

**Womanly Arts:
(Re)connecting with
Your Inner Nature**

Inclusive disclaimer:

To all – gay, straight, bi, transgender, and all I have not named – the Womanly arts are for women of all orientations. Regardless of sexual preference or gender identity, we all have masculine and feminine within us.

How these energies play out is more fluid than fixed. For clarity, I consider “masculine” and “feminine” as energy. Your job is it to find what each means for you and crystallize the difference in a personally significant way. In doing so you set the stage to begin enjoying the polarity between them, as well as the union, which brings forth harmony.

Lastly, do not take what is said as an absolute. I am not a sex expert. There will always be exceptions. Think of the thoughts and opinions expressed here as the tip of the bell curve. I borrow and steal from a variety of sources to create a compelling and inspiring dialogue for women to explore personal empowerment.

What I piece together is a combination of research, history, anatomy and common sense.

Note of integrity: This guidebook is the product of many voices, mine included. Respectfully, it is the intellectual property of Kerry Ogden. Please honor the time, thought and commitment put forth by not sharing it freely with others without written permission.



Guided Self-Study

The material in this guidebook is synergistic, broadening and building on what came before. It's also a lot of information. Please read through this entire manual, but select only those exercises that "speak to you."

The format of this guidebook is set up for you to practice and integrate what you learn and to work at your own pace. It's broken into three steps: Intention, Purpose and Action. For convenience, additional copies of all the worksheets are located at the end of the guidebook.

To get the most out of your journey, it's highly recommended that you will keep a journal. There will be many prompts and questions for you to reflect on throughout this guidebook. Feel free to use them or go with the flow of whatever comes up for you. Your journal is your free zone.

Allow your journal to evolve and change as needed. Your handwriting, style of writing, even your "voice" will change. This is one of the ways journaling is a profound tool for self-knowledge.

There are no grammatical rules. You don't have to limit yourself to words exclusively. Let it flow. Doodle. Draw pictures. In the end, you'll get as much out as you bring in to it.

To begin, sit quietly for a few minutes reflecting on the most compelling or important feeling/event of the day. Or use one of the prompts offered. Whatever you choose, let that be your first sentence. At the very least, you'll have recorded what is most significant to you. It could be a bit of a dream, memory of chance encounter.

Set a timer for 10 minutes or however much time you have. Three minutes of free-flow writing can surprise you. Grab your journal. Start the timer. Keep your pen moving as you write the thoughts, feelings, and images that arise in the moment. Accept all that you write - the pretty, the ugly, the absurd and the boring. Discover what wants to be felt, known, expressed, and released.

After the timer goes off. Put your pen down and close your journal.

In the beginning, you're just learning how to stop editing yourself. This is hard to do, so give it time. Image management is a part of identity formation, but it can quickly turn into a security blanket hiding our real Self.

While there are no "rules," a few basic guidelines are worth noting:



- 1) *Write spontaneously.* Let the words flow on their own. Self-expression is the only goal. Write without caring or editing in regards to what others might think. Also, allow yourself to write when you want to and not because you should.
- 2) *Write honestly.* Be open to what is instead of how you wish it was. No one needs to read this but you, so don't be shy. Get curious about yourself and formulate a few guiding questions like, "How did I respond?" or "How do I feel in this moment?"
- 3) *Write deeply.* Lack of intimacy and engagement is what creates boredom. The solution is to go all in and get in touch with the feelings. When all else fails, get curious about what's behind it and go from there.

Allow the flow without question. Just go with it. The discovery comes later. Write from your gut, don't hold back and accept what comes. Like yoga and meditation, free-flow writing is a goalless practice that cultivates mindfulness, self-acceptance and spaciousness. You write briskly to a prompt, ignore spelling and grammar, and notice what arises.

One last thought...

I love a beautifully bound journal as much as the next person, but it ups the ante to get my thoughts "just right." I don't feel as free to scribble, rip, tear, doodle – whatever I need to do to keep the thoughts flowing. I recommend getting a very simple, spiral bound journal. Nothing fancy, yet something that you will turn to. If you want to splurge, do so on a few really good pens.



Why Womanly Arts?

Gloria Steinem notoriously claimed, "We have become the men we wanted to marry." Feminism freed women to do things that were previously off limits, but the men's movement didn't succeed at the same rate. This resulted in many women taking on more and more, which is the masculine way. It's time for women to re-embrace their own way of being.

Masculine energy is aggressive, logical, directive, decisive, protecting, providing, competitive, planning, strong, vying for power and controlling. Whereas feminine energy is intuitive, connective, relative, receiving, cooperative, emotional, collaborative, bonding, flowing and magnetic. One is not better than the other. The issue is in the balance.

The biggest obstacle between a woman and pleasure is exhaustion. Regardless to how progressive their partners may be, women are still taking on the brunt of domestic work. The fatigue women feel comes from decades of putting their needs last and caring for others first. If sex becomes another item on the To Do list, desire tend to lose its oomph.

Adding to this, women have been conditioned to not talk about how overwhelmed we are, as we fear being seen as weak, whiny or resentful. So we suck it up ("like a man") and strive for perfection, allowing our discontent to seep out in passive aggressive ways. This amounts to a slow death by a thousand cuts.

In an effort to gain the equal and deserving status, respect and pay as their male counterparts, women have been told they had to "man up." Along the way we've lost touch with our greatest strength: our womanliness.

Only when we align with our true nature and respect the strength of our essential selves - without compromise or apology - will women truly step into empowerment. This guidebook is about you owning, celebrating and bringing forth the essence of who you are: vibrant, joyful and sensual.

The Way of the Courtesan

Quotes from the film *Dangerous Beauty* about a young woman who must become a courtesan.

"First secret of all great courtesans: You must know pleasure... to give pleasure. Beauty is a manifestation of the divine. That theory built the Sistine Chapel, and it'll do the same for you. Height is an advantage to women as well as men. Carriage creates the first impression."



"The emperor Pericles relied more for policy on his mistress...than he ever did on his lieutenants. Courtesans, my dear, are the most educated women in the world. A courtesan is a force of nature in a civilized cloak. Any chambermaid can flop down, take off her shirt... and men will come. Your true power comes from something much deeper than beauty. Cleopatra knew that. Theodosia. Aspasia. She could seduce a man at 20 paces... without revealing an inch of flesh. How? With her mind. Desire begins in the mind. Make him believe that he is the only man in the universe."

The age of the courtesan was a time of unimaginable repression for women. Between the 17th and 19th centuries, women were treated as property. Except for the courtesan. Yes, she was paid for sex, but just as often she was sought for the pleasure of her presence. In many ways, the courtesan was the first feminist. She found a way to rise above the repression with her mind.

The courtesan was part of a lineage. She was taught the art of pleasure not only to please a lover, but to connect with her deepest being. This connection within was sacred and made her invaluable. The patrons of the courtesan had sacred spiritual encounters that helped them connect to their souls, once again.

With the advent of feminism, women were able to receive education publically and join the workforce. But in the process, we had to sacrifice a significant part of our nature. To be seen as equals, we had to act like men. And, still, society only grudgingly tolerated women in higher education and the workforce.

The price we paid has taken a toll on our soul. We've lost touch with our essence. It's time to re-educate ourselves in the ancient art of being a woman. While each of us must take our own journey back to self, we will do it in the company of each other. Women must teach and support other women.

I believe this is missing in our lives, especially when you consider the women who are in the workforce *yet* still doing 80% of the domestic work at home. Somewhere around 40 years old we start to feel the subtle drain of our spark.

When we were younger, the blossom of our budding femininity was effortless and impossible to hide. It blushed our cheeks and swelled our breasts. It was there in our flexible limbs and open hearts.

That Source is still within each and every women. It may be dimmed, but cannot be extinguished. We can reignite our femininity because it is our who we are. This essence cannot



be destroyed. It can be weakened, but that means it can also be nourished and strengthened. It starts with remembering who you are.

You are a woman, the daughter of Mother Nature and the sister to all. It's hearing the stories of our sisters leading a vibrant life that inspires us to do the same. Perhaps you know such a woman. Thankfully we are not limited to those we know. Icons like Oprah Winfrey inspire us to dream big. Academics like Brené Brown teach us to dare greatly. While Parkland student Emma González show us how to stand up for what we believe in – at any age.

Together we are going to awaken from a deep sleep and step into our forgotten beauty, power and glory. We will remember how to pleasure from the simple acts of eating, bathing, walking, and dressing. Taking our pleasure is a sacred act for a woman.

The womanly arts begins in the mind. You must choose to embody your radiance, rather than your doubt. Let's all learn from the courtesan who knew she was made from a sacred cloth that is cut from a greater tapestry.

Lessons from the Courtesans

She attracts what she desires.

This is the law of physics: like attracts like. There is power in desire but in order to harness it you must have a clear vision of what it is you want. Once you see it in your mind's eye, use this vision to inspire you to get more of what you want in your life.

She dresses the part.

Courtesans took big fashion risks and were known for launching trends. Poverty was not a deterrent for them, because creativity is a mindset. Are you dressing for the part you want in life? You needn't be a fashionista – unless you want to! Sneak your sexiest lingerie under your work clothes. Trade in the sweat pants for leggings and a cute tunic. You are the star of this show. You determine the wardrobe. Have fun with it.

She rises above.

Courtesans were not born, they were self-made. Because women of the time had few opportunities, she had to cultivate and develop herself. The ingredients that made a great courtesan were intelligence, deep self-awareness, a big imagination and turn-on to spare. Perhaps even more important, she knew hardship. Courtesans found a way to rise above obstacles by shifting their mindset. You, too, have the power to reinterpret your circumstance to your best advantage.



Joy was her North Star.

The courtesan charted her life toward pleasure, which was often equal parts curiosity and gumption. She had to learn to read, write and play instruments without access to formal education. Since she ran in elite circles, the ability to be articulate about society and politics was a must. Since women had no rights, courtesans developed a secret knowledge that was shared among them: the art of being a woman. This “art” allows a woman to defy her circumstances and create a whole new paradigm for herself.

They were lit from within.

The courtesan infused herself with sensual fire. Courtesans *knew* how to feed their inner fire and knew it was the source of their power. A woman who can turn on is radiant at any age. There is an aliveness that is illuminated from within.

She chooses beauty.

Courtesans themselves were not genetically beautiful. They *created* their aesthetics through intention, determination and awareness. Own your style. Be mindful of what works for your body. Get rid of anything that doesn’t make you look and feel gorgeous. Appreciate the uniqueness of your form. Walk like a goddess. A tall posture enhances confidence. Saunter more, rush less. Be diligent in your health rituals. Moisturize. Read to feed your soul. Work your beauty from the inside out. And never forget how sexy intelligence is.

She elevates herself.

The courtesan is a risk taker who believes in herself. She dreams big. She tosses a larger, more expansive version of herself into the future and chases after it. She feels all the feelings of fear that go with it, but knows there is no other way. In her word and action, she is saying “I believe in myself. I am worth the effort. I’ve got this.”

She dares greatly.

Courtesans lived by their own rules. In a time when women were slaves to societal conformity, they enjoyed power, independence, and education. Boldness is a side effect of women in tune with their essence, the inner knowing. When you own your life and are no longer in servitude to expectations of others, you are free to express yourself by *your* standards. To be as creative, fun and daring as you please.

Though we live in a more liberated age, women are still attacked and berated for nonconformity. As a result, we are still judging ourselves and finding fault in ourselves *for*



just being a woman! Courtesans broke through this wall by celebrating and honoring the feminine setting the stage for feminism. Their daring, intelligence and drive made them magnificent, powerful and desirable.

She flirts unapologetically.

It's a spiritual practice for the courtesan. If a woman is flirting she is in her zone. Nothing can take her down. She is embodied in a state of delight that radiates joy and ease. Flirtation is nothing more than *enjoying ourselves* like the world is our playground. Enjoying life like kids at a carnival. Flirtation has no other goal than to love and feel good, which makes it our highest power.

She never, ever gives up on her desire.

Longings have a life cycle of their own and it is important to trust the timing of a deeply held desire. Needless to say, courtesans had timing *down*. When we are tuned in and turned on, we are living in alignment with our true Self which makes locating what you want easy. And knowing what you want is big energetic turn-on. Before you even acquire it, the thought of having begins to fill you with joy.

But be ready for what you wish for. When we open ourselves to desire, we open the door to transformation. Desire is the intermediary between you and that which is greater than you. This is what it means to write our own story.

We will never live out our legend if we follow someone else's script. Each of us has a unique voice that the world requires. And the key to unlocking the gift is to cherish your own story line and to stand for your desires with every fiber of your being. Everything you want *matters*. We are all impacted, influenced and shaped for the better by the radiant power of a woman's desire.

Yes, it's terrifying to surrender to desire. Desire wants what she wants and sometimes we have to be taking apart in order to be put back together in her image. But it's far more terrifying to remain small. It is the ultimate adventure to toss the saddle astride and ride bare back into the unknown. You know there is no other way.

Masculine/Feminine Energetics

When the feminine aspect of women is discouraged, our deepest intuition begins to wither, as well as our feelings, sense of community and connection. When I think of the feminine, I think of nature. The feminine is like that, wild and life-giving. She favors pleasure, inclusion,



surrender and sustainability. The divine does not care about accomplishment, domination, assertiveness, or winning. Those are masculine values.

The distinctions between masculine and feminine are not about men and women. They are primal energies embodied by all. But for the past 5,000 years or so, men and women have been indoctrinated to favor the masculine way of being, so we no longer feel comfortable naming, exploring or *living* from the feminine.

Girls and boys understand at an early age that to live from their feminine energy, is to put a target on their back. So they put it in a box and so, too, go their desires, dreams and feelings. Since we cannot selectively suppress single aspects of ourselves, the soul's compromise is to split. For an unfortunate many, the split continues to multiply until there are so many selves inside it's hard to know who you really are.

All the while, the Goddess, the Witness, the Lover of All, is watching. The name of what you call the energy that resides in us all is personal. That Energy looks out for those who have had to check out of their body/mind due to life events beyond their control. She waits and whispers, "Joy is, was and always will be your birthright."

It's the ego that calls back, "I can't." All those years of conditioning makes us feel shame for wanting more. The only way to turn down the volume is to turn up the feminine power, which is pleasure. When you do, you connect to the raw joy and enthusiasm you had as a child. An unstoppable part of you comes to life (again).

The Feminine will take you places that patriarchal culture disapproves of. Be prepared for your own internalized knee-jerk reaction. She will encourage you to ask for a raise that is long overdue. She will demand that you honor and accept your body. And, yes, she will entice you to approach strangers. This isn't domination in disguise. These actions come from a deep feeling of worth...and mirth. That's the power of the feminine.

Build Your Altar

We have been conditioned to celebrate the masculine and devalue the feminine. In doing so, we have lost touch with how to take sacred care of ourselves. Why else would 23 million women worldwide submit to the knife or needle unless they believed that something about them was wrong, inadequate or offensive?

Would we defile an altar, once we recognized it was sacred? Well, your body is sacred. A woman's body is a thing of wonder, designed for creation and in alignment with nature.



Whether you choose to birth or not, it doesn't matter. We create with our thoughts, our actions and our intentions.

A woman's body is a living, breathing altar. Every human being on earth was once held inside a woman's body, the temple of creation. It is imperative that we treat our body as holy.

How do we honor the holy? By giving offerings, providing pleasure and serving her five senses with delight. Think warm baths with essential oils by candlelight. The more we honor the sacred, the more aligned we are with our power and place in the world.

Just as an altar needs tending, so does the body of a woman. This is not vanity. It is our sacred responsibility to look and feel as beautiful as possible so we can connect to the sacred within. This includes nourishing the temple with nutritious food, getting enough rest, and daily movement.

The feminine is many things and will not be limited to a cookie cutter idea of what a woman needs. She is strong and fierce and can hike tall mountains. She is sweet and demure and coax a butterfly to her hand. She is lusty and sensual and can seduce with a smile. She is beautiful in her natural state but is not opposed to pretty things.

We are the source of our power and self-care is the primary pathway to that power.

Exquisite self-care is the easiest thing to toss aside when the mundane aspects of daily life take over. Society is set up to fill a woman with fear about all the ways she falls short. We need what Pema Chödrön calls a "warrior's heart" to fight the tide that devalues us. And we need each other, our tribe.

Thankfully, like attracts like. The more stoke our own fire, the more others will see it. And the more you see it in others, the more inspired you'll be to create it in yourself.

All too often we don't make the time to make ourselves feel good. After tending to others, we no longer have energy for ourselves. If this resonates with you, repeat this until it lands: "I am important enough to make time for."

Whether it be a small ritual or a lifestyle overhaul, start making time for yourself. Each day do something that makes your life more easeful and beautiful, for no other reason than to make yourself feel good.

It might mean you clear everything out of your closet except for the clothes that make you feel hot. You throw out the old, baggy underwear in your drawer, leaving only the pretty panties that fit well. Perhaps it means turning your bathroom into a mini spa by making a few calculated splurges. It might mean streamlining your kitchen, or clearing off your workspace, or



sorting through your filing. You're sending the message that it's time to make space for yourself.

Maybe it's getting little things in order, making a hook for keys and purse. Cleaning your make-up bag to a few quality essentials. Placing Q-tips in a upright glass and seeing to it that all your toiletries are clean and sparkling.

Whatever you do, *do not* turn these things into a guilt-trip To-Do list. Turn them into rituals. I take a bath instead of a shower because it makes me feel more relaxed and pampered. I use Epsom salt and add essential oils, based on my mood and need. While the water is running, I dry brush my skin. After the bath I nourish my skin with oil. Sometimes I put on music, sometimes I burn incense. What's important is that I make it my own.

The more healthy rituals we habituate, the more we connect to our source of contentment and personal power. When a woman is lovingly cared for, her radiance shines through. It is true of all living beings.

Permission to Rupture

When the feminine in a culture is repressed, the imbalance is often tragic. We have violence in schools, mass shootings, mercenary corporate rule, and an environment on the brink of collapse. Power and profit dominate humanity.

Feeling deeply is critical for a woman's personal transformation *and* for the evolution of the world. Embracing the feminine is a hot topic among naturalist and environmentalist, who see a need for the world to be cared for in a different way.

Tamping our rich emotional lives results in depression and sense of being disconnected from life. Perhaps even more tragically, it results in women living in a low-grade state of numbness, unable to feel, much less reveal, the truth of our darkness.

By living the full expression of our truth – which includes pleasure and pain – we are serving our highest purpose of service to the world. We have a tendency to shy from pain. It's instinctual and culturally encouraged. But if we don't know how to embody pain, we can't move on from it or fully embody our joy. This is one of the reasons why our culture is so violent. We don't know how to grieve or express pain in a healthy way.

My hope is to give you permission to rupture, daily if need be! To feel you deep emotions and learn to embody them completely. This is not easy. Shame likes to lurk in dark corners for a reason. We've been taught to doubt ourselves, comparatively fall short and live in fear of harm. Ah, but when a woman learns to rupture well, she opens. She becomes connected to her



deepest power. She trusts and knows herself from the inside out.

Reclaiming the Feminine

Do you live primarily in your masculine mode always striving to prove your worth? Are goal oriented, living your entire day “doing”? Be honest. It’s not an indictment. It’s culturally indoctrinated. If you’re having trouble seeing your behavior, ask a trusted friend for his or her opinion. Are you aggressive, rigid, strongly opinionated, controlling and sarcastic with a strong bend to be right? It’s okay if you do. Know that you came by them honestly.

In asserting our rights as women, one of the traps we have fallen into is the belief that being a woman makes us feminine despite how much we act like a man. To prove we are just as competent as men we naturally set about proving our worth using masculine rules of engagement. I should know. I was a poster child for androgyny most of my adult life and took pride in being able to rip out kitchen cabinets and tile a bathroom “like a man.”

Life kept rewarding me for going after what I wanted and for being strong and independent. At some point, I convinced myself it wasn’t safe to be vulnerable, need people or display gentleness. I lost sight that feminine qualities are deceptively powerful and, quite frankly, a hell of lot more fun.

It’s easy to get off balance, especially when we live in a culture that glorifies the masculine way. American women are not taught how to embrace and use their feminine power. Like so many, I was taught that if I want to be taken seriously I must emulate masculine traits.

I believe the time has come for women to reconnect with who they are and to be all that they can be. This means understanding that everyone possesses both masculine and feminine energy. The trick is learning how to balance the yin and yang. One is not better than the other. Both are needed for balance.

Alpha Goddess

We are in the era of the alpha goddess!

Women in their 50’s and 60’s have come into their own. They know what they want, they’re open to trying something new, and their buying power has major clout. Alpha goddesses are finding their tribe of like-minded women who can give to the world *and* care for themselves. They know their strength because they have experienced loss and have come through it the wiser. They know their weaknesses and have learned to work with them, instead of against.



They have perspective and know “this too shall pass” and that it’s “not my circus, not my monkeys.”

When we hit 50, we have enough life experience to instantly recognize what is small stuff and what isn’t. Alpha goddesses know that “No” is a complete sentence. Best of all, as we move into our Wise Self we finally free ourselves from the need to prove our worth. Amen to that.

Agelessness is all about vitality and the divine feminine that makes it all happen. It’s connecting with your spirit and pleasure as to engage in the creative process of the earth herself.

A single blade of grass will rise up through a foot of gravel because nature is determined to seek the light. To grow and push past darkness is our natural state. The world needs the energy of women who own their light, their goddess nature. It’s time to bring back the sacred feminine principle that was central to the lives and beliefs of humanity for the vast majority of prehistory – far longer than the relatively new era of the “written” history, which is a mere blip on the timeline.

Feminine energy involves heeding the messages of our emotions and taking the time to care for our physical bodies, as well as the earth herself. It means listening to and receiving new ideas and taking in what other people feel, and then putting it all together to better understand how to interact with someone else in a way that benefits both people.

This is how the lost sacred female energy can work in the modern world. Instead of collaborating, cooperating, and creating, humans have been competing. We’ve tried war, conflict, and being disconnected from our mind, body, and soul. We have to find a way to share the planets resources and work together.

For the record, though the divine feminine is associated with women it’s absolutely part of men’s lives too. The hearts of men feel very deeply, and most men are hardwired to serve and protect those they love.

Sing Your Praises Worksheet

For this exercise you are going to take a deep, humble breath and then you are going to honestly assess your greatest strengths. Most women have been taught that bragging is arrogant. This worksheet will help you reclaim the benefits of your hard earned lessons.

First, identify something to brag about. What can you be proud of right now?



Second, identify something you appreciate or are grateful for. What blessing in your life would you like to acknowledge?

Third, identify something you desire. If money, time, and the laws of physics were no object, what would you desire right now?

Try doing this exercise daily, answering the questions in your journal and reflecting on them. And share this experience with others in conversation

Reclaiming Your Birthright

Your soul longs for more and that “more” is connection, intimacy and love. The “more” is living in your raw, feminine power as the sensual being you were born to be.

The great secret to satisfying those longings of the soul is reconnecting your intrinsic radiance, the authentic core of who you are. When you connect with this essence you will be reminded that you are whole and perfect already.

You have purpose and meaning in just being. You don’t have to do anything to be worthy of it. Use every resource available to connect with this energy, this truth of who you are: breath, meditate, pray, use affirmations, take walks in nature, talk to your inner child and take her out for some fun.

To reconnect and fall in love with you. The more you surround yourself and practice these resourcing tools, the better you’ll withstand the inevitable challenges of life.

No one is “on” 24/7. You will have lows, they are a natural part of life. What is possible is having a system in place that helps you regroup and give you the tools to lead yourself out of tough situations and unhappy moods.



The ability to recover quickly from setback is a strong indicator of health and well-being. This is what it means to be resilient. Understanding that you will weave in and out of feeling fabulous is an important part of this journey. Essential to reclaiming your radiance is that you have a system in place that you can rely on when you feel lost and disempowered. That's where this guidebook comes in handy.

Before we begin, you must take an honest look at your life as it is today and identify what is blocking you from living the life you want. Then make a commitment to leave what no longer serves you behind. Now is not the time to dwell on how. That one of the tricks of fear. Just make the commitment. This intention alone begins great transformation.

The fast track to transformation is honesty. After all, the only one you're be fooling is you. Treat yourself with the dignity and respect you deserve by taking the time to reflect with as much candor as possible. You're worth it.

A good way to begin is by naming what robs us of our radiance:

Approval Seeking

Searching for outside approval to give you your value will suck the ever-loving life out of you. When other people's comments or actions don't validate your worth or importance, it feels personal.

The way to heal this coping strategy is to practice self-love. See and honor your own magnificence. What you think and believe matters. The subconscious is working at all times to fulfill core beliefs.

Teach clients that their very existence makes them inherently valuable. Help them focus more on alignment with authentic self.

Fear of Rejection

People who fear rejection - weren't taken seriously as children, were made fun of or supported - don't feel safe being vulnerable. For them, rejection means "I'm not lovable."

Break through the fear by asking, "What do I have to lose?" (*Meh*, not the best advice.)

Generalized, Free-floating Fear

If you've been hurt in the past, you might be terrified to open up again. But opening up and exposing who you are *and* being who you are is the only way you will have the love-filled life you want. Whether that means a passionate relationship, pursuit of a dream or a love affair with life – it all begins with taking that first step.



When you close down, put up walls or hide behind a façade – fearful of trusting others with secrets of your heart – you yourself from having the very things you want: intimacy, connection and love.

Protecting yourself is to cheat yourself of connection. It's an illusion that robs ourselves of connection and love.

In the starkest sense, there are only two emotions: love and fear. If you aren't letting and living in love, allowing yourself to perpetually fall, you can be certain there's a fear lurking somewhere. Fear is clever and comes in array of disguises. Be warned.

Compromising Your Needs

Being hyper-vigilant to other's needs makes it nearly impossible to tend to your own. If you're programmed to put others first, the ability for self-nurturing becomes compromised, leaving you feeling depleted, dull and lifeless.

It's good to care for others and when mutually reciprocated and received, it can be nourishing and enlivening. More often than not, this behavior is rooted in an outdated core belief. Want to truly help others? Take care of yourself first.

People Pleasing

Many women get their need for acceptance/approval/belonging by being ever available to everyone. They please out of obligation, guilt or some type of need to be liked. This strategy ultimately backfires because if the motivation for giving isn't based in love, it becomes a laborious obligation.

If you're looking for a fast way to drain yourself of joy, chase being "good." The "good" partner, "good" friend, "good" sister, etc. That's because what constitutes "good" is forever changing. In the end it's a crazy-making chase to be good-enough, which you already are. Doing a good deed for any other reason than pure service is a disservice to yourself and those around you.

Energy is everything. Tune into your motivation before taking action. Make sure you are heart-based. There is not better feeling or way to refuel than when you are coming from an authentic desire to be of service.

Living Someone Else's Dream

When you give up your dreams to live someone else's, you give up on that part of you that gives the sparkle, the joy, in life. Your soul knows when you aren't living your own life and it will gnaw, bite and peck at you to take responsibility.



Chances are you've got some bottled anger, so the first step is to accept it. You're likely angry at yourself but are probably blaming others to avoid it. Women are taught early that to be angry is to be rejected. When you don't honor your true emotions, rest assured the body will let you know. It'll start talking to you with indigestion, migraines and weight gain.

Anger is a valid and needed as any other emotion. It can be empowering and a needed source of energy. As you take the time to understand and release it in constructive ways, you'll find it grips you less and less.

Stuffing Your Emotions

Emotions are just energetic forms of information. There are not good or bad emotions. Despite this, many people are raised in an environment where it's not okay to express what is considered to be a negative emotion. Over time, all that stuffing and covering blocks the flowing energy of pure radiance.

Unleashed emotions become toxic sludge polluting your mind, body and spirit. It takes a lot of energy to keep a lid on the cauldron and trying to do so will eventually wear you out, resulting in exhaustion and illness.

Dealing with Expectations

Expectations can get us into a heap of sorrow. They start early and rarely get called into check. But the truth is, as you go through life you find there are no guarantees. What you thought was a sure thing, could end up turning your world upside down.

When reality doesn't match expectation, there starts a slow slide into disappointment. Women tend to become *self*-critical believing they have personally done something wrong. While others do the opposite – lashing out and blaming *others* critically. Both strategies make it virtually impossible to be open and expansive, two qualities imperative to increasing love and connection.

Evaluate how you deal with unmet expectations. Are you able to reassess or do you shut down? Are you able to go with the flow or do you contract? Are you able to regroup or do you withdraw? Are you able to move forward or do you tend to isolate? Knowing you deal with disappointment is the first step toward building resilience.

Comparing Yourself to Others

If you look at other women as competition instead of as a loving sisterhood, you are robbing yourself of a supportive community. Comparing is a double-edged sword. You're either going to feel like you don't measure up or you are going to feed your ego and give yourself a false sense of importance.



Insecurities create separation and scream to the world that you aren't enough. Take positive action against the shame gremlin and see that you are already more than good-enough.

Communication Breakdowns

93% of communication effectiveness is determined by nonverbal cues, 55% is body language and 38% is tone. That's right, a slim 7% is based on what you say.

We all learned how to express our needs in our family of origin. If healthy emotional expression was not modeled, chances are you learned a few maladaptive ways to express your needs. Learning productive, mature and respectful ways to express yourself requires overcoming fear of losing love, being disapproved of or ruining the relationship. It takes courage to speak your truth.

Living in Your Masculine Energy

Are you so independent, capable and strong it makes a man feel like he has nothing of value to offer? When a man doesn't feel needed, he will shut down. It could be you feel you had to step into this role for "shit to get done." The problem is that we must remain fluid.

Balancing the male and female energies is a beautiful dance. Every person has both and will design a much happier life when they are able to successfully discern when it's appropriate to "do" and when it's better just to "be."

How we choose to use our energy is about our approach to life.

If you're single, you may no choice but to step into the masculine role to handle day-to-day needs. But getting used to doing things on your own can be a double-edged sword. It's necessary but after a while if you start *owning* those masculine traits, you will forget what it feels like to be in your feminine.

Honor your capability *while* maintaining a sense of receiving help from a man to do the "manly" things for you. Stop opening doors for men. Give them the chance before reaching out to prove you aren't needy or helpless. Be receptive – it's one of the great strengths of women.



"In this moment..."



Pause and Reflect Worksheet

- 1) Make a list of your radiance robbers, choose one and take an action step every day for one week to create a new positive pattern.

- 2) What is your pay-off for your belief patterns? For example, do you find yourself *always* feeling “left out?” How does this feeling serve you? Does it get you some needed attention and care? Protection? Maybe you get to blame others so you don’t have to take responsibility for your actions? What new behaviors can you take to step out of this pattern and stand in your power?

- 3) Set new boundaries this week by saying no to a request you don’t want to do. Write down a few them below as a reminder of your commitment.

The Formula

In order to set change in motion, you need to know what you want. From there, we create an action plan. The following three steps are the basic outline to creating the change you want in your life.

Set Your Intention

Figure out what you want and how you want your life to look. It can be helpful to start by creating two columns with “Don’t Want” on one side and “Do Want” on the other. Make the list as detailed as possible, starting with what you don’t want. Let that guide you toward what you do want. A positive attitude is the foundation of resiliency. At the heart, it’s about proactively



connecting, owning and accepting. Keep a gratitude journal and practice the Emotional Positivity Exercises.

Pinpoint Your Purpose

Passion is energy. What excites you? Do more of that! Whatever excites you is what ignites your soul. From gardening to exotic dancing, the only thing that matters is that it's your own. Make a "Passion Plan." List 10 activities that you're passionate about. Make multiple copies of the list. Carry it with you, place it near you –wherever you'll see it. Do one of these activities every day. Know who you are. This means living authentically in your truth, standing for what you believe in, unafraid to voice it, proud to the core. Ask yourself:

"What am I passionate about?"

"What are my strengths and talents?"

"What do I value?"

Take Action

This is the doing part of the journey. It's embracing your life and saying "Yes!" to experience. It's leaning into discomfort. Dare to flirt without attachment to the outcome. Do something silly. To have the life you want, *you* need to take the lead. Make conscious choices. Step outside the box. Ask for help. Do something that scares a little bit. Embracing life means being open to new ways of Being, new ideas and new adventure.

Renew your inner relationship. Put the oxygen mask on yourself. Women seem to default to caring for others and feel guilty or depleted about taking the needed time to refuel. The most loving thing you can do for others is care for you! Your capacity to give and receive love stems from how you treat yourself. Set boundaries. Say not to doing and yes to being. Revisit your Passion List.

Laugh and play. Remember joy? That cute little pixie who used to coax you out to play? Well, she misses you! Laughter and play are essential to life. Watch animals, in particular our cousins the chimpanzee. Play is a part of their lives. Play keeps us young, requires flexibility and openness. Make it a priority.

Direction

Before you begin the journey of personal transformation, you need to have a sense of where you want to go. It's time to see your future and set some goals on how to get there. But often times, we have to get out of our own way first.



If you've spent your life as a To-Do List Diva or a "people-pleasing" junkie, chances are you've lost touch with what ignites your soul. You may periodically squeeze in some "me time," but honestly how long has it been since you did so without feeling guilty?

Living a routine, robotic life will dull you down. To get your mojo back you'll need to connect with your electric, passionate energy. Passion involves discovering what excites you and opens you up. It's what feeds your soul. It also equates to feeling fully sensual in the purist sense, as in fully living from all of the five senses.

Mind-set

What we think, our mental habits, play a huge a role in our health. People's perception of aging has a greater impact, positively and negatively, on longevity than low cholesterol, blood pressure, body mass index, even smoking! Our thoughts profoundly impact our biology. What we think matters. Your thoughts and beliefs are the single most important indicator of your state of health and where your real power lies.

For example, in Peru the term for hot flashes means "shame." Whereas in Japan, hot flashes and menopause are considered signs of a sacred spring when a woman goes deeper into wisdom. And, lo and behold, the inflammation Peruvian women experience with hot flashes is higher than it is for Japanese women.

You can shine from here to eternity if you adopt an attitude that embodies your magnificence. Changing your mindset and making positive choices has the ability to profoundly affect your attitude.

When you believe in yourself, there's a flowing energy that comes from your core that screams, "I'm proud of me and honor who I am!" Women who live from this place navigate the highs and lows of life with gumption. And why not? They put a stake in the ground when they get to the top of a mountain and stand ferociously for what they believe in.

I know what you're thinking, what about those moments when it just seems impossible to overcome? There will never be an absence of things that can trigger us, but when you let bad juju get the best of you, you're only hurting yourself.

Did you know giving in to negative affect shortens your life? It also feeds vicious circles, hurts others, increases stress while lowering your immunity. For health reasons alone, *es no bueno*.

For the record, a positive attitude is more than Pollyanic reframe. It's stepping outside the confines of small mind and connecting to the fullness of who you are. It's a mindset that guided by making wise choices and feeling good about yourself when faced with adversity.



To help you focus and get in alignment with a positive mindsets, begin by asking yourself these three questions:

- 1) What message do I want to send about myself to my loved ones, friends, family, clients and new acquaintances? How do I want them to feel when they are with me?
- 2) How do I want my loved ones, friends, family, clients and new acquaintances to feel after they've interacted with me?
- 3) What emotional energy do I want to add to the planet? Do I want anger, blame and resentment to flow from my heart or love, compassion and understanding?

Get as detailed as you can when answering. By getting specific on how you want to present and how you want people to feel, you become clear about your attitude.

Puppy Mind

We all possess a puppy mind, easily distracted and attracted to the bright and shiny. It's also in our biology to take note of danger or adversity as to avoid it. As a result, we must diligently train our puppy mind by keeping it on a short leash. At times you can let it wander, but for the most part you want to have a sense of being able to manage it.

You have more control over it than you think and a lot of it has to do with intention. Try the following practice as a way to being training your puppy mind to go toward the positive:

- 1) As you lay in bed to sleep, create a vision for the day. See yourself responding to life with excitement and appreciation.
- 2) As you wake, remember the intention you set the night before. Make the conscious choice to face the day with open interest and inner strength.
- 3) Hold a guiding principle in your mind, such as "What I think influences how I feel." Write it down on a card or keep it on your phone as a daily reminder.
- 4) Maintain awareness throughout the day. When you notice your puppy mind wandering down a dark alley, give that leash and pull and rein her in.

Visualize

Get clear about what you want and stay connected to that vision every day. If you don't know, it will be reflected in your current circumstances. Look deeply and unflinchingly.

Where are you putting your energy and focus? Do you dwell on what went wrong or do you concentrate on creating the life you want?



We create our future with every thought and word. We are not passive by-standers subject to the whim of fate. We always have a choice.

Clarity is critical for a happy life. But sadly for most, adulthood saw only a handful of our dreams materialize. Various life experiences pulled you off track and created distraction. Without a clear vision, obstacles and challenges can feel like failures and wipe out enthusiasm.

Eventually you may give up – thinking it’s too late and you get what you get. Maybe your desires are so buried you’ve forgotten how to dream and have accepted a blah existence. Here’s the good news...you always have a choice!

Future Planning Exercise

Use the lines below to write down what quickly comes to mind and then use your journal for further reflection.

- 1) “Toss” yourself into the future and then visualize all the steps, decision and choices you need to make to get there.

- 2) See yourself ten, twenty, or thirty years from now. What does this wiser, sage soul want you to know?

- 3) Ask yourself, “What would my life look like if I were living as an empowered, sexy, intelligent woman?” (Fill in with whatever adjectives resonate with you most – healthy, fit, sensual, connected, joyful, fulfilled, etc.)



Areas of Life Checklist

- 1) *Health and Body* – Do you have a nutritious diet? Are you happy with your body weight?
How do you take care of yourself?
- 2) *Relationship* – Describe the details of your perfect partner and relationship together.
- 3) *Finance* – How much money do you make? How much do you have in savings and investments?
- 4) *Career* – What are you doing? How many days a week do you work?
- 5) *Emotional* – What is your general disposition? How do you handle challenge?
- 6) *Femininity/Sensuality* – Describe your essence, how you feel within, how you interact with others.
- 7) *Social* – Do you have positive, like-minded friends who support your needs?
- 8) *Spiritual* – What is your relationship with Spirit/God/Divine/Oneness?
- 9) *Making a difference* – How do you contribute to others and the world?
- 10) *Fun Life Experiences* – What brings you joy?

Acting “As If”

Let it sink in that you have control over the course of your life. To begin the seismic shake-up you desire, imagine yourself living the life you want. Try it on by acting “as if” you have already attained it. Notice how it feels. What are your sense saying? Take these observations into the core of your being. Ground it within.

When you want to create a future that’s outside your current reality you have to consistently as “as if” you are already that person with the life you desire in a real way. Feel it in your body. Engage as many senses as possible. Go for details. Get as specific as you can about the ways you will change your life.

- 1) Determine new behavioral patterns to adopt to support your desires.
- 2) Decide how you want to present to others.
- 3) Choose how you will spend your time.



- 4) Create a vision board using photos and words reflecting your desires.
- 5) When you look at each photo on the board say, "I'm so grateful to have this in my life now. This is who I am."

What new actions and routines will you put in place? Will you join an activity club or meet-up group, take a new class, read books that will help you with your mindset, spend time with others who model what you want, or just make time for fun?

To get results, you'll need to ground your vision on a regular basis. At the same time, you want to be as specific as possible and connect to as many senses as possible. Feel it deeply in your body? See, feel, touch and smell this new version of you!



"I'm happiest when..."

Pause and Reflect Exercise

- 1) Take some time to reflect on the question, "What would my life look like if I were living as an empowered, sparkling, sexy woman?" Give yourself permission to be bold and daring and see outside the box.



- 2) Take an honest inventory of your life. Refer to the Areas of Life checklist. Jot down key areas and issues below. When you are done journal as many details as possible about your experience. How do you feel about your future now? Ask yourself what outer and inner structures you will put in place to ensure attainment of this future.

Inner Critic

Pessimistic or negative thinking is simply a habit that needs to be broken. Life is not a zero-sum game. There is enough joy, money, pleasure and friends for everyone. Recall the importance of mindset. Most people are about as happy as they make up their minds to be. If your life is “crazy” and your kids are driving you “nuts,” that’s exactly where you’ll end up.

To shift your mindset, you must first set the intention to do so. You have to want it. The next step is to put that desire into action. You’re going to want a variety of practices such as reframing, visualization, journaling, group support and gratitude. The goal is to lay down new neural networks in the brain alongside the old way of thinking. In order to do that successfully, you’ll need a bounty of repetition. Over time the old way of thinking will grow over with weeds, while the new way will shine strong and bright.

Note: If you suffer from depression and opt for pharmaceutical help, please keep in mind drugs are meant to be an adjunct toward working through your emotions and developing new habits of mind and body as part of a holistic healing process. I’m aware that this is easier said than done. Push yourself to make the needed changes. You are worth the effort.

Mind Power...Heal Thyself

“Women, delve deep into your primal power, beyond appearances, customs, and religions of this day. Delve into the knowing that you have always had and always will – a knowing that no religion can ever encompass and that no culture can ever define. Delve deep into your belly and the brain that lies there: the primal brain, your original voice, the voice that will never



betray you and will always lead you to the truth of love in action, the being of joy, and peace.
The Voice of Life itself.” ~ Padma Prakasha, *Womb Wisdom*

It’s easy to lose sight of the body’s miraculous capacity for self-repair. If you cut your finger, it will heal whether you want it to or not. When we step in and facilitate this natural process, unprecedented healing occurs.

Western medicine would have us believe that only Western medicine can heal pathology. Don’t get me wrong. There is a time and place for it. If I brake my arm, you can bet I’m its number one fan. The problem with the Western model is that there is no money in people proactively taking charge of their health.

We are programmed to believe we don’t know our own bodies, or worse, that our bodies and environment are a dark mystery riddled with germs and pathogens. Truth is, most ailments were a long time in the making and are lifestyle related. Furthermore, all have a mental, emotional and energetic component to them.

Bernie Siegel, former president of the American Holistic Medical Association said, *“The fundamental problem that most patients face is the inability to love themselves.”* That is some serious medicine. Our challenge is to love ourselves as Nature does: unconditionally.

We can all level up our self-love and learn to care for ourselves mentally, emotionally, physically and energetically – as we would a precious child. Know that a life devoid of movement, sleep and nourishing food is draining and will age you because it overtaxes the immune, endocrine, and central nervous systems.

Self-Discovery Worksheet

What are you afraid to change in your life because you think you might be shamed for making a mistake or fear looking foolish trying?

How is the desire to be seen as perfect keeping or capable keeping you from expressing yourself?



Name three things you would do if there was no chance of failure?

Visualize both outcomes to something you want to do. Discuss what you learned from both outcomes.

The Healing Power of Affirmations

Affirmations are powerful medicine and one of the easiest ways to nourish your entire being with compassionate thoughts and loving intentions. You can use affirmations to address emotional issues, personal health goals, positive self-image or just about anything that is blocked by negative thinking.

If telling yourself what you believe sounds a little woo-woo, just remember your mind is generating thoughts all the time. If they are negative, they affect you - even if you're not aware of them. So why not make them helpful?

Affirmations train your brain to feel comfortable with a new reality that you are choosing for yourself. This is a powerful way to hand back the reality someone else gave you for a reality that better fits who you are becoming.

When formulating an affirmation, keep these simple guidelines in mind: 1) state your goal positively and 2) keep it in the present tense. For example, "I am strong and healthy" versus "I want to be..."

An affirmation always involves making a choice. Don't let the inner critic distract you. It's okay if the statement isn't entirely true. Declaring "I am strong and healthy" taps unconscious beliefs. You are affirming the decision to start now, from this day forward.

Repeat your affirmations daily, out loud, for a month. Say it with feeling, "like you mean it," until you sense an internal energetic shift. Affirmations don't make something happen. They make something welcome. Invite the shift.

Here is sampler platter of affirmations to get you started, inspired by the chakras:



- I have a right to be here.
- I have a right to take up space.
- I have a right to feel pleasure.
- I have a right to create positive change according to my intention.
- I allow myself to express my power in an authentic and satisfying way.
- I have a right to a loving and healthy romantic relationship.
- I have a right to express what is true for me.
- I have a right to see deeply, and to trust what I see.
- I have a right to the truth of my identity.



Use one of the above affirmations as a prompt.

Assessment

To manifest this glorious future, you also need to focus on your inner development. Do you need to become more vulnerable, seeing it as a strength instead of a weakness? Do you need to open your heart more so you can give and receive the flow of love?

How is your self-esteem? Are you comfortable speaking up, expressing your thoughts and setting boundaries? Do you communicate from your heart without judgment, blame or manipulation? Are you able to share your feelings with transparency?

Pull a trustworthy friend into your confidence. Take a deep breath and ask for an honest assessment for how you present in life. Take it in. Let it sit. Watch the inner critic. Thank your friend for being a real friend and then decide how you want to be in the world.

Be patient with unearthing your new you. Anchor it in a strong vision and be fiercely persistent. This is the first critical step as it connects you with what you want.



Relationships

The number one relationship that determines the quality of all the others in your life, is the one you have with yourself. Period. Seeking someone or expecting your partner to complete you is a losing strategy. Mate with your soul and become your own soul mate. Anything you receive beyond that is icing on the cake.

In relationship, your job is to fill yourself up until you are overflowing with love and enthusiasm for life. A partner should bring out the best in you, not fill in missing parts. A healthy partnership is a relationship between two people who mutually enhance one another and it always starts with yourself.

To have a better self relationship, begin to think of yourself as the embodiment of love. Imagine yourself as a living and breathing, transmitting and receiving conduit of love. Freely send your love outward and trust that love will come to you.

To truly love yourself, which is the root of all love, you have to get to know who you are. Often, we go along with other people's plans because we're afraid we will not get the love and belonging we need. This message is often sent unconsciously by our family, friends and culture. Rather than take the risk of being rejected, we follow the fold. But the soul knows and will seek expression, sometimes in less than healthy ways.

I am a firm believer in following your passion. Whether you love writing, traveling, gardening, cooking, fitness, horses, dancing or basket-weaving – to maintain a zest for life do more of what you love. Or as Joseph Campbell says, "follow your bliss." Sparking your inner fire is the great way to keep you and your relationships vital and healthy.

Renew Your Relationship with You

Without a solid partnering with yourself, it's more challenging to successfully connect with others. This is why it's important to be sure your personal foundation is built on love, trust, honor and respect. Your relationship to yourself is hands down the most important one for you to develop.

If you're like most women, by the time you've hit forty you've put yourself on the backburner so many times you feel guilty carving out "me" time. Think about it. How many times have you felt like you were going to "lose it," but instead you ignored your need in order to tend to your kid, colleague or friend? You might even have some identification around being ever able.

If any of this sounds familiar, know that you are not alone. This one of the most common ways we lose ourselves. This is how the sparkle that makes women shine slowly starts to dim. The



key to reclaiming your connection begins with building a rock solid relationship with that charming, endearing and kick ass being inside you.

How Do You Treat Yourself?

Are you your biggest and brightest fan or your own worst enemy? Do you applaud your accomplishments or do you look at what didn't get done? When you're tired do you stop to nurture yourself or do you push yourself harder with nothing ever being good enough? In other words, do you accept, respect and love yourself like the sweet child you are?

Because it's impossible to be raised in a perfectly attuned environment, we all journey through life with some hard knocks. This is how we build resilience to adversity. But for some, the environment and knocks were much harder. Chances are if you do not value yourself as much as you do your kids, friends or even pets, that behavior was learned in childhood. Thankfully, it's never too late to heal.

Find an image of yourself as a kid, preferably before the age of six. Spend some time with this sweet, innocent, curious kid. Find a photograph and make a few copies of it. Put an image on the fridge, near your bed, on your phone or in your wallet.

Talk to her. Ask her what she dreams about. Tell her how cute she is, how loving, creative and beautiful she is. The inner child can be shy at first. Be patient and prepared that she'll likely talk to you from multiple ages.

Help her see what you see. Help her see the innocence of her mistakes as the natural path to learning. Tell her about all the wonderful things she goes on to do and the many ways she learns to overcome hardship. Share your pride in her.

Once you have connected with this lovely inner child of yours, make a promise to care for her. But only do so when you are ready. The worst thing you can do is a break a promise to a child. When you feel it in your heart with a fierceness that cannot be doubted, promise to look out for her, to feed her good food, put her to bed when she is tired, protect her from bad habits and harm. Show her you love her and commit to doing your imperfect best.

Know Who You Are

So many of us have been running on a treadmill for so long we no longer remember why, where or when we jumped on it in the first place. The big secret no one is talking about is that we're all winging it, which means we each carry around some degree of feeling like an imposter



playing the role of a responsible, well-adjusted adult while peering outside ourselves to see if we're doing it right.

Well, guess what? There's only one you and you're the only one who knows what you need or want and it's never too late to get off the monkey train. You're allowed to say "enough" – both that you've had it and that you are.

Take a hard look at your life. Are you living from your internal values or are you on autopilot, mechanically doing what you believe is expected of you? There is no shame in answering yes to the latter. The American persona glorifies "rugged individualism" while the culture hooks us into consumerism, distraction and comparison. We feel guilty if we can't do it on our own and, yet, are compelled to look elsewhere for the answer.

Looking elsewhere for our worth is exhausting. In this image-based society we live in, a person could conceivably spend their entire life curating an externally driven persona without every knowing who they really are.

Take a moment to reflect on how you go about gaining approval. Is it by over-giving, being a good girl, relying on beauty, sexuality, doing for others, accomplishments? Brutal honesty is necessary to clearly see what's driving the behavior. Enlist an honest friend to help, if need be.

Once you've identified your primary approval getting gimmick, take a deep, nourishing breath and thank yourself for figuring out a way to get this important need met. Then let that part know you're going to work on a new, healthier way to get it.

This "new" way will occur in baby steps. You'll test it out, taking small calculated risks. Over time your confidence will grow and your self-respect will increase as the fear that others won't like you gradually diminishes. And if someone does pull back their love, you now know it was conditional.

Another perk to setting healthy boundaries is that you'll stop taking personally what others say. Talk about freedom! You may not like what the other has to say, but you are no longer hooked in and ready to react. If there is truth, you'll have the equanimity to make a conscious choice what to do about it.

When you know who you are, you don't need anyone to approve of you because *you* do already. You know your worth and others pick up on that positive vibe and treat you likewise. Even if you aren't there yet, this is a great way to practice acting "as if" it were true and just watch the way others respond. We teach others how we want to be treated by the way we treat ourselves.



Eidetic Imagery Exercise

Eidetic imagery is a mental phenomenon by which a person produces an extremely detailed picture in his or her mind with such clarity and perfection it seems real. The image can be a reproduction of something the person has seen or a self-generated picture based on past experience.

For added impact, include the feelings. Once you have imagined the sights, sounds, colors, etc. explore how you feel while imagining all this with such vivid details.

- 1) See yourself as the passionate being you want to be.
- 2) See the way you walk and talk.
- 3) See the way you connect with others.
- 4) See how others react and treat you.

Visualize this as often as possible, acting "as if" this is already your life. This is what it means to "own it." You imagine what you want every day until it gets integrated into your and becomes your truth. From there, you live it.

Be Love

I have three "love mantras" that I created as a reminder of what matters most. They are:

"Go where the love is."

"Celebrate others."

"Let them know they are loved."

Another secret in my arsenal is to compliment and give thanks as often as I can. Reflect back the beauty, strength, creativity and wisdom you see in others. Be specific. "You look amazing in that dress and it's all in the way you own it!"

(A snap of the fingers is optional, though highly recommended.)

Share a joke with a stranger while waiting for your next cup of something and get a natural burst of nitric oxide that turns on all your feel good hormones. Be a collector of what positivity researcher Barbara Fredrickson calls "micro-moments of love."

Spreading joy is a spiritual practice and it takes a warrior's heart to see the goodness in the world. But we must find the courage to be the shining light that ignites others and in doing so, you experience the joy of being lit within.



Laugh and Play

I propose we all seek an inordinate amount of pleasure. That we set the intention and purposefully go about creating as much joy as we can. Why? Because we've lost touch with the power of play. The average person used to laugh 20 minutes a day. Now it's less than 5 measly minutes. That is a problem and the solution is not more screen time.

Laughter and play are good for you. It creates instant intimacy and connection and floods the body with endorphins. Women have an innate gift for play. If you feel you have lost touch with this part, it is still within. You just need to give it a little coaxing.

Opening up to playfulness frees the creative expression of your soul. Do yourself a favor and step out of your routine by making fun a priority. The intention alone will inspire you to unleash your playful feminine spirit.

Make Time for Playtime

Life is pretty absurd when you come to think of it. It's hard but it's also beautiful. Because it can weigh us down, it's seductive to toe the line and follow what is expected. But living a life devoted to checking off a to-do list, while instantly gratifying, will eventually leave you feeling drained and unfulfilled.

We must consciously break from routine now and then and do what makes you happy, embrace your passion and have fun. When you do, you will ignite your inner shine and that "in-love-with-life" attitude you were born with.

It's understandable if you think you can't. If that is the case, be kind. Don't make fun another "to-do." Just make a conscious decision to give yourself permission to claim your playful spirit. Make a promise to the joyous inner child inside of you that you will have some fun. Soon.

Here's the catch with play. When your life isn't going well, it will be very tempting to withdraw. That is a normal reaction to pain and you will need to muster all your oomph to go against the urge to isolate.

Ultimately, we are each responsible for our own lives. It is up to you to find and create joy, happiness and pleasure. When you are really in the dumps, name it, feel it, and then do something different.

Your life is your own. Be bold. Live it with passion, seeking fun with an open thirst for experience.



Benefits of Fun

- 1) Pleasure and playfulness make your skin shine and eyes sparkle. The glow literally comes from within. Laughter helps to expand your blood vessels, increasing flow which is what gives you this radiance. Joy makes any age more beautiful.
- 2) Playfulness makes you more in tune to your feminine nature. The walls come tumbling down, revealing an inviting, approachable attitude toward life. When you are embodied in joy, you are freer to respond from your heart.
- 3) Laughter is good for you. Hundreds of hormones and feel-good chemicals are released that have a positive effect on the body, which in turn effects emotions like sadness and fear. You can even “trick” the brain by faking laughter. The same chemicals will be released by the body, but you’ll get the most fun by the real thing.
- 4) Joy is an ice-breaker. Getting others to join in laughter opens communication. They feel more at ease and relaxed around you. Not only will this get people to talk more, they’ll also be more open to expressing themselves more deeply and what they share will have a higher level of vulnerability.
- 5) Laughter builds confidence. There’s no room for fear and doubt when you’re having fun. Letting go of insecurities gives you the courage to be fully you. This alignment feels good and creates a stronger sense of self. True confidence is super-sexy!
- 6) Fun offers a fresh perspective and opens you to inspiration. New solutions to old problems emerge. One way to ignite this is step out of your comfort zone and try something new, like a weekend get-a-way or day trip with a friend. The exposure to new sights, sounds, smells and sensations sends a message to mind, body and soul that something different is happening.
- 7) Joy creates connection, across the board. People are drawn to happy people. One of the simplest ways to engage the world is with a smile. In this device-driven age, much of life is spent with our gaze looking downward. We’re not making as much eye-contact as we used to. Yet in the land of body language, the #1 signal you can send to express warmth and receptivity is a smile.



- 8) Sharing good times creates bonds of instant intimacy. Women thrive on connection. It's in our bones. Joyful intimacy is real and lasting and something women are especially adept at creating. So often we associate intimacy with sexuality. Play is a wonderful way to get this important social need met in a safe and fulfilling way.
- 9) Pleasure, play, joy and laughter are all components of love. When you are connected and are experiencing genuine intimacy your heart opens and expands. You may find yourself falling in love with life, rekindling appreciation for your partner, or growing the love you already live each day. It's impossible not to have these things happen. When you laugh with someone they become a cherished part of your heart.

Falling in Love with Life

"At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us."

- Albert Schweitzer

Visualize the sensations of falling in love with life. If you're like most, this will be difficult. Chances are you are feeling wiped out, overwhelmed and tired. When you find what ignites you, or even what sparks an interest, trust that you will begin to feel more alive. Watch out for the voice inside that says you can't or that it's too hard. Falling in love with life is a simply a perspective change. You live life knowing that you are capable and open to whatever it presents.

Passion is about being in love with all of life, which includes a partner, an idea, a cause, or an activity. There is no distinction between them, because it's a mindset. It's all coming from the same source of energy.

By embracing those things that bring you bliss, fear will gradually get edged out, anxiety slowly dissipates and worries start to wash away. Your heart finds the courage to expand. With clear intentions and purity of purpose, the energy you emit is magnetic and contagious.

I hope you want this for yourself because you deserve nothing less.



Bliss List Exercise

The following is a self-reflection exercise to help you cultivate more joy.

Find a moment and have a pen and paper handy. Close your eyes and take a few, soft deep breaths. On the inhale expand into your heart. On the exhale, ground into your bones. From this place ask yourself, "What could I do for hours on end without getting paid that would fill me with joy?"

Write down five activities that make you really happy. Assess each one. Are they dependent on other people or are they things you enjoy doing on your own? You will have a challenging time igniting pleasure if it is externally dependent.

Self-motivated activities like yoga, gardening, jewelry making, photography, etc. come from within because they are the joys of your soul. You want the locus of control to be in your hands, where it belongs, not at the mercy of others. It can certainly involve others and is often more fun, but it needs to something that already makes *your* heart sing.

If all your activities involve others, go back and change a few. Try to do at least one a day. Consider it your emotional hygiene and make it a part of your daily routine, on par with eating breakfast and brushing your teeth before bed.

If that sounds daunting, you may want to give your attitude a nudge. Joy is an essential ingredient of life. We lose our "oomph" without it. As you do more of what you love, you'll begin to notice little shifts. Maybe you're not as reactive or perhaps you feel an unexplainable burst of giddiness.

Being curious and open to trying new things is crucial when looking to resurrect your passion. People are creatures of habit. You'll need to lean into discomfort to spark change. For those of you super serious about increasing your joy quotient, do something fun, every day, for 30 days. It needn't be big, just something that you find pleasurable. Research shows daily practice makes you three times more likely to establish a new routine. Do yourself a favor and make joy a habit.

Moving from Outer to Inner Wisdom

Imagine what a seismic societal shift it would be if women did not have to do anything to prove their worth? Imagine if we could *let go* of the belief that we must put the needs of others before our own, accumulate accomplishments to be someone, work harder than a man to be taken seriously, define beauty by the dictates of Wall Street and *instead* embrace knowing that we are valuable for just being?



It's the wish we have for every baby born. But we hand in that wish for entry into adulthood. I believe it is myopic of western culture to lose sight of our birthright to live free from having to hustle for our worth.

Many women are haunted by childhood beliefs and experiences that cause anxiety about who they need to be or how they need to act to be accepted. This faulty belief must be addressed and worked through, before they can take charge of their life. But now many have the time by the time this work is needed?

It's never too late to take stock of who you really are and replace old ways of thinking with an updated version that honors your inherent essence.

Are you still weighing yourself down with judgments and self-sabotaging? Ask yourself, "Is this thinking creating the life I want?" I'm guessing the answer is no. The good news about negative thought patterns is that it's just a habit, which means it can be changed. It'll take work but know with perseverance you can part ways with your inner critic.

A simple place to start is to decide to become your biggest fan by affirming your inherent value every day. Take back your power by declaring, "I'm the only person who gets to decide that I'm enough, that I'm worthy and that I'm valuable." Try it right now and notice how you feel.

Body Love Exercise

To do this exercise, you will need a full-length mirror and a candle. Find a time when you will alone and uninterrupted in a dark room. You'll need at least ten minutes.

Light a candle and place it on a table nearby. This is your sole source of lighting. Stand in front of the mirror and look at yourself. As you do, relax your face and jaw. Allow your shoulders to drop.

Notice any thoughts that arise, such as "This is really stupid." Or, "Ugh, I'm so fat!" Or, "Look at all those wrinkles." When these thoughts arise, just smile. Relax your jaw and breathe – slowly and mindfully. Observe how the candlelight casts a flattering, soft light on your skin, making it glow.

Now, remove your clothing and stand before the mirror. Breathe consciously and slowly as you gaze at your reflection. Slowly move your eyes around your reflection so that you look at every part of yourself.



Notice when your breathing changes, when your muscles tense or you feel the desire to look away. Just relax your face, your shoulders or wherever you are holding tension in your body. Simply make note of what you are experiencing and refocus on slow, deep breaths.

As you feel more relaxed, open yourself to receiving strength. Close your eyes and say aloud: "Goddess, Mother, Sacajawea, etc., change me into someone who sees the incredible beauty in my body." Then look at yourself in the mirror again. Look at the part of your body that caused you to have a defensive emotion or physical reaction when you gazed upon it and affirm your beauty.

When you have gazed at your entire body in the mirror, using affirmations whenever you feel resistance, end by saying aloud: "I am a beautiful, valuable, sexy, and sensual woman. I appreciate my body."

Then get dressed *before* turning on the light and blowing out the candle.

Repeat the Body Love exercise at least twice a week for a full month or until you find you're no longer experiencing resistance and it's easy to send your body love and appreciation. The shift can be quite dramatic.

Radiance

In order to self-ignite, you have to go on a sensual journey. Every woman's experience will be different, but the common denominator is that the journey is about pleasure.

It could be taking a female lover after years of being straight. It might include learning how to deepen your orgasm, taking a Tantra classes, or learning about BDSM. Maybe it'll involve moving your body in a new way, through hot yoga or pole-dancing, studying sensuality/erotica alone or with a partner. Or it might just be enough to explore yourself within the parameters of this guidebook, working through the exercises and talking about our experiences.

Whatever you choose, the requirement is the same: *to expand your sensual vocabulary beyond what you have known*. You must learn how to feel pleasure and how to turn yourself on. I'm talking explicitly about what gets the juices flowing down south, what causes you to stir and tingle with excitement. The sensual journey makes full use of the range of the senses. It is *sensual* and must include a feeling of arousal, though not necessarily sexual. Take flirting as an example.

Flirting gets the juices flowing. We feel alive. If directed toward someone we find attractive, we will feel aroused when it's reciprocated. But it can also be a mindset or attitude. A woman who slowly swirls her tongue around an ice-cream cone while basking in the warm sun is having a



sensual experience. The pleasure is innocent and starts in the mouth, but can easily morph into a mini-erotic experience. When a woman learns to self-ignite she can turn herself on with just about anything.

Pleasure is our birthright. It's our source of power and the flip side of pain. For our journey, the starting point is the clitoris. As a general rule, we need to get re-acquainted with our vagina. The better we understand the range of pleasure we can experience, the deeper will be our connection to the Inner Nature.

Why this is so, is because once a woman has learned to know and own herself sensually, she exudes radiance. Once the pilot light is lit, our spirituality is engaged, we can "get off" on life - fantastic food, a great song, gentle breeze or smile from a stranger.

Pleasure Portal

The clitoris has 8,000 nerve endings that serve no other purpose but pleasure, whereas the penis has about 4,000 nerve endings and serves a variety of functions. While the act of penetration based sex *can* bring a woman to orgasm, it is not necessarily in alignment with how a woman's gets off.

Women are primarily orgasmic through clitoral stimulation. The clitoris is exquisitely sensitive and receptive with some areas are more sensitive than others. Knowing your way around and exploring the various subtle degrees of pleasure is a big part of your sensual journey.

The ability to turn one's self on is a choice and a skill that takes practice and it's 100% an inside job. Yes, it's linked to sexuality but extends far beyond that. It's about connecting to your spirit and inner radiance. If we see ourselves as *just* sexual beings, we diminish our worth.



I feel most sensual when...

Radiance is Our Birthright

As long as we're in physical bodies, we are sexual creatures – whether or not we end up in the sack with another person. Women's sexuality doesn't exist solely for procreation. We don't stop being sexual due to a drop off in egg production. We're not hens.



It's important to realize that sexuality is about far more the sexual act. It's about life renewing itself. When you become aware of the profound connection between your sexuality, spirituality, and creativity – you will have discovered a powerful and renewable resource to fuel your life.

To trust in the wisdom of sexuality is to trust your connection to the energy that created the universe. You are as much a part of it as the earth, stars and moon.

When a woman takes the time and attention to learn about herself sensually, she becomes an endless source of radiance. Children exude this natural radiance. They are completely accepting of their bodies, shame-free and relaxed in their self-love. They get enjoyment from just being alive. That is what we are going to plug into, but because we are women and not little girls the portal is womanly pleasure.

It's our enjoyment of our bodies that creates the radiance. This enjoyment becomes our way of walking in the world. We have all seen people, or have been people, in the first blush of love. Every cell of our being feels thrilled to be alive. We are sensually vibrant and pulsing. This energy can be self-created within.

When women are in the company of other radiant women, turn on is a constantly renewable resource. We fuel and replenish each other. WE remind one another of the eternal truth that the self-ignition is required for a woman to live at health and fitness.

Cliteracy rewires her to *expect* radiance as her natural resting state. When a woman connects an innately feminine wisdom begins to emerge, allowing her to trust her instincts, voice and drive. It will likely be difficult at first. You'll have to slog through the part of you that says you don't have the time, it's not worth or seems like a lot of work. You'll need to lean into discomfort, but you will be well supported by your tribe.

A radiant woman is a woman in her highest power. She is a force of positive change in the world. As Ghandi says, "Be the change you want to see in the world."

Pause and Reflect

- 1) Do you allow other people's opinions and beliefs to affect how you see yourself? Set at least one new boundary with someone close to you this week.
- 2) Do you live more in your "doing" or "being" state? What can you do to balance these two energies?



- 3) What motivates you to do things for other people? Is it to look good? To be liked/loved? Approved of? Is it to satisfy your need to feel valuable? Is it because it brings you true joy?
- 4) What three things can you do right now that would exemplify and show the world you are owning who you are?
- 5) Set aside 10 minutes a day to meditate/pray and ask, "Who am I?" Listen for the answers and journal the insights and revelations until you are able to know this is the real you.

Buried Pleasure

Your perception of yourself has the greatest impact on your experience of sexuality. If you believe you're a vibrant, sensual being, you will be. Women have been taught to believe that desire for sex wanes after her cycle fades. What is closer to the truth, is women are exhausted from life and gratefully toss in the towel after years of a less-than-fulfilling sex life.

Women have big sexual appetites if given half the chance to know and express their desires. A woman's sexuality is a whole body experience that is not limited to her vagina and clitoris. Penetration is just one aspect, yet our dominant culture is fixated on it.

We can redefine and reinvent ourselves at any age. That is the magic of women. We are creators. One example of this is the reclamation of our sexuality, as we take it back from a culture that says it has no value after our baby-making days are done.

Awakening to our pleasure and sexuality is an act of empowerment. Research has proven women can enjoy their sexuality well into their "golden years." In the Integrating Sexuality and Spirituality (ISIS) study, women in their 60's and 70's reported having the best sex of their lives!

First and foremost, a fulfilling sex life begins with your thoughts and beliefs. As you start to feel sexier, you actually become more attractive. There is no better aphrodisiac than a woman who in touch with her desire and knows how to self-ignite.

Though we live in a more sexually liberated age, women of all generations still struggle with how to align with their erotic self. Women continue to wrestle with how to be sensual, strong, feminine, and confident and to be respected as a woman without acting like a man. Doubt, shame, and judgment diminish our light. To turn it back on, we need to own our story, practice healthy habits and become students of our own pleasure.



Seeking Inspiration

Every woman alive has experienced some kind of rupture to her most sacred self. As a result, the pain shuts down their radiance. It's a way to stay protected and leaning into it will feel counterintuitive to our safety needs. But if we remain small contained, we and the entire world suffer the consequences.

The world needs women to light up. Through years of indoctrination, we have learned to gravitate toward what feels culturally and historically comfortable. Thousands of years of patriarchal rule has not made the world a better place. In an essay called "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," Feminist writer Audre Lorde writes:

As women, we have come to distrust that power which rises from our deepest and non-rational knowledge. We have been warned against it all our lives by the male world, which values this depth of feeling enough to keep women around in order to exercise it in the service of men, but which fears this same depth too much to examine the possibilities of it within themselves. So women are maintained at a distant/inferior position to be psychically milked, much the same way ants maintain colonies of aphids to provide a life-giving substance for their masters.

She is calling on women to unite and stand strong. To reconnect with our deep, bone-knowing. In truth, there are few things more important for a woman than feeling radiant and anything that gets in the way of it must be reckoned with. It's time for women to fiercely claim, cultivate and guard their radiance. The problem women face is often a lack of encouragement or modeling by other women.

Women used to gather more often in groups and there is good reason to take up this old tradition again. The great "Coco" Chanel knew this better than anyone. She knew women needed and longed to have someone to emulate that could provide her with direction and permission to step into a better version of themselves. To this day, 100 years later, women feel a certain "*je ne sais quoi*" when wearing Chanel.

We do not have time to live as less than who we are. We don't have time to allow our culture to dictate our place in the world. We need to come together and brilliantly support each other in our awakening. It's time to connect. To plug-in. To self-ignite. It's time to embrace our sensual journey.



Reclaiming Aphrodite

The Greek goddess Aphrodite, whose Roman name was Venus, was not just the goddess of beauty, sexuality and seduction but prosperity and victory as well. She was also about relating deeply and profoundly to life.

This archetype of sacred sexuality was worshipped for eons. The male god is but a blip on our collective psyche. To maintain the tenuous foothold of a male deity, cultures around the world tried to deny, suppress, control and demonize the power of women's sexuality. But the feminine was not to be held down. She simply recreated herself emerging as courtesans, Tantric priestess, and sacred healers.

After millennia of influence to deny our sacred archetype, is it any wonder why so many are disconnected from their bodies and creative life force? Deep down, we know we're meant to be sexual, sensual, life-giving goddesses. We each have within us a bone-knowing that sex and spirit go hand-in-hand.

Sexuality is power because it's our connection to the creative life force. When you connect with your Inner Nature, you remember that you're worthy of receiving what you desire. You surrender to pleasure without guilt or shame because it's your legacy and birthright.

To embody Aphrodite is to be unapologetic about your longings, cravings, and pleasurable pursuits. That's hard for many of us to imagine, because we've been taught not to take too much, laugh too loudly, or be too aggressive in getting what we want. We've been taught to question our yearning and make sure everyone else is happy first.

We must all learn to distinguish selfishness from self-nurturing. Exquisite self-care is the practice of reconnecting to our creative and sensual force of life itself. To find the sacred within we must worship with our bodies. That means more dancing, more singing and more feasting! We must reconnect with the earth. Walk barefoot in the grass, luxuriate in moon baths and get our hands in the soil and grow things.

If you want greater vitality and health, learn how to cultivate your innate sexual energy and spiritual life force. Dig deep and draw your energy back down into your pelvic organs. Another way to fill ourselves and reconnect it to try the following practice:

Breathing in Aphrodite Practice

Set aside some time to go for a stroll, in nature, by yourself. If that's not possible, on a crowded city sidewalk or around the house. Where you walk matters less than the mindset when you're walking.



As you're walking, imagine that a very sexy woman, someone you really admire, is walking with you on your left side. (Your right side represents giving and masculinity. This exercise is all about receiving and femininity.)

Think of Carrie Bradshaw and the iconic strut her and her friends embody every time they are together. With every breath, inhale this woman's energy and essence. Fill up on her feminine power. She believes in you and sees that you are her sister and equal. Imagine drawing in her sensuality with every step and filling up with vital life force with each breath.

Turbo-charge this exercise by combining it with an affirmation about your sensuality, such as "I am a goddess of desire, daughter of Aphrodite. I make love with wild, unleashed abandon. I am an irresistible force of nature."

Do this for two to five minutes a day for a month and notice what happens.

The Art of Flirting

Want to know what is the juiciest, most natural expression of feminine playfulness is? It's flirting!

Flirting is about the sheer enjoyment of being connected to your feminine essence. It comes in many forms - from charming someone you've just met, cooing at a baby, playing with your dog, or teasing your partner - it all falls under flirty fun.

Flirting is a natural endorphin and mood enhancer. It's based largely on your desire to live a life of pleasure - both sexual and sensual. It's simple, powerful and starts with a smile.

The beauty of flirting is that it's an approach to life that enables you to go with the flow. When coupled with gratitude, it allows you to take greater risks without feeling embarrassed or ashamed.

So how do you rank on the Flirt-O-Meter? Do you make eye contact regularly? Are you generous with your dazzling smile? Do you have a signature "come-hither" look?

Take a deep breath and call on your most savvy femme fatale friends and ask them how they do it. Don't have any friends like that? No problem. Pick one or two public figures or movie stars you admire for their ease with flirting. Think Kate Hudson or Goldie Hawn. Study them. See clips of them in "real life." Watch interviews. Practice "trying on" or channeling their essence at home. Do it when no one is looking and, most of all, have fun with it.

Celebrating the divine feminine is an incredible act of feminism. It's taking ownership of your internal wisdom and strength. Watch the voice that wants to judge this as trite, demeaning or



manipulative. It's not. It's your birthright to shine in the glory of your goddess-nature.

A Few Fun Ways to Invoke Flirtation

- When out, get up to use the ladies room. Intentionally walk slowly and sultry. As you do this be saying to yourself, "I ooze sensuality and shine with goddess energy. I am a desirable, sexy woman." Seriously. Try it.
- When wearing a coat, shimmy out of it. Better yet, wear a snug jacket and a scarf on your next date and slither out it slowly like you're doing a strip tease.
- Hold your gaze a second longer than usual. It's just a fraction of second but the brain picks it up as different, inviting and wonderfully suggestive.
- Lick your lips and/or slightly press them together.
- Smile! They're free. Give them generously.
- Eat with pleasure and gusto. Enjoy food with all your senses.
- Tilt your head and bare your throat.
- Touch your collar bone when talking. Gently rest your hand there.
- Cross your ankles when sitting in a chair that exposes your whole body. It creates curve to your torso and gives shape to your legs.

The Biochemistry of Pleasure

Did you know the biochemistry of pleasure can counteract the signs of aging? Nitric oxide is an über-neurotransmitter that increases and balances levels of all the other "feel-good" chemicals: endorphins, dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin and DMT. The production of nitric oxide is triggered by laughter, orgasm, and other experiences of pleasure, as well as by eating fruits and vegetables high in antioxidants, meditating and exercising.

When the free radicals from stress and toxins damage the endothelial lining of our blood vessels, the body is unable to release nitric oxide. Literally blocking pleasure. You can still feel good, but you are limiting the depth and degree of just how good you can feel.

Interestingly, the gut produces more serotonin than the brain. This is due, in large part, to the massive amount of healthy bacteria that live in your microbiome. When you have a visceral negative reaction to something "you just can't stomach," that's your neurotransmitters sending you the message "this doesn't feel right to me."

Many women have internalized the cultural message that women shouldn't "waste" money on their own pleasure. These same women would likely not think twice about handing over the



same amount of money to their teenager to enjoy a class trip. But spend it on themselves and their own bodily pleasure? Not a chance.

Deprivation is a puritanical value that is not conducive to experiencing bursts of nitric oxide. It's important to not just get the massage, but to get without feeling guilt. Caring for yourself is not indulgent. It is self-preservation. It's one of the most radical acts you can do in an insane culture that profits from your self-loathing.

Women's bodies, like Mother Earth, are designed to be a source of abundant pleasure. Don't hold back from pleasure! Be direct rather than apologetic. Know and ask for what you enjoy, want and deserve. If this feels edgy, start by enjoying simple pleasures. Do this every day, like brushing your teeth. Make the pursuit of pleasure part of your daily wellness regime. Our bodies are wired to optimally repair and renew themselves when we are happy.

Pleasure is powerful medicine. Making your sexual and sensual pleasure a priority will change your life and fill your cells with life-giving nitric oxide.

Ritualize It

Thankfully you don't have to swear off on life's indulgences to be a goddess of vitality. The key is to create ritual. When we slow down and allow ourselves to deeply appreciate what is before us, we will experience it at a higher level than when we do so as a "guilty pleasure." Eat your favorite chocolate, drink your most luscious wine and enjoy a high quality meal but do so knowing this is special, one of life's great pleasures. Take your time and enjoy the hell out of it.

At the same time, be smart. Honor what you know about yourself. If a piece of cake is a slippery slope into an all-night sugar orgy, ritualizing it may not be in your best interest. This isn't permission to indulge for the sake of indulging. It's about relishing pleasure. Instead of cake, walk barefoot on the grass. Take an aromatic bath. Sit quietly and watch the sun set. You might be surprised how sweet these pleasures can be.

You can ritualize just about anything. A good place to start is by exploring the senses: taste, touch, see, hear and smell life around you. Lavish your body in oil after a bath. Ditch tight fitting clothes that make you feel constricted. Listen to music daily. Make it point to delight in the five senses regularly.



Name Your Pleasure Worksheet

Experiencing pleasure is a critical for vibrant health. Say it out loud: *"Experiencing pleasure is a critical for vibrant health."*

Take a minute to make a list of as many joyful activities and experiences as you can. Do not limit yourself. Think of big ones and small ones: Heated seats in your car on a cold day. The smell of fresh rain. Sinking into a bath. Taking a walk.

Reflect on how you can have these experiences more often. How can you turn mindless activities into a source of conscious pleasure? This is another example of the power of healthy mindset.

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)



6)

7)

8)

9)

10)

Seat of Power

Second chakra is the seat of creative power. Anatomically it's known as the pelvic floor and it makes up the body's creative center. This area is the body's energy center that is governed by our relationships with money, sex, and power.

When we listen to the call of our pelvic energy to live with greater creativity, take more risks, feel more pleasure, and not be afraid of what others might say or think, we are honoring the



creative force within us. If we don't heed this call, it's we'll likely experience imbalance and disruption in the pelvic area. It's mother nature's way of asking, "What needs to be born through you?"

Whether it's a writing a book, growing a garden, or making a baby - listen to the call. Too often the inner critic shuts down creative urges because our culture is uncomfortable with bold, creative women. The unmet callings of our spirit are often due to playing it safe. Find the courage to live creatively from your seat of inspiration.

The health of your pelvic organs is also related to how well you have learned to negotiate the creative energies embodied in money, sex and power. Ovaries are, quite literally, your female balls – the organs associated with your drive to go after what you want in the world. Far too often we sublimate this energy through a man or the masculine aspects of ourselves.

How to Support Pelvic Tone

The pelvic floor muscles involve several interconnected muscles that support the internal organs of the pelvis. Weak pelvic floor muscles cause prolapse, incontinence and urge incontinence. Additionally, about one in four women experience stress incontinence. It's time to put an end to the shame and secrecy and get serious about this very preventable and treatable issue.

As a species, humans are designed for continual movement and for squatting. For hundreds of thousands of years, women spent much of their time squatting as they prepared meals, cooked, gathered roots, socialized, defecated, urinated and gave birth. These days we spend the majority of our waking hours standing and sitting. The body just wasn't made for this.

- *Drink lots of water.* You need to be well-hydrated to be healthy, don't make the mistake of drinking less to avoid bladder control. It's weak pelvic floor muscles that send the signal to pee when you don't have to.
- *Exercise your pelvic floor muscles regularly.* The pelvic floor is more than just Kegel exercises. We want overall tone for optimal health. Simply standing up 32 times a day, then sitting back down will help. The motion applies gravity to your pelvic floor and causes a slight muscle contraction.
- *Squat!* Squatting supports the natural stretching and toning of all the muscles. Find as many opportunities as you can to squat such as gardening or on the toilet. Chair pose in yoga is a classic asana for strengthening the pelvic floor.
- *Stop the urge to pee unnecessarily.* When you know there is not enough liquid in your body to urinate but the urge is there, try this simple trick. Squeeze your pelvic floor



muscles and hold them tight for five seconds. Release. Repeat this five times. Then take a couple of slow, deep breaths. You may have to repeat this a few times before the body trusts that it really doesn't have to pee.

- *Relax, don't rush or push when you have to eliminate.* We've all learned to train our bodies to meet our hectic schedules. Straining to poop or pee builds muscles that take over for weak pelvic floor muscles. When nature does call, take your time and allow things to flow naturally.

No matter what is happening in your body right now, you can always access your ability to self-heal. Support your healing with the habits that nourish and your mind, body, soul will thank you with optimal well-being and vitality.

Under the Hood

Becoming savvy of your female erotic anatomy is how you light your own pilot light and ignite your own engine of power and pleasure. Don't deny yourself the delight of self-pleasure, whether you are partnered or not. Continue or initiate a sexual relationship with yourself. The Taoist call self-pleasuring "self-cultivation."

So let's talk about stimulation. Because vibrators emit a constant, strong sensation they can deaden sensation over time. Yes, they may jump-start an orgasm but a preferred way to feel more with less stimulation is to get acquainted with your clitoris through touch.

Find illustrations of the erotic female anatomy. Maybe even pull out a mirror and take a look at your own. Like all genitalia, it comes in a variety of shapes and colors – each one of them perfect and beautiful.

After you've gazed lovingly at yourself, grab some lubricant and take it up a notch by practicing how to stimulate yourself around your own clitoris. For most women, the most sensitive hot spot is slightly to your left and to the top of the clitoris. The G-spot is a quarters-shaped, slightly raised spot inside your vagina at 12 o'clock, two to three inches in, on the top of your vaginal canal.

You will feel the clitoris only when it a sexually aroused state. You'll want to squat down and insert your second or third (or both) fingers inside toward your tailbone. If you rub yourself in that area, you will feel its sensitivity because the G-spot is blessed with abundant nerve endings.

Try up and down strokes and circles. Stroke it as if you were kneading out the knots of a sore muscles. At first, you may experience pain or numbness. Over time, you can make this area



wake up to bliss – and a loving partner can certainly assist with that. If you have vaginal dryness, use plenty of lubricant.

Cliteracy

Women have been taught that our vaginas are disgusting. Negative beliefs have been passed down for too long. We must claim our bodies as our own and tend to them on our own terms. It's time to wake from the thousand year sleep of self-doubt and self-loathing. It's time to "reteach a thing its loveliness." It's time to hold a mirror to your innate and eternal beauty. It's time to learn the language of the feminine, the language of the Goddess, the language of the divine. It time to get cliterate.

Cliteracy is learning to listen and trust our inner knowing once again. We've ignored it when we got that weird vibe on that one date that didn't go so well. We ignored it when our partner wasn't tuned in that we were tuned out, and we hushed it away when we needed to say "Slow down. I need time to come."

We gain literacy of our sexuality by trusting our body. We listen deeply and respond with care. We stop eating when we are full. Go to bed when we are tired. The information will come in many ways from a felt sense to digestive stress. The more you listen and respond in kind, the more aligned you'll be with your core wisdom. Following this inner knowing will allow you to live a life with greater ease, deeper relationships and more vibrant health.

Why We Need to Be Cliterate?

Understanding, owning and loving our body is at the core of our potential, pleasure and power. Women have not been encouraged to look, feel, touch, or learn about our most private selves as much as we have the almighty penis.

We have learned to orgasm on cue and will fake it if our anatomy doesn't comply. We assume there is something defective about us if we don't, instead of listening to the inner wisdom that our pleasure sometimes comes at a different pace.

When it comes to bedroom behavior, we have been taught to be passive receivers to a prince who knows what he's doing. News flash: he doesn't and may be secretly intimidated by our sexual depth.

I vividly recall driving to a bookstore on the outskirts of town to find a book that would tell me something about sex. I was eighteen. Up to that point, my entire sexual education involved



watching confiscated porn with my best friend. For years I just assumed sex occurred on a pool table.

My younger self found the book she was looking for, *The Joy of Sex*. Beet red, I bravely made my way to the counter and bought the book. When I got home I poured over the pages filled with pencil drawings of a post-hippie couple having sex in every possible position. I closed the book, as clueless as ever.

Of course, it's a different world today and the current generation is significantly more open and sexually savvy. Everything they want to know about sex and more is readily available. They are more willing to experiment and less afraid to say what they want.

Despite this, I still see the old lineage in action. Young women are more liberated, but they are still learning about pleasure from a cock-centered perspective. They're still basing their sexual pleasure on masculine standard. The feminine wants you to discover your pleasure and share the knowledge. Cliteracy teaches us to tune inward and get to know the core of our being.

Cliteracy and Orgasm

The clitoris is the locus of 8,000 nerve endings. Understand, honor and learn how to satisfy this sensitive spot and you will create a bond of trust between you and your body that can't be broken. The clitoris has limitless range of sensation and emotion. Until you feel this grandeur and expansiveness of being, you are not fully inhabiting yourself.

Traditionally learned pleasure is penetration toward a peak of sensation with a climax that spills over into a crescendo. It's fun and can be pretty awesome, but sensual training teaches is about another kind of orgasm. It's a completely different mindset. One in which the goal is not to spill over and deplete, but to stay, expand and fill. In this way, there is no limit to the amount of pleasure a woman is capable of feeling. The more a woman is filled, the more generous she becomes. This is true sexually with her partner and relationally in life.

Culturally, a dramatic shift occurred about 5,000 years ago with the reign of patriarchy. Before that time, female sexuality was wild, powerful and exalted. Since then women have methodically taught to distrust their inner knowing. Most women are still unconsciously operating from a place of scarcity and ignorance in their sensual lives. The way back to our power is through pleasure.

We women warm up slowly. We require more sensual attention before we want penetration. And, yet, think of the billions of women throughout generations deciding there is something wrong with us because our bodies do not work like men's?



Healing Blockages

If you've suffered sexual trauma, or are holding on to the energy of fear and loss in your pelvic area you can use sexual energy to heal the blockages. There are many ways to awaken this area of your body and begin its energetic healing.

The psoas muscles are part of your core muscle groups and run from your lower spine through your groin to your upper legs. These muscles support range of motion, balance, and proper functioning of organs in the pelvic region.

The psoas muscles have a close relationship with the emotional centers in the primitive, limbic brain, so emotional stress – particularly fear and anger – can affect the health and flexibility of the psoas. These muscles are located near the first chakra, the seat of female energy located in the base of the spine, connecting the body's energy to that of the earth.

Moving your hips, relaxing your psoas, and letting go of fear that you'll be judged, or shamed for being a sexual, sensual, creatively expressive goddess is vital to your health. Pilates is an ideal type of exercise to stretch and work this area of your body, as is yoga, and erotic dancing (belly, tango, pole, etc.). Horseback riding is another great way to reconnect with your pelvic region. Nothing like having a huge, strong animal attuned to the movement you make with your pelvis to empower and connect you to your sensual self.

Embodying Our Emotions

It's not easy to choose radiance, especially when there are so few role models in our life or when there is so much pain in the world. We tell ourselves that we don't have the time, energy or space for it. But all this does is stuff our feelings and dim our aliveness.

We need to feel it all. We need to give attention to the childhood dreams that didn't come to pass. We need to express the depth of our pain that society prefers we contain. Never underestimate the necessity of dropping into the depths of despair. It needn't be forced. It just needs to be felt.

Grief is sacred and as valuable as joy. It has wisdom and purpose and a timeline all its own. It teaches us how to expand into a larger version of ourselves. When we dampen down our emotions, we dampen them *all* down. This pushes them further away until all this is left is a shadow of what we know we are capable of feeling.

We cannot fully know pleasure if we have yet to fully know our pain. Some of us have been conditioned to believe that surrendering to rupture will make us victims of circumstance. If so,



it's because we never learned how to move our emotions through to completion. We were never taught that our darkness is a passageway to our radiance.

Wading Through the Swamplands

The feminine asks much of us, but it's only because she wants us to be the fullest, freest and most unapologetic version of ourselves we can be. She demands that we journey through the swamplands of the soul like the lotus that grows deep in muddy waters, far from the sun. When the lotus reaches light, it will have become a beautiful flower.

Our emotions can be as deep and terrifying as the muddy waters of the swamp. By staying with our darker feelings and allowing the arc of their completion, we, too, emerge transformed. Whether we have been raped or abused, been divorced or lost a loved one, our ruptures have to be grieved *physical* or they remain stuck somatically lodged in our bodies.

Staying with our feelings is not considered an important value in a patriarchal culture. We're a "buck up and stop crying" kind of culture. Expressing deep, dark feelings is indulgent, messy and inappropriate. When a woman finds herself in the throes of big emotion, she is quick to deflect or find fault in herself.

Watch the next time someone cries either in person or a documentary. They will apologize for it. Every time. As if vulnerability is something to be ashamed of. Truth is, intense feelings help us grow, heal and expand.

Giving yourself permission to feel grief and rage unblocks stuckness and releases creative energy. If we want to live healthy lives as women, we have to experience and savor the full range of our feelings – not just the socially sanctioned ones.

Swamping Exercise

When we learn how to wade through the muck, we learn to ride the vicissitudes of life. Rather than feeling bad about feeling bad, we know what to do. We ride it out. Swamping comes in handy when we're tired, stressed, angry, jealous, heartbroken, or feeling any other darker emotion.

The guidelines are simple. Plug into your emotional truth and embody the shit out it. We dance and scream. Howl at the moon or bang into a pillow. Maybe your body will want to roll around on the floor or wrestle with a girlfriend. We do our best to get out of the way and let the emotion move through us however it wants to.



This exercise will walk you through the steps. You'll need a journal, a big black trash bag, a pair of scissors, some loud music, some pillows and other props of your choosing. If you really want to do it right, have some good friends join the party. Being witnessed by like-minded sisters exponentially increases the transformation.

Step 1: Write out all the things that have upset you. This step is not necessary for some women, the embodiment process is enough. Writing down your thoughts primes the emotional pump. Try it both ways and see which way works best for you.

Step 2: Get a big black plastic trash bag. Seriously. Cut a hole for your head and arms, and pop it on like a dress. Belt is optional.

Step 3: Put on some loud music. Don't have a favorite trigger song? Ask your friends or Google the emotion your feeling. "Killing in the Name" by Rage Against the Machine is great for anger, "Wait" by Alexi Murdoch is powerful for heartbreak while

Step 4: Now take inspiration from a small child and allow yourself to surrender to the emotion. Don't hold back. Instead, stoke it. Stomp and scream, collapse and roll around, move your body the way it wants to move. As adults we don't have a lot of experience embodying our emotions. Swamping to music will help. Choose one, two or three songs. Finish with something soft and sensual that will bring you closure and back to your essence.

Step 5: Considering Swamping with a tribe. Gather a few friends, bring your props to a safe place, like an empty studio, open basement or living room. Each take turns saying out loud the things that upset you and cheering one another on. Move and dance and crawl and stomp and beat the pillow and whip the walls. It's deeply cleansing to roll around in the mud with others. Finish by giving thanks to each other to daring bravely and being the dynamic, bold divine creatures you are.

The Power of Touch

Touch is a basic human need. We come into this world needing it. Infants fail to thrive without it. Meet your need shamelessly. Research shows we need meaningful, affectionate touch throughout our lifespan. When you experience loving touch, your body releases the bonding hormone oxytocin. If you currently do not have access to close connections, a good gentle massage can be another way to bring touch into your life.

Massage increases your circulation while lowering cortisol levels. It boosts immunity and is a wonderful way to nurture your whole body. Another way to experience sensual, tactile pleasure is to get a good massage. In the somatosensory cortex of the brain, the area where we



experience clitoral sensations is right below where we experience sensations on our feet. Once again, it's all connected.

Erotic Exploration

Erotica is not porn. Repeat that. Erotica is not porn.

While there is a small subsection of pornography targeted to female viewers, it is primarily geared toward men and has done more to warp the erotic imagination and sexual expectations of men than anything else. The standard "formula" is cheap to produce and features an insatiable woman with big breasts and no pubic hair. The man penetrates her without foreplay, climaxes within seconds leaving the woman mysteriously satisfied by his enormous cock.

Generally speaking, porn perpetuates a very substandard sexual experience for both men and women. It has no heart or soul, whereas erotica is enlivening and stimulating. Erotic writing connects us with our earthly desires. And if reading erotica or watching a sensual love story doesn't do it for you, there are many other ways to ignite your sexual self. Additionally, if implants and trimming down to your girlhood turns you on, go for it! Just know it's a choice and not a determining factor in your desirability.

Seduction and Sensuality

You must *know* pleasure before you can give pleasure. The art of seduction is about creating anticipation without saying a word. It's using the body to say, "I know something about pleasure and you're going to have to wait to find out."

As a reminder, sensuality is less about sex and more about the senses. The Latin root *sent* and its variant form *sens* mean to feel or perceive. So the key to embracing your inner sensual goddess is to surrender to the senses. We are born as sensual beings and thrive on being held, fed, sung to and visually engaged. As we grow older, these primal needs are sadly seen as infantile. So we squash them in the name of "maturity."

Relish the softness of your skin by trailing your hand along your cheek down to your neck. "Mindlessly" brush your fingers across your lips, noticing the tingling sensation. Create curves with your body, crossing and uncrossing your legs, moving your torso to and fro, feeling the undulations of muscle and bone working in unison. Most importantly, be aware of these sensual moments.

If you're looking for a fast track to your sensual self, a sure fire way is through dance. Put on your favorite sexy tunes and let your body move. Better yet, take a class like belly dancing,



tango or burlesque. Whatever works to get those hips swaying. The body will remember, in case you're thinking it's forgotten.

Make it point to get into your groove a little bit each. Don't have much time, play something in the car and rock your pelvis in a rhythmic circle. Have fun with it and let the juices flow. Whether it be at home, in the car or in a class. Get in touch with your vixen vibe and start celebrating your sexy self!

Reawakening Sensuality Exercise

If you want to connect with your feminine essence, take a few minutes to do this mind/body exercise.

To open your sensual center start by getting very comfortable, either sitting or lying down. Set the intention that you are taking this moment to reconnect with deep essential part of you.

Close your eyes and take ten deeply relaxing breaths, all the way down to your hips. Exhale stagnation, inhale expansion. Imagine with every breath that a brilliant light travels down to your pelvis enlivening every cell of your being.

Begin to slowly and gently move your hips around as organically as possible, while continuing to send energy into your pelvis. You may want to start out in one direction and then shift to another. There is no right or wrong way to do this – simply intuit what feels right for you. Do this for two to three minutes, allowing yourself to open naturally.

Take a moment now to reflect on what you're feeling. What are you sensing? Your body will talk to you. Be receptive to what it wants to tell you. Receptiveness is a deeply, feminine quality. Relish in your ability to do so.

After a few minutes you will feel the release of your innate sensuality moving through your body. This is the natural sensuality you are going for – nothing contrived or forced – this is how your natural sensuality is experienced when invoked. Some days it will be fierce and roaring, other days it will feel more like a gentle stirring. All normal. Run with it.

Now open your eyes and notice how you feel. It may be subtle or it may be profound. Take a few minutes and wrote about it in a journal.

The more you do this exercise, the more you will connect with your personal power. Make it a part of your daily self-care. The best time to incorporate this practice into your day is right when you awake in the morning, just before you hop out of bed.



Most women have so much to do, they hit the ground running which puts them in masculine action mode. So, before you get out of bed, while still warm from a good night's rest, commit to spending a few minutes welcoming and luxuriating in your feminine essence. This way you start your day grounded in your personal power. You might even find you are able to accomplish more with less stress and anxiety.

The best part about this exercise is that it not only opens your feminine heart center, it creates integration and flow of this natural, sensual energy that is the strength and domain of women. *This* is what it means to own you power.

Touch Like A Temptress

Words are processed in the thinking part of your brain whereas touch goes directly to your emotional center. Not only does touching create connection, it helps to calm the stresses of the day, adds a sense of caring and pleasure, and gets those feel-good endorphins flowing.

Tapping into your sensual self, you naturally become more open to life. Remember this is not about sex. Sensuality is to be filled with an appreciation for all the senses.

When you start doing the things that bring you joy, your heart expands, positively affecting your personal life and empowering you to push past discomfort.

If you are in relationship or have a consensual partner, set time aside each day to do at least one of the following:

- 1) Embrace your partner in a full body hug. None of this pat, pat on the back stuff. You've got to engage in a front on, full body hug where you really hold each other, smell each other, and feel each other's heartbeat. The nurturing and caring involved in this embrace will slow you down enough to open the heart. Hug until you both are relaxed.
- 2) Kiss for at least 20 seconds. This will raise both your hormone levels and make you feel closer. This kind of connection is needed especially when you start to feel like you and your partner are cruising along, side by side, living parallel lives. Take a moment and reconnect with some intentional kissing.
- 3) Massage your partner and let your partner massage you. It needn't be full body. Feet, hands, back and shoulders are all good. Touch emotionally stimulates us and keeps us feeling loved and cared for. Get some tender touching in as often as possible.



Pause and Reflect

- 1) Think back to when you were a child. What activities made you happy? Write about these in your journal.
- 2) Get your journal out and list all the adventures you dream of having or experiencing. Jot down a start date and commit to doing something you enjoy every day.
- 3) What is limiting you from connecting with your sensuality? What steps can you take to overcome it?

Embrace Your Life

We attract what we emanate. Embrace life with intention. Do you want good health, energy, joy and vitality? Of course you do. It's a silly question. Begin by seeing these qualities in yourself.

I realize how clichéd this sounds, but here is the bottom line: your life will not change until you ditch the old way of being and step into a new paradigm.

Sit down right now and create list of the best you possible. Right down everything. Get down as many details as possible. This is your new bucket list.

Embracing life is also about living from your heart instead of your head. It's about expressing the desire to share your exuberance with the world by offering smiles, kindness and compassion to everyone – from the homeless to your loved ones – without a hidden agenda.

When you allow yourself to be filled with love you're vibrating as such a high level it can be felt by others without saying a word. It's a form of gratitude and has the effect of softening the hardness in life.

Upset and difficulty is an inevitable part of life. Finding the courage to live from your heart *in spite of it all* is the key to living whole-heartedly.

Live from Love

Radiance comes in many forms. Mother Teresa was a radiant being. She lived from love. Ultimately, that's what this is all about. Love. For ourselves, each other and the world. Daring bravely to love yourself when vulnerable and afraid. Being open and willing to go deep in search of pleasure.

Barbara Fredrickson, Ph.D. is a professor of positive emotions and describes love as a "moment of warmth and connection that you share with another living being." She goes on to say that love is forever renewable and it can happen between strangers or "another living being."



Think about that. She didn't say love was a moment of warmth that you share with your lover. We've been conditioned to believe that love is reserved for friends and family only and she busts that myth wide open.

Love is a renewable resource - you just need the right formula: two people sharing a positive emotion that is a felt experience couple with a mutual feeling good will. Mix it together and you've got a micro-moment of love.

Gratitude Practice

If you take the time to focus on something you're grateful for, to the point of tears, you will be in the highest vibration, strongly attracting the good. This can happen by looking into the eyes of your child, or playing with your pet, or having a phone chat with your best friend. It can involve sinking luxuriously into a memory of a moment with someone dear to you where you felt unconditional love, or remembering a kindness from your partner, or standing in awe of nature. The more you practice, the more memories and opportunities will reveal themselves.

These are just a few ways to make contact with gratitude. Try to take a few minutes each day for this exercise. You will feel full and peaceful. Gratitude is palpable medicine. You feel it instantly and its healing effects are immediate.

Do Something You Love Everyday

In our culture, women are trained to jump at the chance to help others. We have no experience prioritizing our own joy or making an investment in ourselves. Instead, we are highly motivated when we can be of service to someone else. That role we know.

If this sounds familiar, I've got news for you. A woman's sexual authority need not compromise her spiritual power, but might actually fuel it.

Sensuality is the portal to the divine. Women intuitively know this but the pathway gets distorted by the burdens of responsibility and societal expectations. We forget our magnificence and settle for stealing moments of pleasure, predominantly through food, alcohol and shopping.

It's incredibly powerful to give yourself this gift of doing something you love. Do something you love for at least 10 minutes, every day. We all think we don't have time, but most of us can find ten minutes somewhere. Instead of trolling Instagram (even if you love it), listen to music, dance, shoot hoops, yodel, bang a drum, juggle tennis balls – it doesn't have to be anything spectacular. Just do it on purpose, every day, for no other reason than it makes you happy.



The Right of Pleasure

The only way to truly connect with the female body's capacity to feel rapture is through pleasure – which is the heart of the divine. When a woman owns her feminine energy, she learns about her body, her innate sensual potential and creative capacity. I'm not talking about sex-kitten, pornographic erotic pleasure. This is the humble and awe-inspiring knowledge of what turns you on - physically, spiritually and mentally.

As a reminder, the female body was *built* for pleasure. Why else would we have an organ that packs 8,000 nerve endings dedicated to pleasure? *Eight thousand* nerve endings are there to teach us that our pleasure is not to be denied. When a woman ignores her joy, she can mistake her strength and purpose and believe her only function is to serve.

This misconception can turn into a life starved of pleasure, driven by expectation. Generations of women are living their lives in a perpetual state of anger and resentment, not knowing how to generate joy, pleasure and satisfaction on their own.

It's time to prioritize joy.

The feminine is sensual. She is the world of the senses: touch, taste, smell, sight and sound. She is alive in both genders, though she thrives specifically in women. When women buy into the cultural pathos and accept a superficial definition of femininity that consists of shoes that disfigure feet and cosmetics that are chemically-laden, our life force shrinks.

More importantly, it disconnects us from our essence. This disconnect can lead to a crisis in confidence that is difficult to articulate. We just know something is off. We feel flawed and in need of fixing to meet an unattainable ideal. Every time we feel off, a little more of light diminishes.

To connect with our Inner Nature is a journey of reclamation. We women are reclaiming our right to get our needs met. To care of ourselves and support one another on the path. We've been taught to obey and do as we are told. As a result, we often don't trust our inner knowing becomes not a trusted guide, but a suspicious force to be advised against.

Every one of us has a story of how we learned to silence our inner knowing. Each story is unique yet similar in essence. We were rewarded when we responded from our masculine energy. When we suppressed our strong emotions, intuition and our deep, limitless well of sensuality.



If a woman neglects to prioritize joy, the body produces stress hormones. These hormones restrict blood flow and nitric oxide levels plummet. The result? Fewer neurotransmitters, which translates to increased depression, irritation, sadness, loneliness and anger.

These are serious health risks. Higher levels of cortisol in the body can suppress the immune system and decrease libido. Cortisol interferes with learning and memory. It lowers immune function and bone density, increases blood pressure, raises cholesterol, and causes weight gain and heart disease.

In order to truly claim our essential nature, we need experiences that will continually break us and remake us into the radiant, powerful, sensual women we were born to be. Not through violence or domination, but through continually connecting to an ever-expanding sense of meaning and purpose.

Maintaining Your Radiance

What lights us up and turns us on is ever-changing. Ironically the more demanding our lives, the more rigorously we must attend to it.

Part of a woman's radiance comes from her ever-expanding sensual enjoyment of her body. Whether you are single or married, it's important to continually nourish your sensual unfolding. It's critical to prioritize and invest in your ever-expanding sensual life for the sake of feeding your own soul.

This simply means making the decision to serve your radiance. Does that seem selfish? Not at all. Maintaining a high vibration is the best way to be the most loving and generous being possible.

Creating a radiant relationship is a journey. Just like any creative journey, the key is to get as clear as possible about what you want. The dance of desire is a wonderful exchange between you and that which is greater than you. The more a woman polishes her own alter and stokes the coals of her own brilliant, radiant light, the more she aligns with her true self.

Pleasure Playback Exercise

Radiant relationship is all about learning to live at a higher level of orbit, inside of our connection with another person – be it your partner, lover, friends, family, or children. When we are plugged into what lights us up, we're able to bring so much more connectivity and creativity into our relational life.



Over the next few days, keep an eye out for pleasurable experiences. They may be obvious ones like a great date night, or more subtle like a pleasant morning with your kid(s). For each pleasurable experiences, pick one or two of the highlights and share them with the person involved.

When a positive moment is shared, the brain experiences this as happening in real time (again). Positive "feel-good" chemicals are released. This practice not only strengthens relationships, it solidifies new neuronal pathways creating room for more pleasure.

Try to make a daily habit of sharing gratitude, joy, and appreciation with someone in your life and watch your life enjoyment increase exponentially.

Female Friends Spend Raucous Night Validating the Living Shit Out Of Each Other

AKRON, OH – According to witnesses, a tight-knit group of five female friends spent a wild night on the town Saturday, overindulging in emotionally supportive behavior and generally validating the living shit out of each other.

Confirming the women get together at least once a month for an all-out, anything-goes session of nonjudgmental reassurances, 42-year-old Sarah Dotson said the evening quickly turned into "a total rager," with the friends sharing excessive amounts of admiration, empathy, and encouragement for one another.

"The entire night we just went balls out with the confidence-boosting," Dotson said of the gathering, adding that by 10 p.m. she had already partaken in seven or eight mutual expressions of positive regard. "It was completely insane. We bolstered the shit out of Kelly's self-esteem, and by the time the check came, we had her shouting that her boss was a huge asshole for not recognizing all her hard work and giving her that promotion."

"We just kept telling her how fucking talented and beautiful she was until eventually the restaurant had to ask us to leave," Dotson added.

As the women moved from one bar to the next, the evening reportedly only grew more and more wild, with the friends telling one another whatever they needed to hear regarding callous comments made by boyfriends, deteriorating relationships with family members, pet deaths, or frustrating new haircuts.

"We've always been a group of friends that listens hard, and consoles even harder," said Teri Lange, 48, who admitted that by the end of the night she had lost count of how many thoughtful, heartfelt compliments she had dished out. "Every time I turned around, left and



right, there was somebody helping Karen to own the fuck out of the frustration she feels toward her fiancé."

"The ladies and I just absolutely let loose with that shit until Karen had the strength to accept that her emotions are real whether she likes them or not, and she has to let herself feel them if she ever wants to move on," Lange added.

Sources reported that at approximately 11 p.m., the unruly and increasingly self-accepting women got completely out of hand, respecting and valuing each other to the point that many had clearly had far too much validation. One member of the group reportedly felt so validated she disappeared into the bathroom for a while to cry.

Melissa Byers admitted she was still a bit overwhelmed the morning after her binge-validating spree. The 243-year-old told reporters she was hoarse from loudly singing praises, and simply "wiped out" from so much dancing around touchy subjects.

"By closing time, we were all getting pretty sloppy with our affirmations, validating anything and everything we could find," said Byers, adding that her neck was stiff from a night spent constantly nodding in agreement. "I must have told Teri at least 15 times she'd made the right move by deciding to try and work things out with her boyfriend. What the hell was I thinking? That guy's a total shitheel."

Patrons at Shoemaker's Pub confirmed the rambunctious women would repeatedly get up in each other's faces, stridently identify their true feelings, and embrace for dozens of hugs—only to sit down again and continue on with round after round of the strongest praise.

"Almost every night of the week we get a group of ladies like this who get a little bit disruptive and rowdy, but who are basically harmless, for the most part," bartender Mike Kuhn said. "If I get complaints about them being noisy or obnoxious, I'll ask them nicely to settle down."

"But I try not to be too hard on them, considering all the stress they've been through lately," Kuhn added. "Sounds like it's been really crazy at work. And when you're busy trying to balance a career and a hectic social life, it must be difficult to find time for yourself."

[This was taken from *The Onion*, an American digital media company and newspaper organization that publishes satirical articles. If only...]



Sing Your Praises Worksheet

For this exercise you are going to take a deep, humble breath and then you are going to honestly assess your greatest strengths. Most women have been taught that bragging is arrogant. This worksheet will help you reclaim the benefits of your hard earned lessons.

First, identify something to brag about. What can you be proud of right now?

Second, identify something you appreciate or are grateful for. What blessing in your life would you like to acknowledge?

Third, identify something you desire. If money, time, and the laws of physics were no object, what would you desire right now?

Try doing this exercise daily, answering the questions in your journal and reflecting on them. And share this experience with others in conversation



Pause and Reflect Worksheet

- 1) Make a list of your radiance robbers, choose one and take an action step every day for one week to create a new positive pattern.

- 2) What is your pay-off for your belief patterns? For example, do you find yourself *always* feeling “left out?” How does this feeling serve you? Does it get you some needed attention and care? Protection? Maybe you get to blame others so you don’t have to take responsibility for your actions? What new behaviors can you take to step out of this pattern and stand in your power?

- 3) Set new boundaries this week by saying no to a request you don’t want to do. Write down a few them below as a reminder of your commitment.



Future Planning Exercise

Use the lines below to write down what quickly comes to mind and then use your journal for further reflection.

- 4) "Toss" yourself into the future and then visualize all the steps, decision and choices you need to make to get there.

- 5) See yourself ten, twenty, or thirty years from now. What does this wiser, sage soul want you to know?

- 6) Ask yourself, "What would my life look like if I were living as an empowered, sexy, intelligent woman?" (Fill in with whatever adjectives resonate with you most – healthy, fit, sensual, connected, joyful, fulfilled, etc.)



Areas of Life Checklist

- 11) *Health and Body* – Do you have a nutritious diet? Are you happy with your body weight?
How do you take care of yourself?
- 12) *Relationship* – Describe the details of your perfect partner and relationship together.
- 13) *Finance* – How much money do you make? How much do you have in savings and investments?
- 14) *Career* – What are you doing? How many days a week do you work?
- 15) *Emotional* – What is your general disposition? How do you handle challenge?
- 16) *Femininity/Sensuality* – Describe your essence, how you feel within, how you interact with others.
- 17) *Social* – Do you have positive, like-minded friends who support your needs?
- 18) *Spiritual* – What is your relationship with Spirit/God/Divine/Oneness?
- 19) *Making a difference* – How do you contribute to others and the world?
- 20) *Fun Life Experiences* – What brings you joy?



Pause and Reflect Exercise

- 1) Take some time to reflect on the question, "What would my life look like if I were living as an empowered, sparkling, sexy woman?" Give yourself permission to be bold and daring and see outside the box.

- 2) Take an honest inventory of your life. Refer to the Areas of Life checklist. Jot down key areas and issues below. When you are done journal as many details as possible about your experience. How do you feel about your future now? Ask yourself what outer and inner structures you will put in place to ensure attainment of this future.



Self-Discovery Worksheet

What are you afraid to change in your life because you think you might be shamed for making a mistake or fear looking foolish trying?

How is the desire to be seen as perfect keeping or capable keeping you from expressing yourself?

Name three things you would do if there was no chance of failure?

Visualize both outcomes to something you want to do. Discuss what you learned from both outcomes.



Eidetic Imagery Exercise

Eidetic imagery is a mental phenomenon by which a person produces an extremely detailed picture in his or her mind with such clarity and perfection it seems real. The image can be a reproduction of something the person has seen or a self-generated picture based on past experience.

For added impact, include the feelings. Once you have imagined the sights, sounds, colors, etc. explore how you feel while imagining all this with such vivid details.

- 1) See yourself as the passionate being you want to be.
- 2) See the way you walk and talk.
- 3) See the way you connect with others.
- 4) See how others react and treat you.

Visualize this as often as possible, acting "as if" this is already your life. This is what it means to "own it." You imagine what you want every day until it gets integrated into your and becomes your truth. From there, you live it.



Bliss List Exercise

The following is a self-reflection exercise to help you cultivate more joy.

Find a moment and have a pen and paper handy. Close your eyes and take a few, soft deep breaths. On the inhale expand into your heart. On the exhale, ground into your bones. From this place ask yourself, "What could I do for hours on end without getting paid that would fill me with joy?"

Write down five activities that make you really happy. Assess each one. Are they dependent on other people or are they things you enjoy doing on your own? You will have a challenging time igniting pleasure if it is externally dependent.

Self-motivated activities like yoga, gardening, jewelry making, photography, etc. come from within because they are the joys of your soul. You want the locus of control to be in your hands, where it belongs, not at the mercy of others. It can certainly involve others and is often more fun, but it needs to be something that already makes *your* heart sing.

If all your activities involve others, go back and change a few. Try to do at least one a day. Consider it your emotional hygiene and make it a part of your daily routine, on par with eating breakfast and brushing your teeth before bed.

If that sounds daunting, you may want to give your attitude a nudge. Joy is an essential ingredient of life. We lose our "oomph" without it. As you do more of what you love, you'll begin to notice little shifts. Maybe you're not as reactive or perhaps you feel an unexplainable burst of giddiness.

Being curious and open to trying new things is crucial when looking to resurrect your passion. People are creatures of habit. You'll need to lean into discomfort to spark change. For those of you super serious about increasing your joy quotient, do something fun, every day, for 30 days. It needn't be big, just something that you find pleasurable. Research shows daily practice makes you three times more likely to establish a new routine. Do yourself a favor and make joy a habit.



Body Love Exercise

To do this exercise, you will need a full-length mirror and a candle. Find a time when you will be alone and uninterrupted in a dark room. You'll need at least ten minutes.

Light a candle and place it on a table nearby. This is your sole source of lighting. Stand in front of the mirror and look at yourself. As you do, relax your face and jaw. Allow your shoulders to drop.

Notice any thoughts that arise, such as "This is really stupid." Or, "Ugh, I'm so fat!" Or, "Look at all those wrinkles." When these thoughts arise, just smile. Relax your jaw and breathe – slowly and mindfully. Observe how the candlelight casts a flattering, soft light on your skin, making it glow.

Now, remove your clothing and stand before the mirror. Breathe consciously and slowly as you gaze at your reflection. Slowly move your eyes around your reflection so that you look at every part of yourself.

Notice when your breathing changes, when your muscles tense or you feel the desire to look away. Just relax your face, your shoulders or wherever you are holding tension in your body. Simply make note of what you are experiencing and refocus on slow, deep breaths.

As you feel more relaxed, open yourself to receiving strength. Close your eyes and say aloud: "Goddess, Mother, Sacajawea, etc., change me into someone who sees the incredible beauty in my body." Then look at yourself in the mirror again. Look at the part of your body that caused you to have a defensive emotion or physical reaction when you gazed upon it and affirm your beauty.

When you have gazed at your entire body in the mirror, using affirmations whenever you feel resistance, end by saying aloud: "I am a beautiful, valuable, sexy, and sensual woman. I appreciate my body."

Then get dressed *before* turning on the light and blowing out the candle.

Repeat the Body Love exercise at least twice a week for a full month or until you find you're no longer experiencing resistance and it's easy to send your body love and appreciation. The shift can be quite dramatic.



Pause and Reflect

- 1) Do you allow other people's opinions and beliefs to affect how you see yourself? Set at least one new boundary with someone close to you this week.
- 2) Do you live more in your "doing" or "being" state? What can you do to balance these two energies?
- 3) What motivates you to do things for other people? Is it to look good? To be liked/loved? Approved of? Is it to satisfy your need to feel valuable? Is it because it brings you true joy?
- 4) What three things can you do right now that would exemplify and show the world you are owning who you are?
- 5) Set aside 10 minutes a day to meditate/pray and ask, "Who am I?" Listen for the answers and journal the insights and revelations until you are able to know this is the real you.



Name Your Pleasure Worksheet

Experiencing pleasure is a critical for vibrant health. Say it out loud: *"Experiencing pleasure is a critical for vibrant health."*

Take a minute to make a list of as many joyful activities and experiences as you can. Do not limit yourself. Think of big ones and small ones: Heated seats in your car on a cold day. The smell of fresh rain. Sinking into a bath. Taking a walk.

Reflect on how you can have these experiences more often. How can you turn mindless activities into a source of conscious pleasure? This is another example of the power of healthy mindset.

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)



6)

7)

8)

9)

10)



Breathing in Aphrodite Practice

Set aside some time to go for a stroll, in nature, by yourself. If that's not possible, on a crowded city sidewalk or around the house. Where you walk matters less than the mindset when you're walking.

As you're walking, imagine that a very sexy woman, someone you really admire, is walking with you on your left side. (Your right side represents giving and masculinity. This exercise is all about receiving and femininity.)

Think of Carrie Bradshaw and the iconic strut her and her friends embody every time they are together. With every breath, inhale this woman's energy and essence. Fill up on her feminine power. She believes in you and sees that you are her sister and equal. Imagine drawing in her sensuality with every step and filling up with vital life force with each breath.

Turbo-charge this exercise by combining it with an affirmation about your sensuality, such as "I am a goddess of desire, daughter of Aphrodite. I make love with wild, unleashed abandon. I am an irresistible force of nature."

Do this for two to five minutes a day for a month and notice what happens.



Swamping Exercise

When we learn how to wade through the muck, we learn to ride the vicissitudes of life. Rather than feeling bad about feeling bad, we know what to do. We ride it out. Swamping comes in handy when we're tired, stressed, angry, jealous, heartbroken, or feeling any other darker emotion.

The guidelines are simple. Plug into your emotional truth and embody the shit out it. We dance and scream. Howl at the moon or bang into a pillow. Maybe your body will want to roll around on the floor or wrestle with a girlfriend. We do our best to get out of the way and let the emotion move through us however it wants to.

This exercise will walk you through the steps. You'll need a journal, a big black trash bag, a pair of scissors, some loud music, some pillows and other props of your choosing. If you really want to do it right, have some good friends join the party. Being witnessed by like-minded sisters exponentially increases the transformation.

Step 1: Write out all the things that have upset you. This step is not necessary for some women, the embodiment process is enough. Writing down your thoughts primes the emotional pump. Try it both ways and see which way works best for you.

Step 2: Get a big black plastic trash bag. Seriously. Cut a hole for your head and arms, and pop it on like a dress. Belt is optional.

Step 3: Put on some loud music. Don't have a favorite trigger song? Ask your friends or Google the emotion your feeling. "Killing in the Name" by Rage Against the Machine is great for anger, "Wait" by Alexi Murdoch is powerful for heartbreak while

Step 4: Now take inspiration from a small child and allow yourself to surrender to the emotion. Don't hold back. Instead, stoke it. Stomp and scream, collapse and roll around, move your body the way it wants to move. As adults we don't have a lot of experience embodying our emotions. Swamping to music will help. Choose one, two or three songs. Finish with something soft and sensual that will bring you closure and back to your essence.

Step 5: Considering Swamping with a tribe. Gather a few friends, bring your props to a safe place, like an empty studio, open basement or living room. Each take turns saying out loud the things that upset you and cheering one another on. Move and dance and crawl and stomp and beat the pillow and whip the walls. It's deeply cleansing to roll around in the mud with others. Finish by giving thanks to each other to daring bravely and being the dynamic, bold divine creatures you are.



Reawakening Sensuality Exercise

If you want to connect with your feminine essence, take a few minutes to do this mind/body exercise.

To open your sensual center start by getting very comfortable, either sitting or lying down. Set the intention that you are taking this moment to reconnect with deep essential part of you.

Close your eyes and take ten deeply relaxing breaths, all the way down to your hips. Exhale stagnation, inhale expansion. Imagine with every breath that a brilliant light travels down to your pelvis enlivening every cell of your being.

Begin to slowly and gently move your hips around as organically as possible, while continuing to send energy into your pelvis. You may want to start out in one direction and then shift to another. There is no right or wrong way to do this – simply intuit what feels right for you. Do this for two to three minutes, allowing yourself to open naturally.

Take a moment now to reflect on what you're feeling. What are you sensing? Your body will talk to you. Be receptive to what it wants to tell you. Receptiveness is a deeply, feminine quality. Relish in your ability to do so.

After a few minutes you will feel the release of your innate sensuality moving through your body. This is the natural sensuality you are going for – nothing contrived or forced – this is how your natural sensuality is experienced when invoked. Some days it will be fierce and roaring, other days it will feel more like a gentle stirring. All normal. Run with it.

Now open your eyes and notice how you feel. It may be subtle or it may be profound. Take a few minutes and wrote about it in a journal.

The more you do this exercise, the more you will connect with your personal power. Make it a part of your daily self-care. The best time to incorporate this practice into your day is right when you awake in the morning, just before you hop out of bed.

Most women have so much to do, they hit the ground running which puts them in masculine action mode. So, before you get out of bed, while still warm from a good night's rest, commit to spending a few minutes welcoming and luxuriating in your feminine essence. This way you start your day grounded in your personal power. You might even find you are able to accomplish more with less stress and anxiety.

The best part about this exercise is that it not only opens your feminine heart center, it creates integration and flow of this natural, sensual energy that is the strength and domain of women.



Pleasure Playback Exercise

Radiant relationship is all about learning to live at a higher level of orbit, inside of our connection with another person – be it your partner, lover, friends, family, or children. When we are plugged into what lights us up, we're able to bring so much more connectivity and creativity into our relational life.

Over the next few days, keep an eye out for pleasurable experiences. They may be obvious ones like a great date night, or more subtle like a pleasant morning with your kid(s). For each pleasurable experiences, pick one or two of the highlights and share them with the person involved.

When a positive moment is shared, the brain experiences this as happening in real time (again). Positive "feel-good" chemicals are released. This practice not only strengthens relationships, it solidifies new neuronal pathways creating room for more pleasure.

Try to make a daily habit of sharing gratitude, joy, and appreciation with someone in your life and watch your life enjoyment increase exponentially.



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