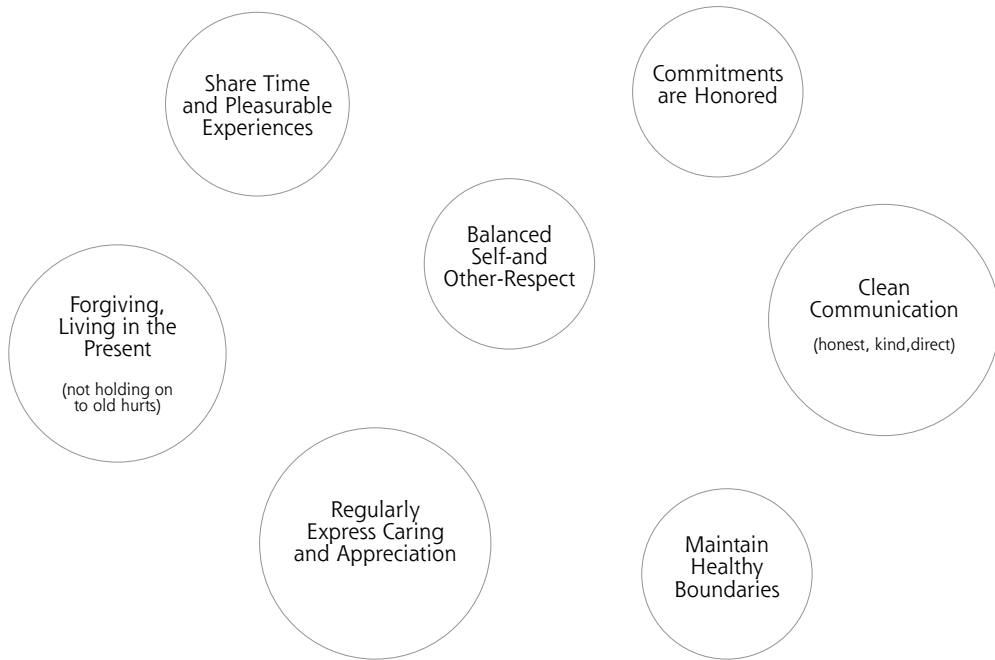
1. Write the names of your closest family members:

2. Write the names of closest friends (or friends with whom you might want to develop a closer relationship):

3. Circle the relationships from responses 1 and 2 above that need some of your attention.

4. Look at each circle below. Draw a line from that circle outward, like a child's drawing of a sun's ray. On that line, write the name of a family member or friend with whom you would like to improve the relationship skill named in the circle. Add as many lines as you would like.

Note: Remember, only you have the power to change just your behavior. You cannot change others'.



LISTENING

POOR COMMUNICATION BEHAVIOR		COMMUNICATION ANTIDOTE	
	Poor listening; interrupting others or dominating conversations		Be quiet and practice listening
	Speaking for others or finishing the sentences of others		Ask others what they think; allow others to speak for themselves
	Giving unsolicited advice		Wait to be asked for your advice before offering it
	Intellectualizing and avoiding feelings, discomfort with emotions		Learn to recognize and listen to your feelings and the feelings of others
	Discounting others with humor, sarcasm, or minimization		Listen and acknowledge the thoughts, feelings, and needs of others
	Conversational "fact checking," correcting the facts while someone is telling a story		Listen and learn to appreciate the story and the intention of the storyteller

MEETING YOUR NEEDS

POOR COMMUNICATION BEHAVIOR		COMMUNICATION ANTIDOTE	
	Giving "Secret Love Tests" ("If you really loved me . . .")		Ask directly for what you want
	Choosing to talk about things at an inappropriate time; lacking awareness of time and place		Get in the habit of asking yourself the phrase that many couples use: "Is this the right time for what I want to say?"
	Overgeneralizing		Be specific
	Expecting others to know what you are thinking		Respectfully tell others what you are thinking
	Attacking others or inappropriate expression of anger		Get in the habit of asking yourself, "What need or want do I have that is not being met?"
	Coercing others or manipulating them to meet your needs		Directly and honestly ask for what you want and need
	Not standing up for yourself		Practice respectful self-assertion

GIVING TO OTHERS

POOR COMMUNICATION BEHAVIOR		COMMUNICATION ANTIDOTE	
	Rarely expressing appreciation to others		Daily express gratitude to the people in your life
	Rarely apologizing, acknowledging mistakes, or claiming responsibility for relationship discord		With humility, look for how you contribute to relationship discord and acknowledge your part
	Apologizing instead of fully addressing the issue, over-apologizing, or apologizing for things that are not within your control		Be willing to fully explore and understand your role in issues, be willing to receive feedback, express genuine sorrow and specifically what you regret
	Resistant to feedback, input, or requests from others		Learn to ask how you can help others, ask for feedback and input
	Lying to yourself and/or lying to others		Be honest with yourself and other people. Get in the habit of asking yourself, "Is this true?"
	Routinely trying to "fix" the thoughts and feelings of others		Learn to tolerate and accept the discomfort and feelings of others

LIMITING COGNITIVE AND EMOTIONAL HABITS

POOR COMMUNICATION BEHAVIOR		COMMUNICATION ANTIDOTE	
	"Mind reading" and making assumptions		Recognize when you make assumptions and check them out
	Engaging in fault-finding, judgmental of others		Practice accepting others for who they are, recognize differing values at play
	Blaming others		Accept responsibility for your thoughts, feelings, and actions
	Rejecting others or giving them the "silent treatment"		Learn to respectfully and directly express frustration or anger
	Focusing on negatives		Look for something positive to appreciate
	Replaying ancient relationship history		Be present; when disagreeing with someone, stay with one issue at a time
	Avoiding conflict		Learn to address conflict with courage, honesty, and respect

LOOKING BACK: A REVIEW

Review your responses from this chapter. Circle items, words, images, or phrases that suggest or may become goals you would like to consider achieving in the upcoming year. There are several items in this section, so go to the ones that most pull your attention as a possible goal.

You have your whole life to become a “master communicator.” Consider aspects of yourself, your communication skills, or your relationships that you might want to change or strengthen during the upcoming year.

Remember, this is a first-glance impression of action you may be inspired to take. You are not committing to anything here. Go with your initial impressions and jot down, mind map, or draw your ideas and thoughts about potential goals in the space below.



CONGRATULATIONS!

You have just laid out your gear and completed a thorough look into your life's playing field.

PUT ON SOME FUN MUSIC AND CELEBRATE YOURSELF!

drift and *dream*

“Dreams are the seedlings of realities.”

– James Allen, *As a Man Thinketh*

Some of the more glorious times on a river trip take place when the river widens and the current runs strong and deep. During those moments, you put down your paddle, listen to the steady lapping of the water, and drift into delicious daydreams. Returning from these meandering daydreams, I find myself filled with renewed enthusiasm, greater purpose, and refreshed creativity. I am ready for the next rapid.

Stretch your body, take a few deep breaths, and settle into a bit of time for a drifting daydream. Review what you have explored in the previous sections. Allow yourself to discover your vision of the next best version of who you are, what you can be, and what you can do.

Challenge yourself by completing the sentences that follow. As you write, speak your current truth – free of self-evaluation, self-judgment, and criticism. Go with your initial thoughts, answer quickly, and move on to the next sentence. Feel the rhythm of this exploration like waves from a gentle current lapping at your boat. If a response doesn't come to you quickly, skip it and come back to it later. Trust yourself. Trust what comes up for you, even if it seems like a small insignificant detail. It is the minutiae that make up the pearls of life.

Time suggestion: *1 hour*

ENTERING DREAMTIME

This year I really want to have . . .

This year I would really like to do . . .

This year I would really like to be . . .

I am passionate about . . .

I love . . .

If I had the freedom to go anywhere this year, I would travel to . . .

If I could do anything this year, it would be to . . .

If I really trusted myself . . .

This coming year, I would get the most satisfaction out of . . .

This year, I would like to spend my spare time . . .

I am ready to change . . .

I feel motivated/inspired by . . .

I imagine myself jumping out of bed with excitement when . . .

This year, I would like to contribute to the lives of others by . . .

I would like to remember this year as the year I . . .

The most important thing in the world to me is . . .

If I were given one wish and I knew it would be fulfilled, my wish would be . . .

This year, I would like to learn . . .

In this coming year, I'd like to release my old habits of . . .

This year, I would like to visit . . .

Most of us forget that we can give ourselves blessings of good wishes and good will. Let this year be a year of blessings. What blessings would you like to give yourself?

Dear _____, *I offer this blessing to the coming year . . .*
(your name)

May it be so!



GAZING INTO THE PAST, INTO THE FUTURE, AND INTO YOUR HEART

Stand and gently stretch for a couple of minutes. When you return to your seat, give yourself a brief face and scalp massage. Now, place your hands palms up alongside your *Illumined Life Retreat & Reflection Guide*. Keep your eyes open and tune your attention to the breath.

If you are working with a group or a friend, one person can read the instructions aloud in a gentle and calm voice. If you are alone, have your retreat guide beside you so you can easily read the instructions aloud to yourself. Keep your hands open and free.

RELAX AND EXPAND YOUR AWARENESS

Breathe in nice and easy, taking at least three deep breaths. Then allow your breath to return to its own perfect rhythm. Gently observe the breath and the sensations associated with the breath. Keep your eyes open in a natural, unforced way, and notice. Read the instructions below slowly and with ease. Allow your eyes to soften.

Notice the sensations of the tongue . . . *Allow the tongue to relax.*

Notice the sensations of the forehead . . . *Allow the forehead to relax.*

Notice the sensations of the shoulders . . . *Allow the shoulders to relax.*

Notice the sensations of the abdomen . . . *Allow the abdomen to relax.*

Notice the sensation of the back . . . *Allow the back to relax.*

Notice the sensations of the buttocks . . . *Allow the buttocks to relax.*

Notice the sensations of the legs . . . *Allow the legs to relax.*

Notice the sensations of the feet . . . *Allow the feet to relax.*

Notice the sensations of the arms . . . *Allow the arms to relax.*

Notice the sensations of the hands . . . *Allow the hands to relax.*

Place your palms up and gaze into your palms.

These Hands

Gazing into your palms, consider the work *these hands* have done . . .
the hands *these hands* have held . . .

Remember . . . all the good works of *these hands* . . .
the vegetables *these hands* have chopped and cooked . . .
the dirt *these hands* have dug in . . .

Reflect on . . . the sand sifted through *these hands* . . .

Allow the breath to move easy in your body . . .
. . . the hair brushed by *these hands* . . .

These hands . . .

the letters written by *these hands* . . .

Remember . . . the shoulders caressed by *these hands* . . .

the pictures painted and colored by *these hands* . . .

the tears brushed away by *these hands* . . .

Reflect on . . . the meals prepared by *these hands* . . .

the comfort offered by *these hands* . . .

These hands . . .

These hands have done so much . . .

touched so many lives . . .

these hands . . .

Breathe in nice and easy. Breathe out nice and long.

Imagine your Higher Self writing you a letter from your future, one year from today. Now pick up your pen and begin a letter to yourself from your Higher Self, your Soul. You can use the prompts provided on the next page if you like. Or simply write as your heart moves you.

With these hands, take up your pen and begin writing this special letter from your Inner Being.

My Beloved _____,
(your name)

I want you to know . . .

This year I would like you to . . .

Understand that you can access inner and outer resources such as . . .

You have qualities shimmering within such as . . .

My lovely One, I also want you to know . . .

Understand that you can always . . .

Finally, one last thing . . .

*All my love,
Your own Soul*

Give yourself the luxury of several deep, full breaths before allowing your breath to return to its own perfect rhythm.

Stand up slowly.

Stretch and enjoy the delicious sensations of your body's movement.



CREATE AN INTENTION FOR THE UPCOMING YEAR

Time suggestion: *30 minutes*

Step 1:

Take a few deep breaths and become still inside.

Step 2:

Clarify the quality or state of being you wish to bring to the coming year. How do you want to be?

I intend to be . . .

Step 3:

Clarify what you intend to create, do, or have to cultivate the desired state of being.

I intend to create/do/have . . .

Step 4:

Explain why you want what you want. Give yourself room to ask plenty of questions about what you want and why. Then keep asking why for a few rounds to discover what more you find.

Because . . .

Step 5:

Give words to what you imagine yourself seeing, feeling, thinking, hearing, touching once your intention is fulfilled. Create a detailed image of your fulfilled intention to give you a feeling of anticipatory excitement. Back off the detail if you start to feel negative.

You will know that you are on track when you feel enthusiasm or peace – when you feel your version of “YES!” Indulge your imagination until you feel, “Great! This is a good idea! This is a great thing!”

Another way of generating such feelings is to imagine that you are writing a future entry in your diary, writing from the place of the imagined future when your intention has been fulfilled. The idea here is to make your intention feel real and achievable and give you feelings of anticipatory enthusiasm.

I imagine . . .

Step 6:

Extract the essence of what you've discovered in the previous steps. Put what you have discovered into words. Trust yourself. Allow your intention to take the form that most inspires you. You may want to close your eyes. Take a couple of deep breaths. Ask yourself, "What is my intention?"

Listen. Do any words or phrases come to mind? Look. Do any images float before your mind's eye?

Draw or write your intention below.

Step 7:

Imagine that you have the power to give what you want to yourself *and* others. Who comes to mind? What is the blessing that you would offer to yourself? To others?

Step 8:

Imagine how it would feel to fulfill your intention. These feelings actually pulse out of your heart into the radiant, interconnected web of consciousness. Take a moment to send out that “Morse-code” message on the feeling level. Those feelings make up your Morse-code message.

Step 9:

As you go about your life in the coming year, look for signs that your intention is manifesting. Write or draw your intention on a few index cards that you can scatter around the house to help you keep it in mind. Keep your attention focused on discovering the experiences that you are truly wanting. Appreciate the large and small manifestations of the fulfillment of your intention in your day-to-day life experience, including any evidence you see in the lives of others.

By Divine Will, for the good of all, may it be so.

ONE YEAR VISION

Time suggestion: *1 hour*

ENVIRONMENT

Step I:

Discover and express your intention for your environment for the coming year.

MY INTENTION FOR MY ENVIRONMENT IS:

Step 2:

Imagine yourself sitting in your house but it is one year from now. Express what your living space is like in this future vision. You may even wish to create a mind map or images and symbols that reflect what you wish the environment of the next year of your life to look like. Trust your creative expression.

If it helps, review what you have discovered in previous sections of this guide. Write a short narrative, expressing your intended environment in present tense. You may wish to write as if writing a letter to someone you care about. Or you could do it as a journal entry, essay, or stream of consciousness with words, phrases, fragments of sentences. Whatever form of expression you choose is fine.

My environment . . .

Step 3:

In the space below, answer the *first* question, then the *third* question. Finally, come back to the *second* question in the middle of the page.

WHERE AM I NOW WITH MY ENVIRONMENT?
WHAT'S IN MY WAY?
WHERE DO I WANT TO BE?

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Step I:

Articulate the intention you have for your personal development.

MY INTENTION FOR MY PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT IS:

Step 2:

Imagine that it's one year from now. Express the ways you have developed personally in the past year. If it helps, review what you have discovered in previous sections of this guide. You could write a story, expressing in present tense, about your personal development. You may wish to write as if writing a letter to someone you care about or as a journal entry, essay, or stream of consciousness with incomplete sentences.

Express yourself by painting a picture, verbal or visual, of what you imagine. You may even wish to create a mind map or images and symbols that reflect what you wish your personal development during the next year of your life to be like. Trust the form your creative expression takes.

My personal development . . .

Step 3:

In the space below, answer the *first* question, then the *third* question. Finally, come back to the *second* question in the middle of the page.

WHERE AM I NOW WITH MY PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT?
WHAT'S IN MY WAY?
WHERE DO I WANT TO BE?

SPIRITUALITY

Step I:

Discover and express what it is you intend for your spiritual life.

MY INTENTION FOR MY SPIRITUALITY IS:

Step 2:

Imagine that it is one year from now. Describe what your spiritual life is like in your future vision. If it helps, review what you have discovered in previous sections of this guide. Imagine what your spiritual life will bring you on a daily basis. Trust your personal creative expression of this ineffable part of your life.

Spiritually . . .

Step 3:

In the space below, answer the *first* question, then the *third* question. Finally, come back to the *second* question in the middle of the page.

WHERE AM I NOW WITH MY SPIRITUALITY?
WHAT'S IN MY WAY?
WHERE DO I WANT TO BE?

WORK AND CAREER

Step I:

Discover and express your intention for your work and career.

MY INTENTION FOR MY WORK AND CAREER IS:

Step 2:

Imagine that it is one year from now. Describe what your work and career life look like in your future vision. If it helps, review what you have discovered in previous sections of this guide. Do this with the awareness that you are painting a picture of your work and what you imagine it to be. You may even wish to create a mind map or images and symbols that reflect your vision for the next year of your career life. Trust the creativity that springs from your pen or brush.

Step 3:

In the space below, answer the *first* question, then the *third* question. Finally, come back to the *second* question in the middle of the page.

WHERE AM I NOW WITH MY WORK AND CAREER?
WHAT'S IN MY WAY?
WHERE DO I WANT TO BE?

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Step I:

Discover and articulate your intention for your health and well-being.

MY INTENTION FOR MY HEALTH AND WELL-BEING IS:

Step 2:

Imagine that it is one year from now. Express your health wishes in this future vision. If it helps, review what you have discovered in previous sections of this guide. You may find it simpler to do this with the awareness that you are painting a picture of what you have imagined. Trust your creativity.

My health and well-being . . .

Step 3:

In the space below, answer the *first* question, then the *third* question. Finally, come back to the *second* question in the middle of the page.

WHERE AM I NOW WITH MY HEALTH AND WELL-BEING?
WHAT'S IN MY WAY?
WHERE DO I WANT TO BE?

MONEY AND FINANCES

Step I:

Discover your intention for your money and finances and express it.

THE INTENTION I HOLD FOR MY MONEY AND FINANCES IS:

Step 2:

Imagine that it's already a year from now. Express what your financial life is like in this future vision. If it helps, review what you have discovered in previous sections of this guide. How have you imagined your finances? What will they look like?

My finances . . .

Step 3:

In the space below, answer the *first* question, then the *third* question. Finally, come back to the *second* question in the middle of the page.

WHERE AM I NOW WITH MY MONEY AND FINANCES?
WHAT'S IN MY WAY?
WHERE DO I WANT TO BE?

RELAXATION AND RECREATION

Step I:

Discover and express your intention for your relaxation and recreation.

MY INTENTION FOR MY RELAXATION AND RECREATION IN THE NEXT
YEAR IS:

Step 2:

Now, imagine it's a year later. What do you envision has changed in the area of your relaxation and recreation? Express the picture you hold regarding your relaxation and recreation. Get creative!

My relaxation and recreation . . .

Step 3:

In the space below, answer the *first* question, then the *third* question. Finally, come back to the *second* question in the middle of the page.

WHERE AM I NOW WITH MY RELAXATION AND RECREATION?
WHAT'S IN MY WAY?
WHERE DO I WANT TO BE?

FRIENDS AND FAMILY

Step I:

Discover your intention for your friends and family.

MY INTENTION FOR MY FRIENDS AND FAMILY IS:

Step 2:

Imagine that it's one year later. How do your friends and family figure in your life? Allow your creative self to freely express what you wish this area of your life to look like within one year. If it helps, review what you've explored in previous sections about your friends and family.

My friends and family . . .

Step 3:

In the space below, answer the *first* question, then the *third* question. Finally, come back to the *second* question in the middle of the page.

WHERE AM I NOW WITH MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS?
WHAT'S IN MY WAY?
WHERE DO I WANT TO BE?

CREATIVELY EXPRESS YOUR VISION

Step 1:

Review what you have written in the previous section.

Step 2:

Gather your art supplies.

Step 3:

Put on some inspiring music or sit in silence if that is preferable.

Step 4:

Create a collage. Alternatively, choose another form of creativity that you would like to use to express the year ahead that you envision. Be sure to include your values, your reason for being, and some concrete representation of your intention for the upcoming year.

Time suggestion: *1 hour*

LOOKING BACK: A REVIEW

Review all of your responses from this chapter. Circle the items, words, images, or phrases in each section that may become general goals you would consider achieving in the upcoming year. Notice aspects of yourself or your life that you might want to change or strengthen during the upcoming year.

Go with your initial impressions and jot down, mind map, or draw your ideas and thoughts about potential goals in the spaces provided.

ONE-YEAR GOALS AT A GLANCE

ENVIRONMENT	PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

ONE-YEAR GOALS AT A GLANCE

SPIRITUALITY	WORK AND CAREER
HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	MONEY AND FINANCES

ONE-YEAR GOALS AT A GLANCE

RELAXATION AND RECREATION	FRIENDS AND FAMILY



REVISIT YOUR READING

Revisit the reading you have chosen for your retreat. Record your current thoughts on it below.

keeping your *boat balanced*

Keeping the boat of your life balanced requires a degree of planning and commitment. For most of us, this means choosing goals that we find meaningful and planning how to best achieve those goals.

Given that your life is lived through multiple lenses, you are best served when considering the most meaningful goals for each facet of your life. Remember, if the boat of your life is too heavily focused in one area, you may have difficulty navigating the challenging waters surrounding the many other areas of life.

Give yourself time to articulate the goals that you are willing to commit to, the goals that matter most to you, not what you think others think you should be doing or focusing upon. Keep in mind that a goal can be meaningful to you, but if your commitment to fulfill that goal is lacking, the goal will not have the fuel to reach completion.

SETTING MEANINGFUL GOALS

On a perfect summer afternoon, a young man and his father dismantled an old, non-functioning brick barbeque in their lush backyard. For months it seemed as if the pile of bricks lay where they fell – through autumn, winter, and into spring.

One bright spring day, the young man stood drinking tea as he gazed out at the backyard. He watched his father slowly walk across the yard carrying two bricks – one in each hand. As the young man’s eyes followed his father’s path, he noticed that most of the bricks from the barbeque were neatly stacked against the far fence.

The boy opened the screen door and walked toward his father. He protested, “I would have helped you to move these bricks if I had known you were going to do it today.”

His father replied with a chuckle, “I’ve been moving these bricks two at a time since we tore the barbeque down last year. Every time I come into the yard, I move a couple more bricks. I figure that these bricks will all be moved by the start of the summer. In fact, I’m already a little ahead of schedule.”

What does this story teach *you* about goals?

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

How responsible, on a scale of one to ten, do you consider yourself to be for your life? “One” means not at all responsible; “ten” means completely responsible. Where do you want to be on this scale?

Fairytales of martyred victims are the stuff of children’s stories; they seep into the subconscious filter through which many people view life. The fairytale of “someday” – when your prince or princess comes, when you get that raise or win a vacation to the Bahamas – leaves you waiting for rescue. Life is happening *now* and you are responsible for your life experience. The prince is not coming.

Many of us allow the fantasies, old stories, and fairytales to steal the direction and pleasure from our life NOW. Many of us wait for rescue from a bad relationship, relief from the fatigue of an unbalanced life, refreshment from the forgetfulness of what matters most in our heart.

The antidote? Take responsibility for your life!

The Antidote

When life gets better, it is because the person who is living it makes it so. Change happens as soon as you are willing to take responsibility for yourself.

Paradoxically, taking responsibility is truly liberating. The moment you stop looking to be rescued, you discover that you actually hold the keys to your own joy and contentment. Your attitude and the areas you choose to focus your attention upon and take action to change are the keys to create the life of your dreams.

Nathaniel Branden, author of *The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem*, has identified taking responsibility as a pillar of self-esteem. He encourages readers to recognize that “no one is coming.” No one is coming to your rescue. No one is coming to “fix” your life *for* you. With this realization, doors open in your awareness, understanding, and willingness to claim responsibility for your life.

Greater contentment and joy arise when you take responsibility for your attitude, your actions, and the attainment of your goals. For many, taking responsibility is exhilarating. For others it is frightening and even infuriating. After all, it means dropping – once and for all – the myriad mental habits you have created to avoid taking responsibility.

We all have our favorite mental habits that we call on to avoid taking responsibility.

Here are the TOP FIVE:

- Blame
- “Poor me” attitude
- Confusion
- Shame
- Gossip

Which are your favorites? How do *you* abdicate responsibility? How do *you* avoid taking responsibility in your life?

Focusing on such self-awareness does not mean that you should become self-absorbed, lacking in caring and compassion. In fact as you take responsibility for yourself and allow others to do the same, your relationships become richer and life becomes more satisfying. You are then freed up to offer the pure compassion and care that is often clouded by the games of your ego.

Recognizing that your life is just that – YOURS – is the first step in assuming responsibility for your life. Taking responsibility is the first step to creating truly meaningful goals. Then you begin to really *care* about different areas of your life and whether they are working or not.

Choice Points

Following on the heels of claiming responsibility for your life is the discovery of your choice points. In fact, this can become quite the internal game, like a child choosing the right bead to fashion the right necklace.

Learn to recognize the moments of choice that you have throughout the day by picking the bead that will add beauty, peace, love, and joy to the experiences strung on the necklace of your life. Each day, you can make choices that will move you closer to your goals.

You make choices in every unfolding moment. You make choices about what you think, what you feel, what you do, and where to direct your attention. The choices that you make fashion your life. Your choices come together to create your destiny. The responsibility you have is to become better and better at recognizing these choice points and then taking responsibility for every choice you do make.

One way to bring choice points into your awareness is to simply write “Choice Points” on a Post-It™ note and place it on your computer, steering wheel, or mirror.

Choice points include not only your actions, but also your thoughts. You can choose *good* thoughts. You can choose thoughts that bring the tiniest pleasure and use those thoughts as a bridge to your next good thought.

Reaching for Grateful Thoughts

Every one of us experiences waves of various emotions. On those days when the current feels rough, you can learn to reach for a thought that makes you feel better.

For me this means that I look for something in my immediate environment for which I can feel grateful. Some examples: “I have a home to protect me from the elements. I’m grateful for the roof. I’m grateful for the refrigerator. I’m grateful that I can breathe deeply.” Each of these thoughts represents a very real choice point. In those moments, I am choosing gratitude. Gratitude happens to be an important value for me. Without fail, it uplifts me and heightens my experience of the present moment.

Living Your Values

Choosing those thoughts, words, and deeds that reflect your values gives you a way to live that is aligned with the current of *your* life. People tend to create lives of greater joy when they make choices that are in tune with their personal values. Meaningful goals are goals that are value based.

This process is as simple as it sounds. Meaningful goals are goals that are aligned with your true values and reflect your reasons for being.

The Binding Expectations of “Should-dom”

Many people get caught in the list of “shoulds,” “mustn’ts,” and “oughts” that they carry in their heads and hear from those around them. It is completely possible to escape the bounds of these rules and conditions that restrict your living. This doesn’t mean that you “should” just do whatever you want. I am suggesting a more conscious choosing.

In this choosing, you raise the question to yourself, “Does this choice reflect my values?” or “Does this choice manifest my reason for being?” or “Am I *willing* to do this because in this action or its consequences, my values remain strong?”

By doing this you take responsibility for your life, rather than deflecting the responsibility for your joy and peace onto others. *Your* joy and peace do not have to be sacrificed to the binding rules and expectations of “should-dom.”

Another way to help your goals be more value based is to ask yourself: “Is this a goal that moves me *toward* or *away from* something?” The more successful and meaningful goals are those that help you move *toward* something you want rather than *away from* something you don’t want.

CHECKLIST FOR SETTING MEANINGFUL GOALS

- **Make sure the goal you are reaching for stretches you.**
Balance your goals so they are realistic *and* a bit challenging. A great goal is one that feels *slightly* out of reach.
- **Make it 100 percent within your sphere of influence.**
For a goal to be truly successful, it must be something YOU can accomplish and a process or task that is independent of others.
- **State it in the positive present.**
Express your goal using positive language, in the present tense. State what you intend to *do* rather than *not* do. For example, “I meditate daily for at least thirty minutes in the morning” versus “I stop wasting time in the morning.”
- **Be specific.**
Let your goals be well defined and free of ambiguity. A meaningful goal is precise rather than general and vague; it can be measured or gauged. For example, use dates, times, or amounts such as “clean two kitchen cabinets” or “call three friends.”
- **Align with your core values and intentions.**
Create meaningful goals, ones that are aligned with what is most important to you and mirror your intentions.

- **Chunk down.**
Keep your goals achievable and incremental. If you take a big goal and break it into smaller pieces, you are more likely to achieve what you want.
- **Be realistic.**
Be honest about what is realistic for you. Few of us ever reach goals that are unrealistic.

CULTIVATING VIRTUES ALONG WITH YOUR GOALS

The wondrous qualities and virtues of the human heart can help us accomplish our goals. Conversely, meaningful goals can bring out our best and sometimes hidden virtues.

Some of us consider virtues as qualities that belong only to saints and holy beings. In fact, they belong to *all* of us. The truth is that virtues exist hidden within the heart of each one of us. Usually, we are aware of at least some of our virtues.

You may have other qualities or virtues that you would like to develop more fully; setting particular goals can help to bring them out in you. For a moment, consider the qualities or virtues that are cultivated or expressed in the attainment of each goal you set. When fulfilling your goals, you are bound to discover that each goal gives you an opportunity to practice and cultivate at least one virtue.

On the next page you will find a partial list of qualities and virtues. When you get ready to set your three-month goals, return to this list. Choose the quality or virtue you would like to cultivate with the fulfillment of each of your goals. If you do not see qualities listed that you would like to cultivate, feel free to add them to the list

A PARTIAL LIST OF QUALITIES AND VIRTUES

Contemplative	Detached	Easeful	Compassionate
Remembering	Loyal	Truthful	Forgiving
Fearless	Worthy	Longing	One-pointed
Pure	Serving God	Balanced	Blessed
Humble	Grateful	Blissful	Reverent
Grace-filled	Kind	Devoted	Aware
Disciplined	Vigilant	Serene	Moderate
Gentle	Constant	Respectful	Enthusiastic
Faithful	Abundant	Content	Sensitive
Liberated	Perfect	Wise	Generous
Honorable	Creative	Vital	Steadfast
Committed	Prayerful	Persevering	Lighthearted
Curious	Self-inquiring	Harmonious	Free
Healing	Trusting	Trustworthy	Patient
Tender	Willing	Efficient	Letting go
Appreciative	Truthful	Peaceful	Obedient
Integrity	Understanding	Spontaneous	Open
Responsible	Communicating	Humorous	Fun-loving
Purposeful	Courageous	Honest	Surrendered
Flexible	Strong	Jovial	Intelligent
Clear	Joyous	Transforming	Simple
Beautiful	Adventurous	Delightful	Compassionate
Relating	Inspired	Powerful	Playful

SETTING YOUR THREE-MONTH GOALS

These instructions are to be used with the Three-Month Goal-setting form on page 203.

Time suggestion: *45 minutes–1 hour*

Step 1:

Write your “Core Values” and “Start Date” in the space provided

Step 2:

Review the ground you’ve explored in “Drift and Dream”.

Step 3:

Let’s up the ante a bit. Instead of one-year goals, write three goals for each area of life – environment, personal development, spirituality, work and career, health and well-being, money and finances, relaxation and recreation, and friends and family – that you intend to reach during the next three months. Or think about how you want to be in each area of your life. What actions will help you be that way? Those actions can be your goals.

Step 4:

Double-check your goals. Do they meet the criteria laid out in the successful goal-setting checklist we looked at in the last section (Page 151)?

Step 5:

Concisely express your intention for each area of your life during the next three months. Why do you want to fulfill these goals? An image or phrase can remind you of your intention for each area of your life.

Step 6:

Review the list of qualities and virtues in the previous section. Write down the virtues or qualities from this list you must draw on to accomplish each goal to your satisfaction. What quality or virtue is being cultivated or expressed in each goal?

Step 7:

Create your “I AM” frame to help you embody the great qualities and virtues you identified earlier. You will find instructions on the next page.

Remember you are allowed to change your mind with all your goals!

CREATING YOUR “I AM” FRAME

Step 1:

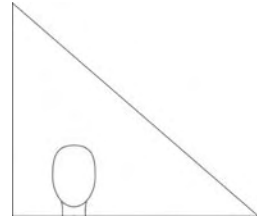
Cut foam core or poster board in a shape that pleases you. Glue a recent photograph of yourself on the board. Make sure there is plenty of room to write around the edges of your photo.

Step 2:

Using a colored marker, write “I AM” somewhere on the board.

Step 3:

Using colored markers or colored pens, write each of the qualities and virtues from your three-month goal sheet on the board. You could also include the qualities of nature that you discovered in your nature reflection, since these also reflect your virtues. Be creative and have fun with your lettering.



Step 4:

Place your “I AM” board someplace where you will see it daily.

Step 5:

When you complete your next round of three-month goals, be sure to add additional qualities and virtues to your “I AM” board.

Another option for expressing your virtues and qualities:

Write “I AM” on several index cards. Write one quality or virtue on each card and decorate them as you please. Place the cards around your house or office. You could also have them on the dining table and pick a card a day, claiming that quality or virtue all day long as your very own.



THREE-MONTH REVIEW

Set a review date in your yearly calendar every three months. At this time, pull out your previous goals and see where you are with them.

Most of us are creatures of habit. Without this review, it's easy to let go of that which is important to us. This can happen even with the best of intentions. You might find that you have laid this retreat guide under your bed or buried it in your bookshelf and forgotten it.

Don't worry. You are not alone. What if you approached the three-month review with self-compassion and a sense of curiosity? Watch your tendency to engage in self-judgment, procrastination, self-evaluation, and self-criticism. These four sisters can bring you unneeded distress. If you find yourself dialoguing with them, **STOP!** Be a good friend to yourself. Approach the review process with kindness and curiosity.

Your life is a process of discovery. The intention of this guide is to support you in creating a fulfilling life and discovering what that means for *you!* As you review your previous goals, you may find that you want to throw out half (or more) of your goals, realizing that they really weren't that important to you. This is really okay. This is **YOUR** life.

Give yourself permission to learn from your uncompleted goals and celebrate your achievements – even if you have accomplished only one goal. That one goal is something new! Notice the difference that accomplishment of one of your goals has made in your life, however slight it may have seemed at first glance.

In your three-month review, you may have learned more about your natural pace with tasks and learning. Perhaps you want different things from what you originally thought. Or you may have learned more about setting realistic goals according to your nature. Maybe you just need to break your goals into smaller pieces.

Go easy with yourself, whatever you learn and discover. Life continues to happen whether we pay attention or not. So, show up for your life! Pay attention. Somewhere along the way, I heard that there are really only five rules that lead to a meaningful life:

Show up

Pay attention

Tell the truth

Do your best

Don't be attached to the results

What if you approached your three-month review with complete compassion for yourself? Would you be more at ease just showing up, paying attention, telling the truth, doing your best, and not being attached to the results?

SETTING YOUR NEXT THREE-MONTH GOALS

Once you finish the review, you are now ready to create your new set of three-month goals. Before you start, take a moment to sit quietly. Take a few deep breaths. Just relax for about five minutes. Let your eyes soften and close. Allow your body to just relax. Pause. In this pause, allow your mind and body to become refreshed. Notice what goals float to the surface of your mind. What do you want to focus on accomplishing in the next three months?

In the following pages, you will find four sets of three-month goals. Just complete one set on your retreat. After your first three-month review (three months from your retreat), you will be ready to complete your second set of three-month goals. Feel free to reread this section of your guide before each three-month review. This will help you approach your review with greater kindness and understanding.



breathe

24 GOALS FOR 90 DAYS

You can do it! You can be it! You can have it! Review your dreamtime vision for the year. What do you most want to accomplish in the *next* 90 days? Does it feel like “YES!”? What small steps will take you to your goals? *Tear this page out and look at it daily.*

Core Values:

Area	Goals	Intention	State of Being	✓
Environment	1. 2. 3.			
Personal Development	1. 2. 3.			
Spirituality	1. 2. 3.			
Work and Career	1. 2. 3.			
Health and Well-being	1. 2. 3.			
Money and Finances	1. 2. 3.			
Relaxation and Recreation	1. 2. 3.			
Family and Friends	1. 2. 3.			

Start date:

Review date:

Imagine your possible life.



24 GOALS FOR 90 DAYS

You can do it! You can be it! You can have it! Review your dreamtime vision for the year. What do you most want to accomplish in the *next* 90 days? Does it feel like “YES!”? What small steps will take you to your goals? *Tear this page out and look at it daily.*

Core Values:

Area	Goals	Intention	State of Being	✓
Environment	1. 2. 3.			
Personal Development	1. 2. 3.			
Spirituality	1. 2. 3.			
Work and Career	1. 2. 3.			
Health and Well-being	1. 2. 3.			
Money and Finances	1. 2. 3.			
Relaxation and Recreation	1. 2. 3.			
Family and Friends	1. 2. 3.			

Start date:

Review date:

Imagine your possible life.



24 GOALS FOR 90 DAYS

You can do it! You can be it! You can have it! Review your dreamtime vision for the year. What do you most want to accomplish in the *next* 90 days? Does it feel like “YES!”? What small steps will take you to your goals? *Tear this page out and look at it daily.*

Core Values:

Area	Goals	Intention	State of Being	✓
Environment	1. 2. 3.			
Personal Development	1. 2. 3.			
Spirituality	1. 2. 3.			
Work and Career	1. 2. 3.			
Health and Well-being	1. 2. 3.			
Money and Finances	1. 2. 3.			
Relaxation and Recreation	1. 2. 3.			
Family and Friends	1. 2. 3.			

Start date:

Review date:

Imagine your possible life.



24 GOALS FOR 90 DAYS

You can do it! You can be it! You can have it! Review your dreamtime vision for the year. What do you most want to accomplish in the *next* 90 days? Does it feel like “YES!”? What small steps will take you to your goals? *Tear this page out and look at it daily.*

Core Values:

Area	Goals	Intention	State of Being	✓
Environment	1. 2. 3.			
Personal Development	1. Plan next retreat 2. Order new retreat guide 3.			
Spirituality	1. 2. 3.			
Work and Career	1. 2. 3.			
Health and Well-being	1. 2. 3.			
Money and Finances	1. 2. 3.			
Relaxation and Recreation	1. 2. 3.			
Family and Friends	1. 2. 3.			

Start date:

Review date:

Imagine your possible life.



For Next year's retreat, I would like...

return from *the journey*

At the end of my first river trip with a gaggle of teenage girls and one gangly old man, I recall turning to the river. In that silent pause, I thanked the river for being such an engaging teacher. As I pulled my boat ashore and unlaced the sashes holding my gear, I knew that I was a different person from who I had been just five days before. The river gave me much-needed confidence and the recognition that time away from the world was important. In its flow, I had reviewed my own life.

Every river trip inevitably comes to an end. The river has carried us along with its current. Finally, there is the take-out point, the point at which the boats are hauled ashore, the gear is unloaded, and goodbyes are said. Take the time to acknowledge yourself and the journey you've just taken. Be sure to take the time to close your retreat in a way that feels right for you.

CLOSING YOUR RETREAT

For some people, a ceremony or ritual at the end of a retreat allows you to pause and reflect on all that has happened – as well as helping you to prepare for the return home. Most women value the opportunity to express their appreciation somehow. This could include some silent time “on the shore” or recollecting the varied moods and moments of your retreat – be it solo or in a group. Consider what will work best for you and do that. Again, trust yourself.

Here are some closing ideas:

- Express your appreciation in a meaningful way. Example: identify what enriched your life from the retreat and articulate your present feelings. Also, express personal needs that were fulfilled by your retreat.
- Light a candle and offer incense and a blessing to your friends and to yourself.
- Revisit your selected reading and record or share any closing insights.
- Fully claim in dance, poetry, or song one of the qualities on your “I AM” frame.

How would *you* like to close your retreat?

How have you changed? How are *you* different?

REVISIT YOUR READING

Revisit your chosen retreat reading. What new insights do you have?

EASING BACK IN

Finally, remember that when you return home, you may experience a few “reentry” bumps. For example, you might feel stressed by the demands placed on you by your family and friends when you return. They likely have missed you and will want your time. It may seem to you that the people in your life are moving at 100 mph and you are puttering along at about 25 mph. You might find yourself feeling irritable or stressed by the “normalcy” of your everyday life.

You can minimize all these possible scenarios by mentally reminding yourself before you return of the practical necessities of your home life. Most people also find it helpful to schedule some buffer time between their retreat and their return to everyday life. It helps to schedule some alone time within the first day or two of returning home rather than jumping back into a full-on schedule right away. Some women like to book a lunch with a friend back home in order to talk about their retreat.

What comes to mind for you that might ease your reentry?

What time of day will you set aside for quiet moments?

Who would you like to have lunch with after your retreat?

What else might help your reentry?

STAYING IN THE CURRENT

By now you know that the river gives a smoother ride if your boat is well balanced and you stay in the current. Of course, in a rowboat, it is entirely up to you to use the river, your strength, and the oars to keep yourself in the river's current. Nobody else will do it. Like life, eh? Each of us is responsible for our own ride.

Every day on a long river trip is the same. You rise, take care of yourself, pack your boat, and tie everything down, and then you head out into the river for a ride. Each day the river offers you something different, some new challenge, new rapids, periods of calm and new beauty.

Looking back I see the river gave me the secret to living an illumined life with contentment, honesty, and courage. The river reinforced lessons I learned about life from my loving parents. Over the years, these lessons have felt like secret gifts to me. Here are some of the secrets I've distilled from the river:

Appreciation

Appreciate the beauty on the river and in life. Also, acknowledge and appreciate the challenges of flowing down the river and the challenges you meet in life.

Balance

Just as packing your boat with balance ensures a safer ride, packing your life in a balanced way ensures a state of steady joy.

Responsibility

You are responsible for the condition of your boat and likewise for your inner state.

Faith

Having faith in the river, your skills, and the boat is a mirror to having faith in God's grace, life, and yourself.

Stay in the current

Life's currents are strong. When you learn to stay close to the truth of who you are, you remain steady within yourself, navigating any twists and turns in your own life with greater ease.

Take the time to absorb what is happening with you in your life. Give honest consideration to what you want and any changes you wish to make. This will help you to maintain your state of being.

As you return from your time on retreat, resolve to regularly take mini-retreats. Make the time to spend with yourself – even if only half an hour a day – to honor yourself, your life, and what your retreat has taught you. Here at the close of your retreat, the river of your life flows on.



post-retreat
resources

bringing it all *back home*

As you found from your retreat, there are times in life when the river splits or you approach rapids and you need a wider perspective to know where its current is the strongest. This is called “scouting the river.” To scout the river, you pull your boat to the riverbank, tie it to a tree or large rock, and hike up a hill or scramble up a rise or across some boulders. Your aim is to get to higher ground so you can see the river more clearly.

In the same way, the perspective of looking at your life from the “banks” has helped you determine how you can best navigate a particular section of life. It’s also valuable to scout the river when beginning any new venture or change. The journey flows more easily, and you flow with it, when you take a “scouting” moment before you begin and throughout your journey.

Scouting the river of your life requires taking a bit of distance, as you have done by going on retreat. It’s a way of gaining a new and different perspective on your life. The information you will find in this section is meant to support you in “scouting the river” of your life throughout the year. The resources are designed to help you keep the spirit of your retreat alive in daily life.

REGULAR REFLECTION

Regular reflection upon our life is a powerful way of staying on course and bringing your retreat home. Taking a few minutes each week to reflect on your life can help you stay in balance.

Weekly Reflection

Decide on a regular time each week to reflect and engage with your *Illumined Life* guide. After your retreat, you may wish to use *An Illumined Life Weekly Reflection Journal* to support your practice of personal reflection. On the pages that follow, you will find several suggestions that you can use to help steer your reflection. Experiment with the process and ideas that work best for you.

Complete the Balance Wheel

Use the “Balance Wheel” in your journal pages to reflect on the previous week. Consider what area of your life might benefit from more attention.

Review the three-month goal sheet from your retreat. Revisit your intention for each area. Give yourself a moment to experience the expansive feeling associated with your stated intention for each area of your life.

Determine the steps you want to take toward fulfilling your goals. Write down those steps on a “to do” list. Remember, breaking your goals into small steps make them more manageable.

Identify any resources, inner or outer, that come to mind. Most of us think that we have to “do it” all alone. We don’t. Who would you like to ask for help? What inner quality could you draw on to accomplish your goal?

Gratitude and Divine Help

Bring your attention to what you appreciate about your life. Review the request that you may have made in the last week or so for “Divine Help.” Do you feel grateful for that hidden help toward your “works in progress”?

My mentor Dick Olney used to say, “I give heartfelt thanks for help unknown already on its way to me.” What are you grateful for? Be specific. Add to this list as your week progresses and watch for gratitude and appreciation that comes as a surprise.

Reflect on what you have scheduled in the next week or so. Pinpoint and express those things with which you would like “Divine Help.” For me this looks like “God, will you help me . . . ”

Bring Your Attention to Nature

What can you learn from nature now that you are home? Take a moment to notice and identify nature in your own backyard. Acknowledge and feel your appreciation for the ways, large and small, that nature serves and supports your life.

Cultivating Qualities

What qualities or virtues do you want to cultivate this week? What kind of person do you want to be this week?

Have A Conversation With Your Inner Being, Your Higher Self

Take a few deep breaths. Call to mind and heart the feeling of being connected to God. Ask for clarity and grace. Pose the following questions:

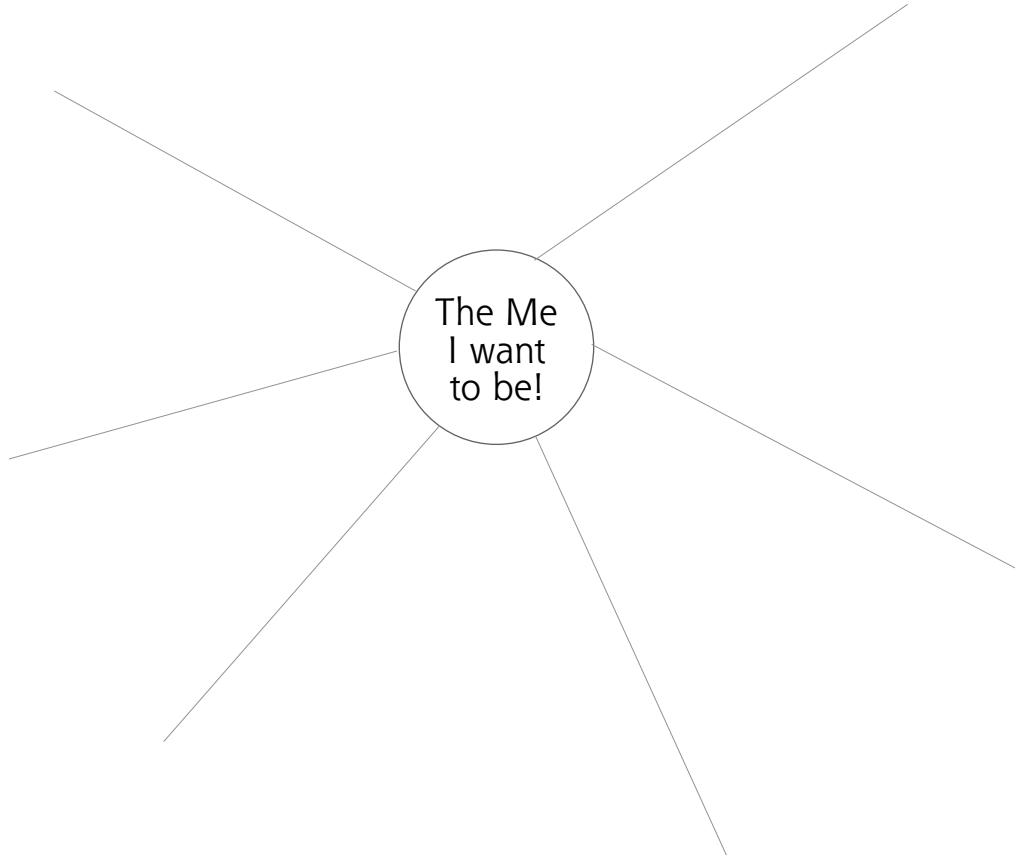
- What would You like from me this week?
- What action or goals do You feel are best for my focus?
- Are there people it would be good for me to contact this week or to express my appreciation?

Wait patiently for any insightful images, sounds, or even phrases you receive. Jot them down. Look for more insights showing up throughout the week ahead and be sure to write them down. Transfer any celestial action points to your calendar or “to do” list. Thank yourself. Thank God. Thank those people with whom you share your life.

If you find this format supportive to your growth, consider purchasing *An Illumined Life Weekly Reflection Journal*. It is already formatted and ready to use. Of course, you are welcome to copy the sample page or use the ideas presented as a template in your own journal.

Mind Map Your Reflections

Some people like to mind map their reflections. You can set up a mind map like the one below. For more instructions on mind mapping, see “**How to Mind Map,**” on page 252.



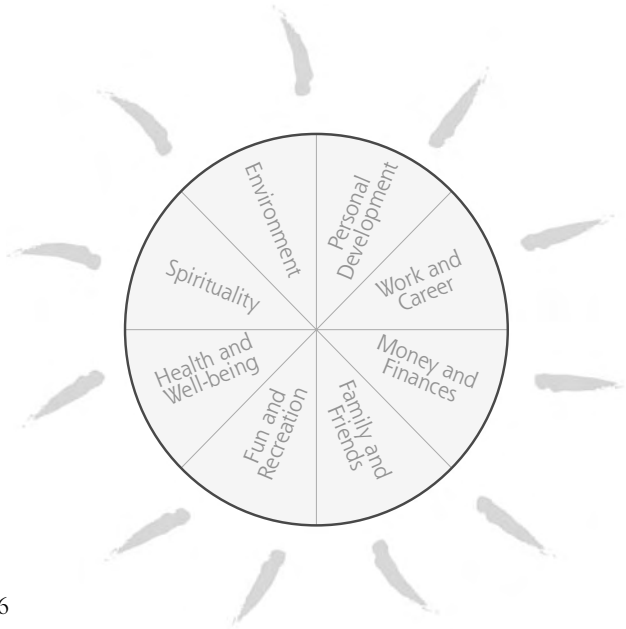
Sample Weekly Reflection

Week _____

I am grateful for:

I would like Divine Help with:

--	--



Listening deeply to myself, my "to do's" are . . .



Bringing my attention to nature, what is nature teaching me?

What qualities would I like to cultivate this week?

What would my Higher Self like me to know?

SET UP AN ILLUMINED LIVING CIRCLE

Research has demonstrated that having the ongoing support of other women is an invaluable resource that helps you manage stress more easily. Further, an Illumined Living Circle can help keep you on track with your goals. The guidelines I have outlined below will help you to create a successful and healthy group.

First Meeting

Your first meeting together is a good time to gain group clarity and consensus on how you would like your group to be and what you wish to accomplish. Taking care of these details gives the group shared understandings early on.

These are the issues that are commonly addressed in the first meeting:

- Group intention
- Facilitation rotation
- Standards of presence – how you want to be together
- Where and when you will meet
- Meeting structure (check-in, exploration, closing, effectiveness illumination)

What other issues would your group like to discuss in the first meeting?

Intention of Your Illumined Living Circle

Consider your intention for meeting as a group. This can be discovered in an open discussion of what you are hoping to receive by being a part of the group. You may even use your Intention Worksheet located on page 241 in the “Post Retreat Resources” to help you articulate your group’s intention.

Facilitation

Most groups benefit from facilitation. Assuming that your group does not have a professional facilitator, you could take turns assuming that role. A facilitator helps the group by making sure that all voices are heard, monitors time, and helps the group to stay focused, aiding in the fulfillment of the group’s intention.

The facilitator and all the group members help a group maintain itself as an alchemical crucible of learning and transformation. Should issues or disharmony arise in the group that are not addressed by the group, these issues create a “crack” in the crucible. Another way that cracks form in groups is when the group strays from its original intention. Such a crack disrupts the group’s ability to function in a healthy way. As a shared and agreed-upon group role, the facilitator helps the group courageously, kindly, and respectfully attend to any cracks.

Standards of Presence: How You Want to Be Together

In your first meeting it is always beneficial for the group to discuss the ways you want to be together. Some people call these “ground rules.” It’s not necessary to be too heavy-handed here. This is just a way to begin sharing what you expect and would like from each other. What ground rules appeal to your group? How do you want to “show up” for yourselves and each other?

What agreements might you create together that will help you to create a strong and safe group?

As a group, reflect on the positive experiences that you've had being part of a group. What was it about past groups that made you want to be a part of them? Discuss your varied responses together.

Facilitator Tip

You can help the members of your group develop stronger relationships with each other by encouraging a group norm where people speak when they feel inspired to do so, rather than going around in a sequential circle format.

Some norms or agreements to consider:

- **Confidentiality:** you may talk with others outside the group about your own experiences being part of the group, but you may not share who else is participating in the group (without agreement of the participants) or what other people discuss. No drinking of alcoholic beverages during or before meetings
- Honest willingness to address uncomfortable topics
- Compassionate encouragement
- Kind challenges
- No advice giving, unless requested
- Start and end on time

Our Group's "Standards of Presence" Ground Rules:

Remember, each group member is equally responsible for the group holding to their agreed-upon standards of presence.

Suggested Group Structure

- **Group size:** 5 to 8 people
- **Length of each session:** 1 to 1.5 hours
- **Duration of a series of sessions:** Some groups like to agree to meet weekly for three months. Later you can assess where you are and recommit at that time.
- **New members:** It is beneficial to discuss and agree upon the procedure for inviting new members, as well as how to gracefully refuse membership to someone who may request to join the group.
- **Where:** Groups meet in all kinds of locations: over dinner or coffee; at the local library or alternating in each other's homes.
- **Saying goodbye:** It is important to be clear with each other about protocol for no longer participating in the group. Most people prefer a bit of warning, so they have a chance to say goodbye.

Meeting Structure

Effective Illumined Living Circles follow a regular structure that is predictable and designed to suit the needs of a particular group. The structure typically includes check-in, exploration, closing, and some form of regular evaluation. Each of these points is discussed in turn below.

Check-in

This is a time when each person takes just a few minutes to share. A good length of time per person for sharing is three to five minutes. This leaves plenty of time to explore and discuss a topic of interest to the group and/or for group members to give and receive the support needed to attain a goal that they may be having a difficult time achieving.

One suggested structure for check-in allows each person to share one or more of the following:

- A goal you have successfully achieved
- A personal “brag” – something you are proud of accomplishing
- A moment when you felt aligned with your personal values
- A goal you are challenged by or are procrastinating about accomplishing
- A request for group time to explore acting on a challenging goal
- Something you have learned or would like to know more about
- A request for time to explore a topic of interest to the whole group

Your group can also come up with its own structure for check-in.

Our group’s structure for check-in is:

Facilitator Tip

Remind the group to follow the suggested structure for check-ins. Help people remember at the beginning to keep the check-in brief. If people go into a long check-in, gently ask if they would like some time to explore their topic after everyone has a chance to check in.

Exploration

It will become clear what the group's agenda is for the meeting following check-in. If several people are requesting time to talk about something that is going on with them, look for and gather the common themes. Generally, there will be time to explore a couple of different topics per meeting.

Remember to listen to each other with respect. You may choose to use the “Getting on Common Ground” communication worksheet (described on page 239) to aid in your understanding of one another. If you're not sure you understand each other, ask for clarification.

As individuals involved in the group exploration, remember that each person carries a depth of wisdom within. Each voice deserves time to be heard. Each person has the right to explore and uncover solutions that are perfect for her and aligned with her values. Another person's solutions may inspire your own. Given this, it is important to create an atmosphere of safe exploration. One way of doing this is to ask more questions rather than giving advice.

The stance of giving advice and solutions tends to shut down one's own, and others', access to hearing and imbibing innate wisdom. For some people, advice giving is a primary way of relating to other people. If you are such a person or others in your group are, you may benefit from weaning yourselves from this habit by learning to ask if another person would *like* a suggestion. Or even ask, “What do you suppose would happen if you [*insert your suggestion or advice*]?”

Other questions that may help your group explore a topic or a challenging goal might include:

- How is your goal aligned with or in conflict with your values?
- What is your compelling reason for achieving this goal?
- What do you *really* want?
- What are the obstacles?
- What are your resources?
- How might you break the goal down into smaller, bite-sized pieces?

Questions that can help our group explore and access our inherent inner wisdom:

One way to wrap up a group discussion on a particular topic is for the facilitator or another group member to ask “Is anyone ready to commit to some action this week? If so, what would you like to commit to? If not, does this feel like a good place to pause and give yourself some more time to think further about this?” Or “What have we learned about applying what we’ve been discussing?” More simply, “Are we ready to move on to another topic?”

Facilitator Tip

Ask for clarification if you think that someone is being unclear. Again, watch out for the group tendency to offer advice or solutions. If you hear advice giving, you can ask the group member who is being given advice, “Would you like some advice, or would you simply like to further explore the topic?” This helps the group avoid advice giving.

Remember also to make space for the more quiet members to share their thoughts. You can do this by simply and directly asking them, “Do you have anything you would like to add?” The challenge for the facilitator at this point is to hold the space open for them to speak, because the tendency within any group is for the more vocal members to fill the spaces.

Closing

Be sure to leave a few minutes for closing the session. Proper closure honors the contribution each person has made. This time together gives the group a chance to leave with a feeling of satisfaction. It also allows members to leave the group on an uplifted note, without feeling exposed and vulnerable.

There are many ways you can close a group. Discuss with your group how everyone would like to close. You may wish to consider the following closing options:

- Silence
- Meditation or guided relaxation exercise
- Brief sharing of what each person discovered during the session

- Facilitator's summary of the discussion
- Each person's brief sharing of goals to achieve during the next week
- Silently offering blessings and goodwill to each other

Facilitator Tip

Take responsibility for monitoring time throughout the group. Know how long your group likes for closing (two to ten minutes). This is something the group can discuss in their first few meetings. In this way, the group as a whole discovers what works best for them.

Again, make sure that you leave time to close the session with each other. You can do this by bringing a conversation to a close and letting all the members know how much time is left. This will help the group as a whole learn to be sensitive in bringing their meetings to a satisfying close.

Effectiveness Illumination

Evaluating yourself as a group can be as simple as checking in with each other every other month or so to see if your Illumined Living Circle is still on track. Is it effective? Is your group aligned with the intention that you set out for yourselves? You could set a time for "effectiveness illumination." For instance, you could do this every week, at the first or last meeting of each month – or even every quarter. The idea here is to have a mechanism of reflecting on yourselves as a group.

Considering the following questions may help you to explore your group's effectiveness:

- Is the group still the way you all want it to be when you gather together?
- Is your group fulfilling its intention?
- Is there anything you've been avoiding talking about together that would strengthen your "crucible" if you did talk about it?

- Are there any changes you would like to make in the format in order for your group to be more satisfying or to work better?
- What's different about you now? Where do you feel like you've made the most progress? Has the group work helped you to move forward in new directions? How?

FORGIVENESS AND LETTING GO: A KEY TO LIVING IN THE PRESENT

To err is human, to forgive divine.
– Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism*, 1711

The mechanics of forgiveness can be surprisingly filled with ease and peace. Given the chance, the natural ocean of love and compassion that resides in the human heart begins to wash over us, cleansing us and opening the door for living in the NO, rather than the THEN.

Conversely, a lack of forgiveness binds us to the past. It prevents us from living in the present. A lack of forgiveness inhibits the joy present in our current relationships and robs us of much-desired peace.

Forgiving others is made easier when we become adept at forgiving ourselves. For some of us, forgiving ourselves is a huge challenge. It is made easier through the cultivation of self-compassion. The quality of self-compassion increases as we learn to reflect on ourselves with the lens of honest kindness.

Forgiving oneself as well as others is rarely accomplished in a single act or the thought “I forgive.” At a time when I most needed to understand more about forgiveness, my grandfather told me that forgiveness is a decision followed by *practice* and a *commitment* to hold the other in one’s heart with an attitude of forgiveness, compassion, and tolerance.



FORGIVENESS AND LETTING-GO EXERCISE

To begin, recall ALL of the significant people in your life and consider any resentment or regret you may still hold toward them – great or small. Then move through the process outlined below.

Daily Practice

You may want to begin a daily practice of letting go through forgiveness. Become familiar enough with forgiveness as a process that you can easily integrate this great quality into your daily life. In this way you become more and more emotionally present. Recall the events of the day and each evening consider if there is anyone who you believe has wronged you *in any way*.

Conversely, whom might you have wronged? As we hold on to regrets, we often keep ourselves tied to the past and also cut ourselves off from forgiveness toward ourselves. Of course, this whole combination makes it much more difficult to forgive others.

You may also find it helpful to use this process to practice forgiveness regarding present or past world events in our collective history that may or may not have impacted you personally. Forgiveness is a muscle that many of us need to learn how to exercise.

Step 1

Begin by calming yourself. Perhaps bring to mind your feeling of connection with the Divine Presence. You may find it helpful to take a few minutes to breathe deeply while allowing your body to relax. Bring your attention to the area of your heart.

Step 2

Spend a few moments with your attention resting in your heart while recalling a time you felt great joy, peace, or love. Begin looking at yourself through the eyes of kindness and self-compassion. You will know you are on track here when you feel the beginnings of a soft, tender feeling toward yourself. For some of us, this may take a bit of practice over the course of several days. Begin thinking of yourself with kind and understanding thoughts as you would experience toward – or from – a very dear friend.

Step 3

Jot down a list of all the people you feel as though you have wronged. Consider the regrets you are holding on to and write them down:

Step 4

With yourself and each person you noted, follow the template below.

This template is meant as a guideline to support you through the process. You can do this exercise in the form of a letter, an imagined conversation, or a form of creative expression.

Trust your own process. Remember to be gentle and patient with yourself; this is a process and may take several rounds of writing and reflection until you get the hang of it. There's no need to judge, justify, or evaluate your experience or your writing. Simply allow yourself to feel what you feel and think what you think.

As much as possible, establish yourself in the inner stance of self-acceptance and self-compassion.

Dear _____,

I resent that you . . .

You did not . . .

Now I feel . . .

Back then I wanted . . .

I appreciate you (or that circumstance) because I learned . . .

When I empathize with you and imagine what it's like being you, I see that . . .

Looking back on the whole situation, I regret . . .

From my heart to yours, I ask forgiveness for my wrongdoings.

From my heart to yours, I am forgiving you for your wrongdoings.

My intention is to forgive you completely,
whether you knew what you were doing or not.

My intention is to release these injuries and wrongdoings.

I accept and acknowledge that the time of these wrongs is part of my past
and no longer part of my present.

I am forgiving you and I am forgiving me.

With blessings from my heart to yours,

(your name)

GETTING ON COMMON GROUND: A COMMUNICATION WORKSHEET

For most of us it is fairly easy and even predictable to get lost in the mysterious labyrinth of trying to communicate clearly within our most precious – as well as our more mundane – relationships.

The worksheet that follows can be a guide to illumine better understanding while helping you learn how to communicate and share perspectives in a cleaner and more direct fashion. It will be beneficial for you to work with the worksheet for your own understanding. You can share only those pieces that you think will help increase shared understanding.

You can also use the worksheet to help guide you in asking questions aimed at increasing your understanding of another person.





YOUR PERSPECTIVE		Questions to Illuminate THE OTHER PERSPECTIVE
	<p>Observation Identify the facts. What is observable?</p>	
	<p>Interpretation How are you interpreting your observation? What judgments are you making about what you observe?</p>	
	<p>Feelings What are you feeling? Consider the four primary feelings, each on its own continuum (from a strong to a mild feeling): mad, sad, glad, scared.</p>	
	<p>Need What do you think you need? What do you want?</p>	
	<p>Values in Play Identify the values that are playing a part in this situation.</p>	
	<p>Request What is your request?</p>	
	<p>Negotiation Come to a mutual understanding of a win-win agreement.</p>	

INTENTION WORKSHEET

Use this worksheet to guide you in clarifying your intention for any given area, project, or relationship in your life.

CREATING YOUR INTENTION

Step 1:

Become still by taking a few deep breaths.

Step 2:

Clarify the quality or state of being you wish to bring to your project or relationship. How do you want to be?

I intend to be . . .

Step 3:

Clarify what you intend to create/do/have.

I intend to create/do/have . . .

Step 4:

Identify why you have chosen this particular intention; doing this will help you to generate the feeling associated with fulfilling your intention. Give yourself the freedom to ask plenty of questions about what you want and why. Then keep asking *Why* for a few rounds to see what you discover.

Because . . .

Step 5:

Articulate what you imagine yourself seeing, feeling, thinking, hearing, and touching once your intention is fulfilled. Allow these images to evoke the *feelings* associated with the fulfillment of your intention.

These feelings help generate the *energy* of your intention. Having the energy of your intention brings the intention more to life and gives you a kind of internal guidance system, alerting you when you are feeling in a way that is not aligned with your intention.

You will know that you are on track when you feel enthusiasm or peace, when you feel your version of “YES!” Indulge your imagination until you feel, “Great! This is a good idea! This is a great thing!” Create enough detail to generate positive feeling. Back off of the detail if you start to feel negative.

I imagine . . .

Step 6:

Extract the essence of what you've discovered in the previous steps. Express the main content of what you have discovered. Trust yourself. Allow your intention to take the form that most inspires you.

You may want to close your eyes. Take a couple of deep breaths. Ask yourself, “What *is* my intention?” Listen. Do any words or phrases come to mind? Look. Do any particular images float before your mind's eye? Draw or write your intention below.

Step 7:

Feel confident that you have the power to give what you are wanting to yourself *and* others.

What is the blessing that you would offer to yourself? Take a moment to do this for yourself.

Now take a moment and focus on offering the same blessing to others. Who comes to your mind?

Step 8:

Imagine the feelings you would experience with the fulfillment of your intention pulsing out from your heart into the radiant web of consciousness. You can think of it as an alignment that brings positive energy from the universe back to you. Imagine yourself sending out that Morse-code message and receiving one back.

Step 9:

As you go about your life, look for evidence, large and small, of the fulfillment of your intention. Keep your attention focused on the discovery and recollection of the experiences you have asked to experience. Actively practice appreciation of the large and small manifestations of the fulfillment of your intention in your day-to-day life experience. This can include any evidence you see manifesting in the lives of others.

By Divine Will, for the good of all, may it be so.

HOW TO MIND MAP

Mind mapping is a creative way of aiding your memory and collecting your thoughts around any given topic. For people who are not linear thinkers, it is a very useful means of laying out ideas, taking notes, or brainstorming. These instructions were graciously provided by Peter Russell, M.A. (www.peterussell.com).

- Use just key words or, wherever possible, images.
- Start from the center of the page and work out.
- Make the center a clear and strong visual image that depicts the general theme of the map.
- Create subcenters for subthemes.
- Put key words on lines. This reinforces the structure of the notes.
- Print rather than write in script. It makes your mind-map entries more readable and memorable. Lowercase is more visually distinctive (and better remembered) than uppercase.
- Use color to depict themes or associations and to make things stand out.
- Anything that stands out on the page will stand out in your mind.
- Think three-dimensionally.
- Use arrows, icons, or other visual aids to show links between different elements.
- Don't get stuck in one area. If you dry up in one area, go to another branch.
- Put ideas down as they occur, wherever they fit. Don't judge or hold back.
- Break boundaries. If you run out of space, don't start a new sheet; paste more paper onto the map. Break the 8×11 -page mentality.
- Be creative. Creativity aids memory.

SUGGESTED READING

www.illuminedlife.com

These are some of my favorite books, magazines, and websites . . . add your favorites!

Environment

Clear Your Clutter with Feng Shui, Karen Kingston

Real Simple magazine

www.juliemorgenstern.com

www.onlineorganizing.com

www.organizedhome.com

www.flylady.com

Personal Development

The Four Agreements, Don Miguel Ruiz

The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem, Nathaniel Branden

Taking Responsibility, Nathaniel Branden

What's on Your Mind, Swami Anantananda

The Artist's Way, Julia Cameron

Emotional Alchemy, Tara Bennett-Goleman

Remembering Wholeness, Carol Tuttle

The Poetry of Self-compassion (compact disc), David Whyte

O: The Oprah Magazine

www.emofree.com

www.viastrengths.org

Spirituality

My Lord Loves a Pure Heart, Swami Chidvilasananda

Courage and Contentment, Swami Chidvilasananda

The Power of Now, Eckhart Tolle

God Makes the Rivers to Flow, Eknath Easwaran

Friendship with God, Neale Donald Walsh

The Biology of Transcendence, Joseph Chilton Pearce

Illuminata: A Return to Prayer, Marianne Williamson

Peace Is Every Step, Thich Nhat Hanh

The Practice of the Presence of God, Brother Lawrence

www.siddhayoga.org

Work and Career

Crossing the Unknown Sea, David Whyte

Do What You Are, Paul D. Tieger and Barbara Barron-Tieger

Bringing Out the Best in Yourself at Work: How to Use the Enneagram

System for Success, Ginger Lapid-Bogda

To Lead Is to Serve, Shar McBee

Attracting Perfect Customers: The Power of Strategic Synchronicity, Stacey Hall and Jan Brogniez

www.careerjournal.com

Health and Well-being

Women's Bodies, Women's Health, Christiane Northrup

Galloway's Book on Running, Jeff Galloway

The Heartmath Solution, Doc Childre and Howard Martin

Body for Life for Women, Pam Peeke and Cindy Crawford
Strong Women Stay Slim, Miriam Nelson, Ph.D., with Sarah Wernick
Ancient Secret of the Fountain of Youth: Book 2, Peter Kelder
Prevention magazine
Yoga Journal
www.webmd.com
www.yogajournal.com

Money and Finances

The Laws of Money, the Lessons of Life, Suze Orman
The Motley Fool Personal Finance Workbook, David and Tom Gardner
Financial Peace, Dave Ramsey
www.womenswallstreet.com/WWS/
www.moneyclubs.com
www.suzeorman.com

Relaxation and Recreation

The Heart of Meditation, Swami Durgananda and Sally Kempton
Learn to Relax: A Practical Guide to Easing Tension and Conquering Stress, Mike George
Outside magazine
Spa magazine
Travel and Leisure magazine
www.coping.org/growth/fun.htm

Friends and Family

Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Compassion, Marshall Rosenberg

Taking Responsibility, Nathaniel Branden

The Dance of Intimacy, Harriet Goldhor Lerner, Ph.D.

The Relationship Cure: A 5 Step Guide for Building Better Connections

with Family, Friends, and Lovers, John Gottman, Ph.D.

www.psychologytoday.com

www.aboutmykids.com

APPENDIX: EXERCISES AND ENVISIONINGS

Set Your Agenda	pp. 7
Create Your Retreat Intention	pp. 13
Holding a Mirror to the Past Year	pp. 25
Turning the Light on the Present	pp. 29
Nature Lessons	pp. 36
Living from What We Choose	pp. 39
Discover Your Values	pp. 44
My Reason for Being	pp. 54
What's My Type?	pp. 63
The Balance Wheel	pp. 65
Lay Out Your Gear ~ Environment	pp. 71
Your "Rooms" and Their "Views"	pp. 75
Lay Out Your Gear ~ Personal Development	pp. 79
Lay Out Your Gear ~ Spirituality	pp. 87
Lay Out Your Gear ~ Work and Career	pp. 95
Lay Out Your Gear ~ Health and Well-being	pp. 103
Exploring the Stressors	pp. 109
Lay Out Your Gear ~ Money and Finances	pp. 112
Financial Checklist	pp. 114

Lay Out Your Gear ~ Relaxation and Recreation	pp. 119
Lay Out Your Gear ~ Friends and Family	pp. 126
Improving Relationships with Friends and Family	pp. 128
Destructive Communication Patterns	pp. 130
Entering Dreamtime	pp. 138
Gazing into the Past, into the Future, and into Your Heart	pp. 146
These Hands	pp. 148
Create an Intention for the Upcoming Year	pp. 152
One-Year Vision	pp. 158
Cultivating Virtues Along with Your Goals	pp. 194
Set Your Three-Month Goals	pp. 196
“I AM” Frame	pp. 198
Three-Month Goal Sheets	pp. 201
Weekly Reflection and Journal Pages	pp. 222
Setting Up an Illumined Living Circle	pp. 228
Forgiveness and Letting Go	pp. 239
Getting on Common Ground: Communication Worksheet	pp. 244
Intention Worksheet	pp. 247
How to Mind Map	pp. 252
Suggested Reading List	pp. 253

an illumined life

QUICK ORDER INFO

Phone orders: call 865-384-4104 - *Please have your credit card ready.*

Internet orders: www.retreatandreflect.com or www.amazon.com

Please send more FREE *An Illumined Life* information on:

Other books Speaking/seminars Retreat facilitation Coaching

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone(s) and best times to call: _____

E-mail address: _____

Sales tax will be added for the lovely states of Tennessee, North Carolina, and New York.

Payment: Check Credit card – American Express Visa MasterCard Discover

Card number: _____

Name on card: _____ Expiration date: _____

Please sign me up for Melanie's free e-newsletter:

E-mail address: _____



HICKORY HILL PRESS
Maryville, TN 37801



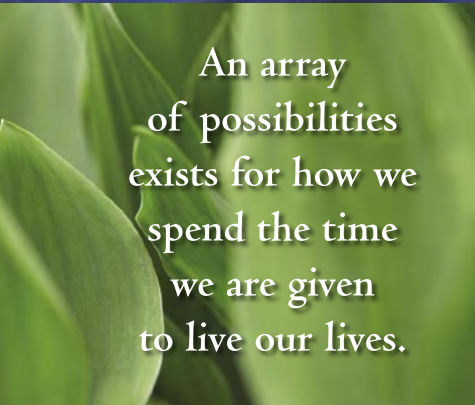
Journal/Self-Help

An Illumined Life provides a roadmap for just about anyone who has made a commitment to give time – to herself. Chapter by chapter, this retreat workbook will lead you on an adventure to reconnect with yourself and your

an illumined life

world. Want to make some changes? Melanie McGhee covers a tremendous amount of territory,

introducing the reader to new vistas and ways of viewing your life terrain. Drawing from her own experience and professional expertise, she lays the groundwork and provides a walking stick that will both elevate and transport you to a new life – one that is lighter and surely, more illumined.



An array
of possibilities
exists for how we
spend the time
we are given
to live our lives.



*A mother, a successful therapist ~
a woman with lots to do! ~
Melanie McGhee gave herself a
retreat almost twenty years ago,
delicious time all for herself at a
hot springs in Utah. It was just
two days, and she found that her
life was forever enriched by it.*

Melanie McGhee, L.C.S.W. is a psychotherapist and personal coach, an educator and long-time meditator. For the last twenty years, she has shared her insights and considerable skills to assist people in discovering their most brilliant and illumined self. When not on her own retreats or those she leads, she lives in east Tennessee with her husband, David. Melanie also takes weekly mini-retreats with her two daughters for tea and conversation.

“Melanie McGhee has created a fabulous resource with *An Illumined Life*. It is a brilliant retreat guide. I highly recommend this wonderful book to help you make the most of your retreat experience, I know I will!”

Carol Tuttle - best-selling author of *Remembering Wholeness*

Cover design by: Cheryl Crawford and Denton Lesslie • Author photo by: Hannah Patterson

www.retreatandreflect.com
\$27.95

ISBN 978-0-9789699-0-5

