

Honoring the True Self: a journey to discover a woman's core needs

An ebook by Aisha-Sky Gates



Your True Self is bright, beautiful, and a lot of fun.

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Synopsis

The author, Aisha-Sky Gates, life coach and alternative lifestyle counselor, created Personal Life Leadership©, a female empowerment program for women, Elevate Women podcast, and more. This delightful ebook is a workbook in the central lessons of PLL. Honoring the True Self explains how any woman of any culture can discover her core needs and why she should. It's a fun strategy for inner work that pays off in deep pleasure, self-assurance, clarity of mind, and a much lighter heart.

Women's liberation work today is aimed at cultural resistance (Brene Brown) or body wisdom (Christiane Northrup) or affirmations (Louise Hay). **Honoring the True Self: a Journey to Discover a Woman's Core Needs** accepts those wonderful influences and is most strongly rooted in Eva Pierrakos's The Pathwork of Self-Transformation and Buddhist philosophy.

Dedication

To every woman who has ever felt too much or not enough,

This book is a compass, not a command. It is an invitation to remember what your soul has always known: that your desires are sacred, your pleasure is powerful, and your peace is your birthright.

I am betting on you.

I am betting on your courage to turn inward, on your willingness to listen to the whispers of your heart, and on your readiness to reclaim your life, not as it was given to you, but as you choose to create it.

When you honor your core needs, you do more than heal yourself. You awaken the world.

May this journey bring you home to yourself. May it fill your days with joy, your nights with peace, and your life with the magic that only comes from living in alignment with your truth.

You are not alone. You are not too late. You are exactly where you need to be.

Welcome home.

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Introduction

This is not another program telling you who to be or what to believe. This is an invitation to discover who you already are and then to have the audacity to honor that. That is, you honor yourself through pleasure and through daily practice. Certainly, you do it through the revolutionary act of listening to your own soul.

Women want to feel good, to feel alive, to feel like themselves. And they don't want to have to pay dearly for it. They don't want to have to give up more than they already have.

Women are exhausted from:

- Being told they need to heal everything
- Being told their desires are problematic
- Being told that they need to "do the work" to deserve happiness
- Being told spirituality requires sacrifice or that transcendence only comes from meditating in a cave removed from the world.

There is another way to feel better, to feel renewed, to feel like yourself again. Come with me and learn:

- Your desires are the map.

- Happiness is not something to earn. It's something to align with.
- That alignment happens through honoring what already makes you feel alive.
- You have a right to your own personal happiness.

This book is a guide to discovering your core needs, which will deliver you into your own personal bliss. From there you will feel better, be able to think better, elevate your decision making, and give and receive love better.

Hello to all my sistah-friends who were curious enough to pick up a book about core needs. I wrote this as a letter to you, all, about how you can open up to more happiness in your life.

That's the bottom line here. Joy. Happiness. Bliss.

Contentment and satisfaction. I am on a mission. I want more and more women taking themselves off the hamster wheel that society put us on and walking themselves in the direction of Joy and Relief. You can be happy. Happiness of your own making is a terrifically potent antidote to society's ills and negative effects.

I am Aisha-Sky Gates. Over the last twenty years I have written about a wide variety of relationship topics. I have specialized in alternative lifestyles. All of it has been very satisfying for me as I worked with clients, male and female. That work continues.

My Elevate Women podcast covers topics that women need right now. Neither in print or on my podcast do I operate at the "who is going to do the dishes" level. If you need to negotiate or re-negotiate tasks or the relationship as a whole, well, I've already written a model for how to do that and told you why you should in an earlier book of mine. For a long time now, I've written and talked about subjects like imposter syndrome, real self-care, the importance of women supporting women, energy flows and how to manage yours, relationship conflict resolution, and more.

Moving on, I want to deal at the soul communication level of how we, women, are conducting our lives. It does not matter what culture you are from or what religion you follow or what your belief system currently is. I am talking to all women. I wrote a book that will help you to recognize the truth about what makes you happy and then have what it takes to honor that. You can see that my aim is big but I promise that what follows is super-crazy-easy for you. I'm talking about a mind shift, not one more thing to add to your already taxing To Do List.

Yes, for sure, I wrote this book because I see a problem and I am proposing how we, women, can turn it around. You are Divine and as such you do not have to prove anything to anyone to be deserving of Love. You were born pure and bright and beautiful. No price to pay to be able to receive Love. Undoubtedly,

somebody told you differently. Most likely, you have been laboring under the yoke of unkindness and a lack of compassion plus an identity rooted in self-sacrifice:

"I have to work crazy hard to be judged as worth something at all."

"I have to put the needs of others before my own. It's only right."

"I feel guilty whenever I allow myself to think of meeting my own needs."

"Attempting to set boundaries with people is nearly impossible. I hate conflict or potentially making other people uncomfortable."

You are Divine. It's got nuthin' to do with religious dogma or a particular belief system. Having followed my own philosophizing, I've learned to include myself in the basket of those who are worthy to receive love and attention alongside everyone that I serve. This book was an act of service. It wasn't a sacrifice. It was a joy to write.

Seven years ago, I created **Personal Life Leadership**©, a female empowerment/spiritual path program for women. **I guide women inward toward their core where they can tap into inner wisdom, learn to trust intuition, and re-discover True Self.** True Self is You minus the layers and layers of cultural influences that told you who you had to be. True Self/Real You is still there, intact, inside of you. When you begin to feel Her

again you are on your own spiritual path of discovery for being the real You, lovingly focused on your purpose for this lifetime.

The heart of Personal Life Leadership© is the discovering of core needs. **Core Needs.** **Every woman has core needs.** These are activities or amazing conditions that bring you back to yourself. Satisfying core needs is always going to be magical and fun. When you do your Thing you feel amazing. You feel great. Pleasure. Pleasure. Pleasure for you. This is way beyond just doing something that is relaxing. Your core need(s) will raise your vibration into being True Self. Yes, all of that. Only you can say what those are for you.

I can teach and I can show women areas of interest that will probably trigger your remembrances. Thus, I created my Personal Life Leadership© program that you can take. I also made

- my podcast episode on core needs,
- my core needs quiz (quick one on the website, elevatingwomen.org or the full version in this book), and
- other freebies like journal prompts.

Women from all cultures and life situations can adopt Personal Life Leadership©, beginning with getting clear about personal pleasure, core needs, and what it takes to restore themselves to their true being.

What you will find in these pages can be described as a process of self-determination because only you get to say how you will interpret your new understandings of self. Only you determine how you will walk in the world once you remember who you really are. You are in a beautiful process of discovery of self. Along the way, you are really learning to trust your own knowing.

If Personal Life Leadership© has a dictum it would be

allow yourself to realize what makes you feel alive. Do that. Do it often. Watch what happens to how you feel about yourself and how you see the world and your place in it.

And you already know our Personal Life Leadership© mantra:

You have a right to your own personal happiness.

Why, why, why pursue pleasure? Because you and I know that pleasure and aliveness are the fastest pathway to awakening or raised consciousness. When a woman understands her core needs and honors herself by satisfying them she gets to experience joy, presence, and satisfaction. She feels more like herself. She's alive and enlivened from her core outward. She is radiant. So, there she is with experiential proof that she matters, that she is more. That remembered awareness shifts her entire neurological and spiritual operating systems!

Misogyny says, "Your desires are not worth examining" and "Desires make you wanton and potentially reckless. They are dangerous to pursue." Societal messages tell us 24 hours, nonstop that we are less than. Look at television advertising.

Who is wielding a mop and caring for the children? Why do we feel compelled to spend millions of our dollars every year on cosmetics and body products to suit the male gaze and/or to make up for our allegedly inherent deficiencies?

Personal Life Leadership© says, "I have desires. You have desires. Pursuing pleasure for yourself is not reckless or wasteful. It's an honoring of self. You'll discover that you are better, not worse. You are more generous, not selfish. You are more connected, not isolated. You are more than your best self, all because you accepted your brand of pleasure in your life. Having turned inward, you'll discover your True Self. And, then, you get to live your life from that immense self-awareness.

Yes, of course, we despise the old paradigm that still actively tells us, women, that we are less than, that we do not have a right to our own happiness, that joy is a fantasy not worth pursuing, and that we are being selfish if we do not enslave ourselves to taking care of other people's needs. But . . . how long are you going to give away your energy and attention to hating those messages and the harm that they have done throughout the millennia? That's your energy given away. Not that you don't have a right to feel what you feel about what you and I and other women have been through.

There is another way to achieve our goal of true freedom for women as we walk this earth. We can turn our backs on what we no longer want to see in the world and give our energy to what we want to build. Our means for building is within ourselves.

As each of us turns inward and rediscovers who she really is we have immediately transformed the world and everything in it. Change you. Shift your consciousness. Open to True Self. Honor self/Self.

Turn toward what's true and good and wonderful for you and away from soul-depleting cultural influences. Rediscover who you really are by investigating personal pleasure. **What makes you feel more alive and more like you? Do that. Do it some more.**

Your awakened state will bring you joy and self-assurance. You will re-learn what it means to be in love with yourself. It's exciting, fulfilling, and a lot of fun. So satisfying. So soul-satisfying that your new awareness will drown out or minimize the television ads telling you that just being female is a never ending problem.

Eva Pierrakos: spirituality must be pragmatic and integrated with earthly life.

I feel tremendous compassion for the messy, complicated lives that we, women, got handed. I love and respect us, all. I am asking us to sanctify the lives we are already living by honoring what makes us feel whole.

The Sound of Resistance: But, but, but . . . why should I try this. I feel okay. My life is floating along okay. I worked hard to get to where I am.

Fair question. I have worked with women for many years, different types, ethnicities, and classes. Every woman has to make determinations about how to conduct her life. All the time, right? Of course. What I designed here leaves control in your hands. Walk your own path. Realize how very much power you actually have. Begin to pursue your own happiness. Understand what it means to prioritize your own personal happiness. You and everyone around you will benefit. If life is pretty good for you right now I am so very glad. I invite you to read on, doing so in the interests of gaining more and more information about You.

Resistance: I am not sure that I want to upend my whole life to pursue some unseen spiritual goal. I don't have time to add on one more thing.

Another good question. Read on. You'll discover something wonderful for you, specifically. No cookie cutter templates here. I wrote a book to guide you home. Just as the Universe exacts no price for your bliss, your satisfaction, or your fulfillment I propose no new burden in order to rediscover who you really are.

I'm not giving women more stuff to have to deal with:

"You must heal your trauma,"

"You must tear apart how you are currently living,"

"You must work toward enlightenment or your spiritual practices will come to nothing in the end."

The program inside these pages has an intention of pleasure. That's right. Pleasure.

I was exercising my main core need of creative expression by designing exciting possibilities for your inner landscape. You can only benefit. Your decisions are your own as you walk your path of discovery. Be happy.

Speaking of benefits if you get well-acquainted with your core needs, listen to this:

You'll know that you deserve pleasure. You'll know that you deserve to feel good, to wake up excited to start your day, to feel complete and full and satisfied in yourself. You can have all that and more.

You can feel good, not overworked.

You can feel satisfied with yourself and know for sure that you are enough. You have nothing to prove to anyone.

You can lead a love-filled life and pursue what you feel passionate about. It's all good.

Keep reading because what I am proposing is easy and fun.

Turn the page and meet the other sisters. You get to join us in sacred circle. Each of us is investigating individual paths but we are delighted to do so in the union of women gathering. We are blessed.

Chapter 1: The Gathering Circle



Women have always held sacred circles.

Welcoming curiosity and compassion

for each and every woman

We Can Set a Tone of Sisterhood

Welcome to another Elevate Women Circle. I'm so glad you're here. Close your eyes for a moment and take a breath with me. You've just arrived at a gathering of women who like you have gone to great lengths to make time to be here. We've assembled in a suite of warm, welcoming meeting spaces at one of the best resorts in the world. We, women, of many ethnicities and different classes, have made ourselves comfortable on the floor today with cushions and blankets. We're creating our very private, circular nest. Many, many candles bathe the room in soft light. You know I love candlelight. There's tea steaming in mismatched mugs that say "Girl Power" and "Divine Feminine" on them. You know I love my tea. Grab whatever you need and get comfortable. Everyone is very friendly; introduce yourself as you settle in.

I know. I feel it, too. There is something in the air that you haven't felt in a long time. It's safety. It's nothin' short of radical acceptance. It's the love that women naturally feel for each other. The women that you are sitting with aren't here to perform or compete or prove anything. They're here to remember who they really are. And now, through the magic of these pages, you and I are sitting among them in exactly that kind of circle. This is not a clinical space. This is not a place where you need to be articulate or feel that you have to have it all figured out.

This is a women's circle in its most sacred form—a space where souls gather. Women are particularly talented that way. We know how to enter the sacred just like that. I'm Aisha-Sky and I am here, holding space for you, just as I have for countless women over the years through my podcast, my speaking, my relationship counseling, and my coaching work through Elevate Women.

You Are Not Alone

I want you to know something foundational right now. You're not meant to do this alone. Not because you're not strong enough. Not because you don't have what it takes. You absolutely do. But because there's a particular kind of healing and transformation that only happens in community. It only happens when women gather and share their truth with each other.

Throughout human history, women have come together in circles in dedicated sacred spaces but, also, around open fires, in kitchens, in gardens, on farmland, and in forests. In those gatherings, something powerful always happened. Knowledge has been passed down. Strength has been drawn from the collective. Wisdom has been shared. Individuals have been transformed.

There's something about a woman's voice being heard and witnessed by other women that creates a frequency of healing all its own.

The Pathwork speaks of the law of interconnectedness:

- the understanding that we're all connected at a soul level,
- that what happens to one affects all,
- that we're here not just for our own transformation but to support each other's evolution.

I want you to know from the very beginning that your presence matters. Your questions matter. Your journey matters. You don't have to have arrived anywhere else before stepping into this circle. You don't have to be healed, figured out, or enlightened. You just have to be willing to look at yourself with honesty and compassion. That willingness is everything.

In The Pathwork of Self-transformation (1990) teachings, Eva Pierrakos spoke of the Real Self. It's that divine spark within each of us. Your True Self or Real Self has been there all along, at your core, beneath all the social conditioning and expectations and obligations you've endured since birth. In this book and in our circle, you'll be able to identify your deepest desires that we call your core needs. If you make time to satisfy those core needs you are necessarily living from the trueness of who you really are.

Creating a Judgment-Free Zone

In this circle, there are no exact answers. There are no "shoulds." You don't have to be dressed a certain way or be looking any sort

of way. In fact, the more real you are, the more authentic you are, the more powerful this journey becomes.

That's because transformation doesn't happen when we're performing or pretending. It happens in the raw, honest moments when we say the things we've been afraid to say. When we admit to the fears we've been hiding, things get really electric and productive. When we acknowledge the ways we've been abandoning ourselves, we open doors that let in the sunlight. When we tell the truth about how tired we are of living according to someone else's script, well, it is then that we are finally ready to open and be renewed.

In The Pathwork, this is called developing consciousness of the Lower Self, that part of us that has been shaped by fear, by old patterns, by the distortions of our divine qualities. The Divine Spark that's giving you life at your core is waiting and ready to do transformational work. We are Divine.

So, in this circle, we don't judge ourselves or each other for our Lower Self manifestations. We don't shame ourselves for our fears or our resistance or our doubts. Instead, we bring light to them. We examine how we feel with curiosity. We love every inch of ourselves and that is how transformation is within our power to have.

That's what a women's circle does. It creates a container of such radical acceptance that the masks can finally come off. And when the masks come off, real work becomes possible. Real healing is likely.

As you move through these pages, I'm asking you to take off your mask. We, each, constructed a mask long ago in order to be able to deal with the world. It's not just you. Like the rest of us in the circle, being self-protective only made sense. But today, leave the inner critic at the door. Bring your whole self—your mess, your questions, your confusion, your longing, bring your light—to our sacred circle. All of it is welcome here. All of it belongs. That's what I mean by creating a judgment-free zone. We celebrate being real.

Introducing the Concept of Core Needs

Women love to talk. I know that I do my share all the time. Let's discuss a crucial topic. Understanding core needs is the heart intelligence of my Personal Life Leadership program. What are **core needs** and why do they matter so much? A **core need is any activity, mindfulness practice, form of relaxation, or super desirable life situation that restores you to your True Self, that center of peace and wholeness that exists underneath all the noise, all the roles, all the expectations, all the conditioning.**

It's the Thing that makes you feel like you again. Maybe it's creating art. Maybe it's moving your body. Maybe it's singing or listening to music that moves you. Maybe it's walking barefoot in grass or sitting by the ocean. Maybe it's being held, touched, witnessed. Maybe it's solitude and silence. Maybe it's multiples of these possibilities.

Whatever it is, when you engage in it, you are expressed as your True Self. Your nervous system settles. Your energy

expands. You feel more alive, more present, more you. Only you can discover what your core needs are.

Core needs aren't luxuries or indulgences or frivolous activities you might do in all your spare time. They're essential. They're spiritual. They're the language your soul speaks and your spontaneous response to hearing your soul is feeling lighter and uplifted. Regular words aren't enough to express how elevated you feel.

In The Pathwork framework, Pierrakos speaks of the importance of honoring what is real and true within us, and core needs are one of the most direct expressions of what is true. They are not needs you've been taught to have. They're not needs imposed by family or society. They are needs that arise from the deepest part of your being—your authentic self, your creative core, your Divine Spark. When you honor a core need, you're literally saying yes to your own soul. You're saying, "I matter. My aliveness matters. My joy matters. My wholeness matters." That's not selfish. That's sacred.

Why Exactly Do Core Needs Matter?

Here's what I know after working with hundreds of women over a couple of decades—most of us have been conditioned to ignore our deepest needs. We've been taught to prioritize everyone else's comfort, to pander to someone else's approval and everyone else's idea of who we should be. And in that process of abandoning ourselves, we lose something precious. We lose

touch with the voice of our soul even though each of us knew it as a child. We lose access to the energy and creativity that flows when we're aligned with our True Self. We become depleted. We become disconnected. We feel empty even when our lives look full on the outside.

We experience what I call a kind of soul-level exhaustion. It's not just physical tiredness, but a spiritual weariness that no amount of sleep can fix. This exhaustion is your soul's way of telling you, "I am abandoned. I'm being silenced. But I am You and will always be here."

And when you continue ignoring that message, that extraordinary drag on your spirit can begin to show up in your body as anxiety, as depression, as chronic tension, as illness, and in a general sense of disconnection from life itself. But here's the turn around, beautiful truth: when you honor your core needs, when you give yourself what truly restores and replenishes you, something miraculous happens. You become stronger, healthier, more self-loving. You start making decisions from your center instead of from fear or obligation. You reclaim your energy, your joy, your sovereignty. Your health improves. Your relationships shift for the better.

Your capacity to show up for others increases, not because you're depleted and forcing it, but because you're overflowing with love for self. That doesn't just benefit you. Love spilling over and outward benefits everyone around you.

A woman who knows and honors her core needs is a woman who can show up fully, freely, and powerfully in the world. She's not running on empty. She's not bitter about all she's given away. She's not waiting for someone else to save her. She's saving herself. And in saving herself, she gives permission to everyone around her to do the same, relating to their souls.

Listening Deeply

One of the most spiritual things we can do for each other is to listen deeply. We are not here to fix anything or anybody. We are here in our sacred circle to witness and honor each other's lives. Through this book, I'm listening to you: to the questions you're asking, to the pain you're carrying, to the dreams you've tucked away, and to the parts of yourself you've been afraid to acknowledge.

And I'm inviting you to listen deeply to yourself, as well. Pause. Breathe. Ask the important questions as we move along:

What do I really need?

What does my soul want from me?

What have I been ignoring or dismissing about myself?

In most cultures, we're not taught to listen deeply, especially not to ourselves. We're taught to react, react, react, push forward. We're trained to think that our inner voice is unreliable, that we should trust external experts more than our own knowing.

But The Pathwork teaches us that our True Self, our Real Self, holds perfect wisdom. All we have to do is learn to listen to it. Deep listening is an act of love. It's how we honor what's true. So, in this circle, we slow down. We listen. We honor what comes up, even if it's uncomfortable, even if it doesn't make sense yet. And we trust that in the listening, wisdom will emerge.

I'm inviting you to listen deeply as you read these pages. Listen to which chapters resonate most. Listen to what triggers you or makes you uncomfortable. That's usually where your growth edge is. Listen to what makes your heart sing. Listen to what your body is telling you. That deep listening is where your transformation begins.

Honoring Vulnerability

Vulnerability takes courage. It takes courage to admit that you don't have it all together. I once had a client who was known for her tremendous scholarly accomplishments but was often quite depressed and felt lonely. She revealed to me that she feared that God had already given her as much as she had any right to expect. She'd grown up very poor with few prospects and yet here she was living a middle-class, privileged life. Maybe she had no business wanting more, like being truly loved and appreciated. What if God thought of her as selfish?

It takes courage to say, "I've been neglecting myself," or "I don't even know what brings me joy anymore," or "I'm terrified of wanting too much."

But vulnerability is also where the magic happens. When you allow yourself to be seen, you create the space for **authentic connection**. Authentic connection is the ground from which transformation grows.

In our sacred circle of women, vulnerability is strength. When women gather in our kind of vulnerable space, sacred magic happens. Deep inner walls come down. Real talk becomes possible. Real healing becomes possible.

I'm asking you to be vulnerable here, to let your guard down, to trust that you're safe in this circle. Allow yourself to be seen exactly as you are. I promise you that whatever you're feeling, whatever you're facing, you're not alone. I've been there. The women I've worked with have been there. We've all found our way back to ourselves. So, can you.

Curiosity Over Perfection

Women tend to approach self-discovery with the same perfectionism they apply to everything else. They want to do it right. But The Pathwork teaches us that real transformation comes through allowing ourselves to be exactly where we are, experiencing curiosity rather than judgment.

Approach your inner work with playfulness, with lightheartedness, and with the spirit of a child exploring something new. Let yourself wonder. Let yourself wander. Let yourself be surprised

by what you discover. Everything that happens is part of the beautiful, messy, nonlinear process of coming back to yourself.

YOU COULD SAY TO YOURSELF, "Is this silly? Is this practical? Is this something I should be wanting?"

INSTEAD, HAVE A LIGHT, HAPPY MOMENT AND ASK, "What feels true to me? What makes me feel more like myself? What brings me peace?"

Without editing or critiquing what you receive, notice what happens inside you. If you feel drawn to painting, take note of that. If you feel called to spend time in nature, notice that. If you want to move your body, to make music, to sit in solitude, acknowledge and accept it all.

I encourage you to sit with these questions. Silence is your friend to be able to hear your answers. However, don't hesitate to focus on the questions and then go on about your day. Your deeper mind will happily keep working with them. Answers may pop up days later as you are washing dishes or enjoying a walk.

So, as you explore, let curiosity take the lead.

Let yourself want things without immediately explaining them away or dismissing them.

The Power of Shared Discovery

There's something deeply healing that happens when you discover your core needs in community. When you hear another woman's story and recognize yourself in it or watch someone else light up as she remembers what she loves to do, you are uplifted. Later, when you witness another woman claiming her boundaries and setting her life in alignment with her truth, that witnessing will transform you. The sharing and witnessing dissolves the shame and isolation that so many women carry.

Shared discovery multiplies joy and dissolves shame. We are impressed deep inside that we're not alone. We know that we are not selfish for wanting more, for needing to express ourselves as more. Sharing creates a container of safety and stability where real transformation becomes possible. When you share your core needs discovery with other women and they receive it with genuine celebration and recognition, something shifts inside you. You start to believe that what you need actually matters. You start to trust your own knowing. You start to see yourself as worthy of honoring.

And when you witness other women doing the same work, you're reminded again and again that these things are possible. This is real. We can do this together.

So, as you move through this book, know that you're part of something bigger. Your journey matters not just for you, but for all of us. We need you to remember who you are. We need your creativity, your wisdom, your unique gifts. We need your light. The world needs you now, fully alive, fully present, fully yourself.

And that's why this work—this sacred work of discovering and honoring your core needs—matters so much.

Permission to Explore and Enjoy

You have permission to enjoy our process. You have permission to prioritize your own happiness. This is sacred work and it's supposed to feel good. Because when you're meeting your core needs, you're in love with yourself again. You're playful. You're free. You're aligned with your True Self. This is your journey, my sister.

Divine energy flows through laughter, which is a surrender of the ego mind.

When one of us remembers who she really is, when one of us honors her core needs, when one of us comes home to herself, we all rise a little bit higher. That's the power of sisterhood. That's why community isn't optional. It's essential.

You're part of this circle now. In this eloquent private room, there are cushions for comfort on a thick carpet, floor chairs, soft colorful coverlets for warmth, beautiful tapestries on the walls to tease our eyes, and plenty of candles to light our way as we journey into Rich Inner Territory. We'll hold each other's spirit.

Allow yourself to feel the welcoming warmth of sitting with your sister-women.

Mantras

1. Joy flows, we all rise.
2. One joy, flowing through all.
3. I am worthy of time, space, and care.

Journal Prompts

A. What beliefs have kept me from honoring my own needs?

B. What do I choose to believe today and honor about myself?



Chapter 2: Clearing the Mud



Society's Mud Plus Our Internal Sludge

Awareness of Cultural Influences

Understanding the "Muddy Pond" Metaphor

Your True Self lies beneath cultural debris. Picture a beautiful, clear pond that has been filled with mud and debris for a long time. That pond is you. Your True Self hasn't been destroyed or lost though. It's still there, still radiant, still whole, just buried beneath layers and layers of cultural silt that have settled on top of who you really are.

Louise Hay had something to say about this: *women have historically been programmed to accept limited choices.* But I know that underneath all that programming, your True Self is alive. It's resilient. It's valiant. It's waiting for you to clear away the debris so you can see yourself clearly again.

This chapter is about clearing. It's about recognizing the mud for what it is—not your fault, not your failure, but the natural accumulation of societal messages, cultural expectations, and inherited beliefs that have gotten in the way of your vision. Once you see the mud for what it is, you can start rinsing it away.

I, repeat:

- Not your fault,
- Not your failure,
- Mud equals the natural accumulation of societal messages, cultural expectations, and inherited beliefs inside you.

How Cultural Influences Cloud Your Vision

Think back to when you were a girl. What messages did you receive about what a woman should be, should do, or should want? Those messages came from everywhere, all the time. Your family, your school, your church/synagogue/temple, your TV shows, the mall, the salon, the magazines at the checkout counter were all screaming messages at you. They came so consistently, so quietly sometimes, that you probably didn't even notice them becoming part of your internal voice. And over time, you did internalized them.

You started organizing your life around The Cultural Messages. You were making decisions based on these external scripts rather than on what your soul was actually asking for. You stopped listening inside yourself and trusting what you could find there.

That's the mud. We won't waste more of our time and energy hurling anger at the mud. But it clouds everything. It distorts your ability to hear your own inner wisdom. Mud clouds your sense of

- what you actually need,
- what you deserve, and
- it keeps you from seeing your True Self clearly.

Once you recognize the mud for what it is, you can start to clear it away.

The Messages We Inherit

Let me name some of this for you because naming it helps dispel what no longer serves you and me:

- Women are still fighting for fair pay, for equal advancement, for basic respect in the workplace and beyond.
- We're taught that our bodies are problems to be solved—too soft, too loud, too emotional, too much.
- Advertising campaigns are designed specifically to make us feel inadequate, to plant doubt in our minds about our worth. Commercial jingles burrow into our brains and tell us we're not enough—not beautiful enough, not young enough, not thin enough, not smart enough, not quiet enough, not strong enough.
- And underneath all of this runs a deeper current: the message that our needs don't matter. Our happiness is less important than everyone else's. Being a good girl/good woman means sacrificing, giving almost constantly, and diminishing ourselves to make others comfortable. That's some powerfully thick mud, sister-friend, and it's been coating our vision for generations.

Recognizing the Patterns That Hold You Back

Now, I want you to think about your own life. What patterns do you notice? Here are some pattern possibilities. What do you recognize from your own life?:

- Are you constantly over-giving?
- Do you find yourself saying yes to things you don't want to do?
- Are you perpetually exhausted, drained, running on empty?
- Do you second-guess yourself even when you know you're right?
- Do you rely on outside validation—approval from your boss, your partner, your friends, your family—as a replacement for trusting your own inner knowing?
- Do you feel guilty for wanting things just for yourself?
- Do you talk yourself out of satisfying your own needs?

These patterns aren't random. They're not personal failures. They are the direct result of cultural conditioning that has taught us to prioritize everyone and everything but not ourselves. But I happen to know absolutely that these patterns can be interrupted. I and so many other women are laughing as we look back at the patterned behavior that we no longer embody. Once you see them, once you name them, you can begin to choose differently. I did. Other women in our circle are saying the same.

Institutional Barriers and Inequities

The mud isn't just built up silt in your internal pond. It's structural. It's built into the systems we move through every day.

It's in the workplace, where women still earn less for the same work as their male peers. It's in the healthcare system, where our pain is often dismissed or minimized. It's in the legal system, where violence against women is often underreported, covered up, or minimized. It's in the family structures that still expect women to carry the emotional labor, the mental load, physical hardship, and endless responsibility.

These aren't small issues. They're massive barriers that affect how we move through the world, how safe we feel, how much space we believe we have a right to occupy. And they tell us a powerful lie that our needs aren't nearly as important as keeping the system functioning. That's more mud, deep, heavy, systemic mud.

But even as we work to change these systems, we can also work to clear our own vision, to remember that our needs matter, to create sanctuary for ourselves wherever we are.

What I have written here is not about tearing down oppressive systems. I believe in a bright new tomorrow full up with systems that support equality and inclusion. I believe in building the new world that we want to see. All of that and more, to be sure. But all of that begins with the individual You and the individual Me reclaiming who we really are. Your job is not saving the world. We are tired of the world's weight on our backs alone. Your job is not to rail at an unfair world or to try to convince others how bad it all is. Your job is to take good care of You. You are important. You are Divine. I am Divine. When I honor myself I have just

made a huge contribution towards humanity's good health and sanity.

I deserve to prioritize my own happiness. I did not come to this earth to be a mule for the world's or my family's problems. I matter. You and I are worth so much more than that. You deserve to be happy. What would your life look like if you absorbed that message? How would your decision making change if you understood your natural worth? Your job is to turn inward and play a game of discovery. That's all. Be happy.

The Daily Toll of Impossible Standards

There are everyday negative impacts of living in a culture that doesn't prioritize women's wellbeing:

- Most of us are perpetually tired. We're overworking, over-giving, running ourselves into the ground.
- We're steeped in self-doubt, even when we're accomplished, even when we're doing well. There's a chronic lack of self-assurance that undermines us. There exists a constant questioning of whether we're doing enough, being enough, producing enough.
- We're dependent on outside rewards and outside validation instead of learning to trust our own intuition and inner knowing. A consequence is suppression of any notion of honoring the self/Self.

- We're disconnected from our bodies, from our pleasure, from our creative selves.
- We're isolated from other women, competing instead of connecting.

These are real costs with real impacts on our health, our joy, our sense of self, and our quality of life.

These conditions and their effects exist outside of our will; we did not cause them or vote for them. We live in a culture that doesn't encourage women to have a rich inner life, to prioritize our own happiness, or to develop a deep relationship with ourselves. We can begin to investigate how to turn all of that around and live happy, fulfilled lives.

So far, in this chapter I've written almost exclusively about externalities. I've given cultural influences a lot of different names that you and the rest of us around the circle can relate to. But if we stop here and only focus on enculturation then we are no closer to our own liberation. We've simply identified problems that affect all women. No new news there. Of course, we are not done. We've identified the mud and we had to start there. Now, let's move inside of each of us to identify some consequences of exposure to and shaping by all that mud. We will look at the internal sludge like

- Suppression of desires,
- self-doubt,

- perfectionism,
- lack of self-compassion,
- guilt and
- a feeling of disconnection.

I have ideas for how to counteract these harms to women.

Moving From External Approval to Inner Authority

For years and more years, I was just like you. I was seeking approval from everyone else—the person that I married, my relatives, my employers, and society at large. I was performing the role I thought I was supposed to play, trying to be perfect, trying to earn love and acceptance through my actions. And you know what it got me? Exhaustion. Emptiness. A profound disconnection from myself.

Furthermore, I did not grow up with any models of self-determination. I was steeped in the belief that life happened to me. If good things happened then I was told that I was lucky. Nothing was happening for me. Either I was randomly fortunate in one moment or tragically chosen in another. Or, God, a male deity, was sometimes pleased with me and sometimes not and he could be punishing me if things weren't going well. I lived in fear. I saw no way out.

It wasn't until I started looking inward, when I started questioning the messages I'd internalized, that things began to shift. I realized that the approval I was seeking from the outside was

actually something I needed to give myself from the inside. That's when everything changed. That's when I started to reclaim my power.

I want you to begin to consider shifting your authority from the outside world to your own inner knowing. Your intuition is not just valid. It's sacred. Your feelings matter. Your needs matter. Your vision for your life matters. And you don't need anyone else's permission to honor what is true for you.

Permission to Be Imperfect

Here's something radical: you don't have to be perfect. You don't have to have it all figured out. You don't have to be the perfect daughter, the perfect wife, the perfect mother, the perfect employee, the perfect woman. Have you thought about the misguided logic here given who gets to say what is perfect? It hasn't been you. It hasn't been me. You and I have just been reacting to the pressures of being made to accept other people's standards for what is beautiful or what is intelligent or what is holy or spiritual or what is acceptable coming from a woman.

Here is my counter message for you: you have permission to be messy. You can be angry. You have every right to feel confused sometimes. You can be uncertain. You can be all of those things and still be worthy. You can still be deserving of love, respect, and care, most especially from yourself.

Perfectionism is mud. It's a tool that society uses to keep us small, to keep us questioning ourselves, to keep us dependent on external validation. But it doesn't have to be your choice any more. You can put it down. You can release the impossible standard that you have internalized and replace it with something much more powerful:

- self-compassion.
- Grace.
- Permission to be human.
- Permission to have needs.
- Permission to prioritize those needs.

From Over-giving to Self-Honoring

Think about what you've been doing with your energy. Where has it been going? For most women, the answer is everywhere except to ourselves. We give and give and give to our families, our jobs, our communities, our partners, our friends, and to our religious institutions. We make everyone else's happiness our responsibility. We put everyone else's needs before our own. And somewhere along the way, we convinced ourselves that this was noble. That this was what it meant to be a Good Woman. None of those beliefs came from us, women. They were and still are imposed from the outside world.

But I'm here to tell you, "that's mud." That's the old paradigm and it's time to wash it away. **Because when you're constantly overgiving, you're abandoning yourself.** You're telling yourself that your needs don't matter, that your happiness is less important, that you don't deserve to be cared for. Those are lies, powerful, persistent lies.

You can begin to shift that pattern. It does not have to be all at once. But gradually, gently, you can begin to redirect some of that generous energy toward yourself. Beginning to honor your own needs with the same care and attention you give to everyone else is a sacred act.

Reclaiming Your Energy and Freedom

Imagine for a moment what would change if you prioritized your own happiness. What if you said no to things that don't serve you? It's not an angry no; it's just "no, thank you." What if you created boundaries around your time and energy? And, what if you made space for what truly restores and replenishes you?

Imagine walking through the world taking up all the space you feel like possessing. Breathing deeply. Laughing fully. Speaking your truth. Not shrinking, not apologizing for existing, not making yourself smaller to make others comfortable would do wonders for your quality of life and fulfillment of self and your life.

Feel free to laugh at me. I am about to do what I never thought that I would. I'm about to quote a Hallmark rom com in which you can see the progression as the woman protagonist gradually discovers and reclaims her right to prioritize her own happiness. The movie is It Was Always You with Erin Krakow:

Having a plan for being happy isn't the same as being happy.

What We Can Do with the Dirt that Plagues Us

First of all, realize how much Uncomfortable Stuff in your life is not your fault or your responsibility. Those irritants, I will call them, are outside of you and were not your conscious choice. They have been a main cause of your self-doubt. It's the mud. It's not you.

Make that differentiation and you will have made excellent early progress on your clarity of mind. That's a few great steps toward your True Self and cracking open your bliss. I urge you to

1. Get used to recognizing and dismissing each negative cultural pressure in your life. Give it no more of your energy.
Claiming your right to prioritize your own happiness is a reclaiming of energy and freedom. Don't make this exercise boring or weighty. Why add more weight to the mud that already sits on top of your True Self? Make lighthearted observations as you go through your day.
2. Make Identifying Mud a playful game with other women and with friends. It will help you to keep social influences separate

and apart from your personal identity. “This isn’t Me. This isn’t Me and that isn’t Me either. I know who I am.”

Mantras

1. “I am not the mud. I am the light beneath it.”
2. “I release what is not mine. I reclaim what is true.”

Journal Prompts

A. List three cultural messages that you’ve internalized. How have they shaped your choices?

B. What would change if you no longer believed those messages?



Chapter 3: Awakening Your Innate Desires



Wanting What You Want Just Cuz

“I prioritize my own happiness.”

Remembering Who You've Always Been

Your True Self isn't something you need to create or even discover for the first time. You will remember yours. True Self is a soul remembrance. You were born as your True Self. Before the conditioning, before the expectations, before the "shoulds" took hold inside, you were You, complete, whole, radiant, and free.

Think back to your childhood for a moment. There was a time when you knew what you wanted. When you were little, you felt things deeply. As a child, you weren't apologizing for taking up space. Back then your joy was unrestrained. Your Child Self gave no caution to your creativity flowing without permission. That wasn't a different version of you. That was You. The Real You was out and about.

When I was a very young child I was allowed to freely get my crayons out and draw or I could read my books or play with my dolls and games. As an adolescent and teen I could go outside and walk in the woods or kick a ball or work in the garden. Many things happened throughout those years that made me very unhappy but I also had the means to bring myself back to freedom and happiness on my own. I had a rich inner life as a kid. Only as an adult am I appreciating the fact that my spirit did not go unnourished. There was the will and the means to restore and replenish True Self.

Cultural influences have added muddy layers, but nothing has changed the essential nature of who you are. And the beautiful truth is that you can remember. You can filter out the mud. You can recover that knowing of self that existed before the world told you who you should be. Your True Self is calling to you, inviting you to come home.

Life in our 40s, 50s, and beyond can throw some real curveballs. I see it in so many of the incredible people in my circle...the strange feeling that somewhere along the way, they lost a piece of themselves.

Society doesn't quite know what to do with us once we reach "a certain age." And honestly? Sometimes we don't either.

But here's the beautiful secret...this season of life isn't about being who you were. It's about meeting who you *really* are.

—Colette Baron-Reid, author, spiritual teacher

What Did You Love as a Child?

I want you to think back to a time in your life when you felt most alive and most connected to yourself. What were you doing? How did your body feel? Were you creating something? Moving your body? Spending time in nature? Playing music? Writing? Building something?

For many of us, these answers are connected to something we've since abandoned, pushed aside, or decided was impractical or frivolous. Maybe you loved to paint, but you were told that art wasn't a "real" career, so, you stopped. Maybe you loved to move—to dance, to run, to be active but somewhere along the way, you got busy and stopped making time for it. Maybe you loved solitude and deep reflection, but your responsibilities piled up and you started filling every moment with productive activities and obligations.

These aren't random losses. They're connected to what we call core needs. The things that made you feel most like yourself as a child are probably signposts pointing toward what will restore you as an adult. So, take a moment and ask yourself, "What did I love? What made me lose track of time? What brought me peace and joy simultaneously? What made me feel like myself?"

Desires Hidden Under "Shoulds"

Now, I also want to acknowledge a more delicate possibility. Sometimes, our deepest desires get buried not because we lost them, but because we actively suppressed them. Maybe you

wanted to pursue something creative, but you were told it wasn't practical. Maybe you wanted to prioritize your own needs, but you were taught that being a Good Woman meant sacrificing. Maybe you wanted to be bold and take up space, but you learned that it was safer to be quiet and small.

Over the years, these suppressed desires don't just disappear. They go underground. They become that vague sense you might currently have that something is missing. They become the restlessness you feel even when your life looks perfect on the outside. They become the quiet voice inside saying, "Is this all there is?" Those desires are still there. They haven't died. They're just waiting for you to give them permission to be seen again. The question within our circle at this moment is "What is your soul asking for?"

Turning Guilt into Permission

One of the biggest obstacles I see women face if they try to honor their core needs is guilt. We feel guilty for wanting something just for ourselves. We feel selfish. We feel like we're being irresponsible as if we are neglecting our duties. We've been so thoroughly trained to put everyone else first that the idea of prioritizing ourselves feels transgressive, wrong, even dangerous. How dare we even think about anything that might not support the status quo as you have known it?

A friend showed up at my local yoga studio for meditation. It was only her second or third time ever attempting meditation of

any sort. When we were done she reported to the class that her mind was reproaching her for taking this time for meditation as opposed to the countless domestic tasks that awaited her at home. A critic voice was saying, "What do you think that you are doing? Laundry isn't going to do itself. When exactly are you going to start dinner? Don't you have things to pick up at the store?"

But I want you to challenge that guilt. "Guilt, where did you come from? Whose voice am I hearing, really? Is it mine? Or, is it the internalized voice of everyone who ever told me that my needs didn't matter as much as other people's? Guilt is not your friend. It's not protecting you or making you a better person. It's keeping you stuck. It's keeping you disconnected from yourself. It's time to release it.

Meeting your core needs isn't selfish. It's the opposite. It's essential care of You. It's how you come back to yourself. You can show up more fully in your life and in the lives of people you love. Give yourself the gift of doing what makes you happy. Nourish yourself in this way.

Needs Versus Wants: dismantling old beliefs

I think one of the reasons women struggle so much with honoring their core needs is because we've been taught to dismiss them as frivolous wants. We are reluctant to recognize our core needs as genuine and legitimate. It certainly appears that you and I and our sisters around the circle have given away our power to

others. What is deemed to be legitimate is determined outside of ourselves. We tell ourselves, "I don't need to paint. Maybe I want to. But I don't need it." We tell ourselves, "I don't need to spend time in nature. I could be doing something more productive." We dismiss our deepest yearnings as luxuries. We label them as nice to have, but not essential. However, that's not true. Core needs aren't luxuries. They're spiritual necessities. They are in right alignment with your soul. They are a means for remembering who you are.

If you have a physical need such as the need for water, food, or sleep and you don't meet it then your body suffers. Similarly, if you have spiritual and emotional needs—the need for creative expression, for beauty, for peace, for movement, for connection to something larger than yourself—and you don't meet those needs, your spirit suffers. You become depleted over time. You become disconnected eventually. You begin to lose yourself very soon. So, let's dismantle the old paradigm's belief that core needs are wants. They are not. They're essential. They are vital. For you, they are the difference between merely existing and truly living. You have a right to pleasure, excitement, satisfaction, peace, and joy.

Listening to Your Inner Voice

Deep at the center of your being, there is a voice. It's quiet, gentle, and absolutely true. It's the voice of your True Self, the Real You, underneath all the layers of conditioning, expectation, and cultural messaging. This voice has been there all along. It's

been waiting patiently for you to turn down the noise long enough to be able to hear it.

Most of us have spent so much time listening to everyone else—our parents, our teachers, our partners, society at large that we've forgotten what our own voice sounds like. We've become hyper-aware of other people's needs while developing tone deafness to our own needs.

But hear me when I say that **your inner voice is still alive. It's resilient. It's valiant.** And it's ready to speak to you again. In fact, it's been speaking all along.

Those moments when you have felt restless, when you felt unfulfilled despite appearing to have everything, when you felt like something was missing even though you couldn't quite name it, that was your True Self speaking. That's your soul nudging you, saying, "Remember me. Come home to yourself." We are going to turn up the volume on your inner voice.

Healing Begins with Awareness

At some point we accept that disconnection is inevitable. We believe that we're too old, too busy, too responsible to have the luxury of doing what truly brings us joy. But that's the mud talking, my dear circle sister. That's the conditioned voice. And it's not the truth.

The good news is that healing begins the moment you become aware. The moment you recognize that disconnection is a signal

rather than your irrevocable fate. The moment you acknowledge that your restlessness or emptiness is your soul calling you home, that awareness itself is transformative. That's because once you call out those urges, feelings, and nudges for what they are, you can't go back to claiming that you don't understand what they mean. Once you name what is real, you can begin to do something about it. In fact, naming the malaise or seeming disconnection from True Self immediately takes some of the power away from keeping you in the mud. Yes, some of your energy was being used to keep you disconnected or less self-aware. No wonder you are tired. But that one act of naming what's really going on is the beginning of washing away the muddy layers so that you can see clearly.

This is what I mean by clarity—one of the three pillars of Personal Life Leadership©. You see what's true. You see how cultural influences have shaped you. You see what you've been neglecting. And in that seeing, in that honest acknowledgment, something shifts.

You stop judging yourself for feeling unfulfilled. You stop trying to fix the symptom and start addressing the root cause. You start to turn your attention inward, asking yourself the important questions: "what do I need? What makes me feel most alive? What brings me home to myself?" The questions represent conversations that you are having with You.

You are sitting here in the sacred circle wrapped in sisterly/womanly love. You are not alone. You have support for

investigating your inner landscape and being honest about what you find there.

Remember, however, that only you have your answers. You have power. You have a growing will for self-determination and self-awareness. You are starting to hear your answers and you will determine what you will do with them. There is no dogma or new belief system to adopt from these pages. Instead, you are The One Who Has Power Over Her Own Life.

These questions that the circle has before it, asked with gentleness and curiosity, are the beginning of healing. And healing is always possible. It's never too late to come home to yourself.

A Beautiful Truth and Blessings Follow

Let yourself want things without immediately explaining them away or dismissing them.

When you follow those gentle longings, when you honor what your soul is asking for, blessings follow. I'm not speaking metaphorically here. I'm speaking from my own experience and from the experiences of countless women I've worked with. The sisters in our circle can tell you that it is true.

Before I began to honor my deepest needs and desires, I was purely reactive. Things just happened in my life and I tried to deal with them, end of story or so I thought. I wasn't happy but I thought that I had no alternatives. I was glad to have my

everyday filled with taking care of others' needs so that I had little if any time to myself and for myself. Everything hurt. My body hurt and never felt fully wonderful. My mind had one continuous ache and my emotions were like burning coals, so far from pleasure or delight or delicious anticipation.

When I began to allow myself to want something, immediately I felt guilty. When I dared to wash a dish and daydream a little I felt ridiculous but I also felt a little happier, a little lighter, which encouraged me to slip into pleasure thoughts and feelings again. Oh, my. How dare I? Ah, but I did. I talked to myself about the difference between my two outlooks. That step made it easier to return to the pretty mind pictures that I was having and the lighter feelings, too.

I let myself draw one day. I hid those drawings. In secret, I let myself draw again and again. With simple pencils and a good eraser a beautiful energy from somewhere well outside of my everyday circumstances was pulling me inward. When I doodled, and over time my doodling became full, rich portraits and scenes, I had no sense of time passing. I loved who I was creating pictures from my imagination. I loved how I felt being me. This Me was unafraid. She was a big, gorgeous spirit going wherever she pleased. This Artist Me was part of the cosmos.

I talked to myself about the huge emotional shifting that kept pulling me inward. How dare I be happy? But I did. This was a beginning for me. In the rest of my life I discovered that I could draw from the strength and self-assurance of the Me that Dared to Be Happy. I liked who I saw that I was becoming.

When you start to meet your core needs, things shift, energy moves. Your energy increases. Your outlook brightens. Your health improves. You start to feel like yourself again. You feel more grounded, more peaceful, more able to handle the challenges of life. You make different decisions based on a healthier You. You draw firmer boundaries with people out of respect for yourself. You stop wasting your energy on things that don't matter. You start attracting people and situations that align with your values because you're operating from your spiritual center rather than from fear or obligation.

And here's the most profound blessing: you become free. Free to be yourself. Free to take up space. Free to speak your truth. Free to create, to move, to love, to be. That's what awaits you on the other side of honoring your core needs.

Mantras

1. “I am not becoming. I am remembering.”
2. “My desires are sacred. They are the language of my soul.”
3. “I release guilt and embrace joy as my birthright.”
4. “I trust my inner voice. It knows the way home.”

Journal Questions

- A. What did I love doing as a child that I no longer make time for?
- B. What beliefs have I internalized about pleasure and self-worth?
- C. What would my life look like if I prioritized my own happiness?
- D. Whose voice do I hear when I feel guilty for wanting more?
- E. What is one small way I can honor my core needs this week?

Reflection Exercise

Memory Walk: Close your eyes and imagine a moment from childhood when you felt completely alive and free. Write about it in detail. What were you doing? How did you feel? What was present that is missing now?



Chapter 4: The Core Needs Quiz Experience

Having a positive attitude towards your future, means that you are...

- A.** Resilient
- C.** Optimistic
- B.** Vibing
- D.** Confident

Self-awareness includes knowing about my...

- A.** Strengths
- C.** Hobbies
- B.** weaknesses
- D.** All of the above

What is a “Need”?

- A.** A boat
- C.** Food
- B.** Flowers
- D.** Clothes

Multiple Choice Quiz

Creating a Sacred Container for Discovery

 This is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers. There are no grades, no scoring systems designed to rank you or label you.

I say this because I know that many of us—especially women—have been conditioned to approach anything that asks us questions as though it's an evaluation of our worth. We hold our breath. We second-guess our answers. We worry about what others might think. We try to give the "right" answer rather than our honest one. But that's not what this is. This quiz is a mirror. It's an opportunity for you to look at yourself and see what reflects back. The answers belong entirely to you. They're not for anyone else's judgment or approval.

Setting Your Intention Before Beginning

 Before you read the first story and set an intention. It creates a container of sacredness around what's about to unfold. It signals to your deeper self that you're ready to receive wisdom.

Take a breath. A real one, deep into your belly. And as you exhale, ask yourself this question: "What do I need to remember about myself right now?" Listen for the answer. It might come as words, as an image, as a feeling, as a knowing. Trust whatever comes. It's your soul speaking.

Understanding the Quiz Format and Structure

 In the pages that follow, you'll encounter five short stories. Each one is a portrait of a woman discovering or reconnecting with one of her core needs.

Marisol rediscovers creative expression through painting. Naomi returns to her soul through sound and music. Lena finds her way home through nature and solitude. Adrienne remembers herself through touch and embodied presence. Soledad reclaims aliveness through movement.

After each story, you'll find two simple questions.

Which aspects of the story touch your heart? Which moments do you recognize in your own life? Which desires are being reflected back to you? As you read each story, notice not just the content, but your body's response. Do you feel a quickening in your chest? Does your breath shift? Do you find yourself tearing up or smiling? These physical responses are important.

Gentle Listening

 Your intuition is wise.

Your feelings are valid data. This quiz is most powerful when you answer from your gut, from your heart, from your authentic self, not from the voice of obligation or conditioning.

Gentle listening. This is not the sharp, critical listening we often direct at ourselves. It's not the voice that judges and compares and finds us lacking. Gentle listening is the kind of attention you would give to a beloved friend sharing something tender with you. It's open. It's curious. It's kind. Listen for what your soul is asking for, even if it surprises you. Most especially, if it surprises you.

No Right Answers, Only Your Truth

 This quiz is not meant to box you in or to define you forever. It's meant to be a starting point, a doorway, a beginning conversation with yourself. You might take it again a year from now and get different results. That would be perfect, because you'll have grown and changed and your core needs might have shifted, which is to say that you have a better view of what is core.

So, Circle Sister, take a breath. Ground yourself. Set your intention. And when you're ready, turn the page. The five stories are waiting to speak to you. Your soul is waiting to be

remembered. I and the sisters of the sacred circle are here with you, witnessing and holding space for whatever unfolds.

The quiz begins now.

Title: What Restores You to Yourself?

A Companion Quiz to the “Core Needs” Episode of Elevate Women Podcast

Welcome Message

This quiz isn’t a test. It’s a mirror. Your answers will be a reflection of your inner landscape.

Each woman is restored in her own way. As you take the quiz, set an intention of listening gently to what brings you home to yourself.

After completing it, you’ll receive soft insights highlighting a core need you may want to explore more deeply. You might even choose to listen to the episode again. Often, something deeper reveals itself the second time around.

TO BEGIN: read each of five short stories and answer the two questions that follow it. The stories represent five possible areas where your core need(s) might be found. These five will give you a good start in understanding your own deepest passions.

SECTION 1: Art Expression

“Creativity in the Closet”

Marisol, full-time nurse and mother of two, was on her knees cleaning out a closet when her fingers traced a mostly gone label on a dirty grey cover. She grumbled about having so much more cleaning to do on a rare day off. A rush of memories said otherwise: she was sketching daily, through high school and into

her twenties. Marisol couldn't stop a loud sigh from escaping. She made no decision about what to do with an old sketchbook.

Weeks passed but on a particular evening, after tucking her eight-year-old into bed and soothing the not-colicky-tonight baby, Marisol slipped downstairs. She had no plan beyond landing in the study. That room had no toys, no laundry on the floor. Those sea-blue draperies she had sewn herself. She'd cut, sanded, and stained the wood frames holding their family photos plus her lucky camera's prize shot of an old male moose.

Marisol stared at her old armchair. "Where are my magazines? Nothing in our house stays put." At last, her hands slip under the futon couch and pull out Essence, National Geographic, Good Housekeeping, and she recognized and opened that old grey cover over vellum paper.

A week slips by in a blur of ordinary life: breakfasts, dinners, housecleaning, a shifting work schedule for herself and her partner, and just enough sleep to keep it all going. Right now, the baby's cries seem endless just when she needs to assure the older child that mommy can do math and loves him very much. Caring for others was a given but there was more room, more grace with which to do them.

She was speaking up and insisting on reasonable limits to work whenever possible. She was kinder to herself about eating and getting enough sleep. Could it be because she discovered a space that belongs to her alone?

Later, she tied back her grey, kinky-curly hair with a hemp band she'd macraméd recently then returned to the dining room table where her child's colored pencils lay scattered. She lets her hand

fall onto cool cotton vellum and begins to draw, listening as she went. The lines, the curves, the shading, all feel like a conversation she'd been longing to have.

Her heart softens. Thoughts slow. The room takes on a sweet quiet emanating from her, the creative. Repeated strokes pull her deeper into mystical stillness. She's returning to a language she once spoke fluently: one of color, shape, and deep memory.

Light shocks all the windows; night is done. The family routine resumes—pancakes flipping, oatmeal bubbling, lunch packed for the older child and a lunch for Marisol. Her partner is singing. The family energy has shifted, too.

When I make space for being a creative, I am expanded, more centered, more fully alive. When I forget, I grow irritable and disconnected from myself and others.

1. When I'm fully engaged in something creative (writing, painting, arranging flowers...), I often feel:
 - o Like I'm channeling something larger than me
 - o Light, focused, and peaceful
 - o Inspired but also self-conscious
 - o Frustrated—I want to be creative but feel blocked
 - o I don't usually do creative things
2. When I go too long without expressing myself creatively, I feel:
 - o A little lost—like part of me goes quiet
 - o Fine—it's not something I think about often
 - o Bored or under-stimulated
 - o Uninspired or flat

SECTION 2: Sound & Music

“The Music Room with No Door”

There had been a time when Naomi sang every day, not professionally, not for applause. She just sang. While brushing her teeth. While chopping vegetables. While driving to work. The songs came through her like breath itself. There was sacredness in exhaling with sound. She never thought much about it. Life just felt warmer when she let her voice express itself.

But time moved on. She married. Had children. Launched a business. Life got loud, full, and so much faster. The singing faded, not because she chose to stop, but because there was always something else that seemed more important.

Years passed. Naomi was accomplished, reliable, admired. But on the inside, something felt dull, blunted. Had living become only on the surface? She described it to a friend once as having misplaced the deeper parts of who she used to be.

One day she attended a women’s retreat and was invited to join a morning vocal toning session. Something in her resisted. “I don’t sing anymore,” she said but she walked forward anyway to stand with the other women under the cedar trees.

The facilitator played a single low note on a crystal bowl and asked the group to hum with it. Naomi closed her eyes and began to hum. Then let it grow into a tone. Naomi joined the sounds around her from the forest, from the other human voices. Hers was part of a natural chorus in a wordless song.

Her whole body vibrated. Not just her vocal cords but also her chest, her spine, her memory. Her soul moved forward from wherever it had been waiting.

She wept.

The practice, individual and group, was all about sounding true.

In that moment, Naomi didn't just remember singing. She remembered herself. Naomi was whole, unmasked, full of color and feeling. She said afterward that she'd returned to "the music room within her spirit. She'd found a forgotten key.

From that day forward, Naomi welcomed spontaneous sound and song, not every day and not even every week but enough to stay connected. It was enough to keep the channel open. Because for her, sound—humming, thrumming, beats, toning, singing—was devotion. It was her soul's language.

And that, she learned, made it a core need.

3. Music most often helps me:
 - o Feel what I need to feel
 - o Return to calm
 - o Remember something important inside
 - o Get energized
 - o I don't use music that way
4. When I hear the right music or sound, I sometimes feel:
 - o Like I'm remembering who I am
 - o Like I'm breathing differently
 - o Deep emotion, often unexpectedly
 - o Nothing in particular

SECTION 3: Nature & Stillness

“The Walk Back to Herself”

At first, it was just a walk.

Lena had been feeling off for months: foggy, tense, disconnected, not broken, just muted. Nothing felt quite right. She was busy, but fading inside.

One Saturday afternoon, without planning it, she put on her sneakers and left her phone behind. She started walking, not with a destination, just a quiet nudge to move.

She followed a trail near her neighborhood she’d passed a hundred times but had never entered. It led her into a small wooded area. The sun was soft and gold, filtering through the trees. Birds called to each other. The air smelled like damp earth, green and alive.

She walked slowly, yes to exercise but just to see what might happen.

And something shifted.

Her breath dropped lower into her belly. Her jaw unclenched. Thoughts thinned. She felt her entire being release. Have you ever slipped into being hyper-aware of everything around you? Moss on rocks, on trees stood out, a patch of wild violets were too, too purple, and the sound of insects had the volume turned way up. Every movement in her body felt large and exaggerated. “What is this?” It was sacred. She knew that.

She stayed an hour. Maybe more. And when she returned home, she felt completely different—not energized exactly, but realigned. More herself.

That night, she wrote in her journal:

“I remembered that I belong to something larger, not because I thought it, but because I felt it.”

That walk became her practice, not every day, but often enough to keep her in Truth.

Nature, she realized, wasn’t just pleasant. It wasn’t just a break. For her, it was communion. Stillness. A kind of wordless prayer. In nature, she remembers who she is, without effort, without having to prove anything. Lena could have transcendent moments any time that she stepped outside the noise of everyday life. And that made it sacred, a core need. Not optional. Not decorative. Essential.

5. Time in nature makes me feel:
 - o Alive, soft, clear
 - o More like myself
 - o Relieved and less burdened
 - o Usually good, but not always connected
 - o Honestly—I don’t seek it out much
6. If I could spend a day in solitude in nature, I would feel:
 - o Healed
 - o Curious
 - o Bored
 - o Nervous
 - o Open, but not sure why

SECTION 4: Touch & Body

“The Body Knows”

For years, Adrienne didn’t think much about touch. She hugged friends when appropriate. She cuddled her children. She held her partner’s hand at dinner parties. There was physical contact

in her life. And, yet, touch that she provided always served someone else's comfort or someone else's need.

She couldn't remember the last time she'd received touch that was just for her without an expectation of giving something in return.

One morning, she hated herself for being short with the children. Finding a living room pillow at hand she actually gave it a pretty good punch. Was that a growl? Did that sound come out of her? She felt apologetic toward that pillow. She needed to give it some love by gently reshaping it. Once that was done, she took herself to the kitchen. A half-sheet flyer on the frog announced massage at a very reasonable rate. Adrienne called the number. She almost cancelled twice. There was guilt about spending the money. She worried about taking time for such an unproductive thing. But something deeper insisted. So, she went.

The room was quiet like she was not used to. The air was hothouse warm and smelled of lavender. She lay down on the table, uncertain at first. But as the massage therapist began to work, something unexpected happened. There was relief of pain held in the body but previously unacknowledged. There was certainly releasing of tension and relaxation. Emotional spaces were opening. It was recognition but it was going to be much, much later before Adrienne would have a word for this new experience.

As her body received touch—slowly, with presence—Adrienne began to weep. Quietly. Wordlessly. Her shoulders shook. Her breath caught in her throat.

Her skin had been holding stories that were now flooding forward. She was being witnessed. For the first time in a long time, she received without giving.

Later, she would say:

“It wasn’t the massage that changed me. It was the remembering. My body remembered that it mattered. And I remembered I had a body.”

After that day, she began to build small rituals of loving touch into her life: anointing her skin with oil after a bath, self-hugs with deep breathing, expansive talks with her partner that changed their dynamic, self-learning the art of foot massage, shifting her own energy away from over giving created room for kind new offers for massage exchange.

Touch, she realized, had always been a core need, not in the way magazines talk about “self-care,” but in a way that felt ancient and sacred. When she was touched with love or reverence—by others, or by herself—she softened into the truth of who she was. She became real again.

The skin, her nerves, the reaction of her muscles, her heart knows so much—the body led her back.

And now, she listens.

7. When I receive touch that’s caring or present (a hug, a massage, a hand on mine), I feel:
 - o Seen
 - o Safe
 - o Emotional
 - o Awkward
 - o I don’t like physical touch much
8. Touch in my life right now feels:
 - o Abundant and nourishing
 - o Mostly for others, not me

- o Inconsistent
- o Missing entirely

SECTION 5: Movement

“The Dance Floor in Her Living Room”

She had rhythm and she used to love music but dance, she told now herself, belonged to the younger Soledad that had started it all, the freer one, the one who never apologized for her joy.

Somewhere along the way, that part of her had gotten packed away along with spontaneity, play, and sensuality. The tradeoffs were seriousness without any breaks, efficiency, and feeling endlessly responsible.

“I just go to work six days a week. My second job is every night though. My mother isn’t doing well. There’s only me to take care of her. I wouldn’t have it otherwise but there isn’t anything else to my life. Here I am daydreaming. It doesn’t matter.”

One winter evening, after a long, gray day, she lit a candle, poured a glass of wine, and was surprised to have selected an old playlist she hadn’t touched in years. Soledad’s mom was sleeping.

Each song was slipping something miraculous into her heart and mind. The music became her partner, pulling Soledad to her feet.

She started swaying.

Then she was turning and turning, fast and slow, fast and faster. Muscles fired up all over from the top of the head down to pouncing toes.

This was dancing, not for fitness, not for anyone watching. Just movement, remarkably, from the inside out had taken over. Her arms remembered. Her hips remembered. Her breath deepened. Her smile infused the air.

She didn't perform. She didn't judge herself. She inhabited the moment for all that it was worth and it was worth a lot.

When the stream of songs finally came to an end, she collapsed on the couch and wept as a false self dissolved.

Later, she would tell a friend:

"I don't dance to feel better. I dance to feel like me. That's the difference."

It became her practice. A few songs after work. Barefoot on the kitchen floor. Lights low. Heart open. Letting herself be.

Movement, she realized, was how her soul prayed when words were never going to be enough. When she forgot to move, she forgot to feel. And when she forgot to feel, she forgot to live for real.

So now, she dances. And she remembers. A core need was discovered and honored.

9. When I let myself move freely (dance, stretch, walk), I often feel:
 - o Free
 - o More in my body
 - o Open and inspired
 - o Not much—movement feels mechanical
 - o I rarely move that way

10. When I move regularly in ways I enjoy:
 - o I feel more alive
 - o I feel more like *me*
 - o I feel less anxious
 - o I notice a shift in my creativity or connection to Spirit

RESULTS (Soft Reflections):

- If most answers are A: **You Restore Through Creative Expression**

You may feel most alive when you're creating. Creative expression—through art, writing, decorating, designing, or crafting—is essential for you. It's sacred. When this need is met, you feel more connected, more spacious, more aligned. When it's unmet, your spirit dims slightly. Let creativity be your compass back to self.

- If most answers are B: **You Restore Through Inner Resonance**

You have an internal tuning fork, and sound helps align it. Whether through music, silence, or sacred words, you come alive when something vibrates *true*. Your core need is likely to be a quiet, sound-rich space where your nervous system can settle and your soul can rise.

- If most answers are C: **You Restore Through Connection to Earth & Spirit**

Nature restores you, not just with beauty, but with memory. When you're in wild places or even touching soil, your body rebalances. Your soul exhales. Your need is *solitude with the sacred*. Nature is not an escape; it's your teacher.

- If most answers are D: **You Restore Through Embodiment & Sensory Nourishment**

Your body is your spiritual home. Through touch, breath, and presence, you come back to yourself. When your body feels

honored and safe, your whole being opens. Seek practices and people that offer nurturing touch, physical presence, and sensual awakening.

- If most answers are E or mixed: **You Restore Through Movement & Aliveness**

Movement is your language. Whether through dance, conscious walking, or spontaneous motion, tai chi or tai chi walking or qi gong it wakes you up. Movement shifts stuck energy and brings in light. Your core need might be simple: to move as only you can. Make space for it daily—even five minutes can return you to yourself.

Closing Note: *This quiz is an invitation, not a definition. You may resonate with more than one reflection. That's beautiful. Come back to this exercise any time you feel disconnected from yourself.*

And let the podcast be your companion. Listen any time.

The path back to wholeness is already within you.

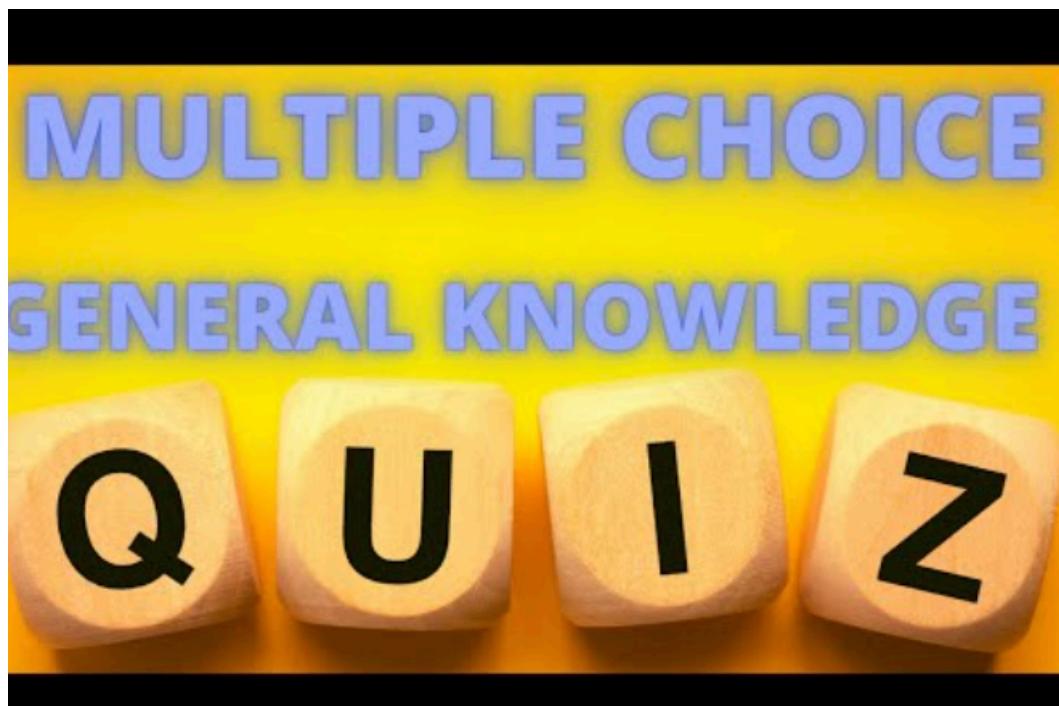
I Really Want to Hear from You!: At this point, you have listened to the podcast episode, Core Needs, once and completed the Core Needs quiz. I invite you to dialogue with me at ascension@elevatingwomen.org. Tell me about your core needs discoveries. I will happily respond with journal prompts or additional practices.

A Good Idea: listen to the podcast episode again. You are likely to hear more guidance for your journey on a second listening.

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Chapter 5:

Interpreting Your Results



Understanding Your Quiz Results with Gentle Wisdom

You've completed using the Portal to Remembrance, that is, the quiz. Yay. What does this mean? How do I interpret what I've discovered? The reflections you're about to receive are soft. They're gentle. Think of them as signposts rather than destinations pointing you toward rich soil inside you that's worth exploring.

Your quiz results offer you a personal tone or frequency for your restoration. It's from the deepest places of your own knowing. You are already hearing and feeling your way back to your True Self. Your core need resonates with your rhythms. It honors your particular journey and it was your inner wisdom that revealed it.

As you consider your results, I want you to approach them with wonder:

What are they trying to tell me?

What patterns do I notice?

What surprises me?

What confirms something I already knew?

What invites me to expand my understanding of myself?

Let these questions guide your reflection. Let yourself sit with the information without rushing to fix or change anything. Just notice. Just receive. Just let the wisdom of your own soul begin to settle into your full awareness. That's where you can find You.

Single-Thread Clarity

Some women feel relieved by single-thread clarity or one core need being dominant. They've been searching for years, wondering what would make them feel more like themselves, and, suddenly, there's an answer, a place to focus energy and intention. It's like the fog lifting and seeing the path clearly for the first time.

Other women feel surprised or even resistant. "Really? That's my core need? I thought I'd outgrown that," or "That seems so simple," or "I feel selfish focusing on just that." If you're experiencing any of those reactions, I want to gently challenge you. Your soul knows what it needs. Trust that knowing, even if it seems simple. Even if trusting it feels selfish or if you think you should need something more dramatically profound, go with it. Your core need is exactly what you need.

Going Deeper Into Your Primary Pathway

If one core need has emerged clearly for you, the invitation now is to go deeper. Get curious about that need in all its dimensions. If your primary core need is creative expression, for instance, you might ask yourself:

What forms of creativity call to me most strongly?
When was the last time I engaged in creative activity?
What obstacles have I put in my way?
What would it take for me to create space for this in my life?
What fears come up when I think about prioritizing my creativity?

These deeper questions help you move from abstract awareness into concrete understanding. You have all the answers you need. You'll be able to identify not just what your core need is, but also what's been preventing you from honoring it. And they help you to begin to imagine what your life might look like if you actually made space for this need.

If your core need is sound and music, you might explore different forms of musical engagement. If your core need is nature, you might think about the specific landscapes that call to you and how to access them more regularly. If your core need is movement, you might notice what forms of movement make you feel most alive and free. This deeper diving isn't about becoming an expert. It's about becoming intimately acquainted with your own soul's urgings. It's about falling in love with what restores you.

When Multiple Core Needs Emerge

Other women complete the quiz and discover that their answers are more distributed. Perhaps two or three core needs resonate with equal strength. Together, they create the full spectrum of your restoration. This is no less valuable than single-thread clarity. It's just a different configuration.

Some women feel relief when they discover multiple core needs. "Oh, so, I might react to more than one of these. That makes sense."

Others feel overwhelmed. "How am I supposed to honor all of these needs? That's too much." If you're feeling overwhelmed, I want to gently remind you that honoring multiple core needs doesn't mean doing everything all the time. Now that you are aware of the full spectrum of what restores you, you can look forward to answering different needs in different rhythms and seasons. Maybe you create space for visual art in the fall, for movement in the winter, for nature in the spring, for music in the summer. Maybe some needs are daily practices while others are seasonal or monthly rituals.

The point is not to focus on everything. The point is to recognize and honor the multifaceted nature of your own soul's longing. From day-to-day allow yourself to follow nudges and knowings. Go where you feel drawn.

For All Women

Now let's get even more concrete. What do your quiz results actually mean for you? Let's say your results emphasize creative expression and touch. What does that tell you? It tells you that you restore yourself through making things and through receiving nurturing physical contact. It tells you that when you've neglected these needs, you probably feel disconnected and depleted. If you want to feel more like yourself, more grounded, more alive, you need to create space for both creative activity and embodied connection. It tells you something important about how you're wired, how your soul speaks, and what feeds you.

For another woman, results that emphasize nature and solitude tell a different story. She restores herself through spending time in the natural world and through having adequate quiet time. Her depletion shows up differently. Her pathway home is different and her needs are unique to her.

While core needs are the anchors of your True Self, they may appear to shift or evolve as layers of conditioning are removed. This is not because your essence changes, but because more of it is revealed. As you peel back societal expectations and inherited roles, deeper dimensions of your being come into view. Life traumas or major events do not alter your core needs. They illuminate them. They act as catalysts, bringing clarity to what has always been true. Thus, your core needs may evolve not by changing, but by becoming more fully known. Trust this unfolding. It is not instability. It is revelation.

If you feel drawn to an area of expression that you did not test for then go with that. Every woman has one to five core needs. Other interests can be extremely pleasurable and even uplifting and that's a good thing. If other interests have appeal then go with that. The quiz is only an experiential tool, which was intended to spark your intuition. Listen to inner wisdom always. Enjoy yourself.

Distinguish core needs, however, as the deep-seeded ones that you **MUST** have in order to maintain being You. You'll know that one of these interests is core and, therefore special because of

- Its extraordinary and even transcendental effect on you when you are doing it,
- The deeper and lasting effects on you that go beyond just relaxation,
- Noticing that how you feel has moved well beyond feeling better. You have become re-acquainted with True Self.
- Training yourself to do life from your core has begun. Everything will arrange itself anew when your True Self is leading the way. Life will feel delicious.

Connecting Quiz Patterns to Your Life

Take time now to reflect on how your core needs have shown up (or not shown up) in your actual life.

If creative expression emerged as a core need, can you trace back to times when you were creating?

How did you feel?

What changed when you stopped?

If sound and music are central to your restoration, when did music last make a real difference for you?

If nature is calling, when was the last time you felt genuinely nourished by time outdoors?

If touch is important, when did you last receive embodied care or nurturing physical connection?

If movement is central, what forms of movement make you feel most alive?

These reflections help you connect the abstract wisdom of your quiz results to the concrete reality of your life. They help you see

patterns. They help you notice where you've been abandoning yourself. And they help you begin to imagine what you want to change in order to honor these needs.

Maybe you'll realize that the last time you felt truly yourself was when you were painting every day, before life got busy. Maybe you'll remember that music used to be central to your daily life before you convinced yourself that you didn't have time. Maybe you'll notice that your worst periods of depression or anxiety have coincided with times when you weren't getting outside or moving your body. These connections are valuable. They are evidence of your core needs at work. They're proof that honoring these deeper needs matters.

Okay. Allow me to remind us, the Sisters of the Sacred Circle, that the quiz and this book are meant to give you direction and experiences that lead you to your core needs. We, together, are making it more likely that you have direction and focus in the right area in order to have your own awakening to your specific core needs.

If your area is creative expression then, perhaps, on further reflection you realize that your core need is water color painting. Another woman might be directed toward creative expression but her specific core need is clay sculpture. Or, maybe, it is landscape design and gardening. Understand? Spend time listening within yourself and be amazed by information that is just right for you.

From Awareness to Integration

Awareness is the first step. You're now aware of what restores and replenishes you. You can see your core needs clearly. That's real progress. But awareness without action is just information. Real transformation happens when you move from awareness into integration, when you start actually making space for these needs in your daily, weekly, monthly life.

This is where many women get stuck. They complete the quiz, they have their "aha" moment, and then nothing changes. Life goes back to the way it was. The busyness and full calendars return. The old patterns reassert themselves. The core needs, once again, get put on the back burner. I'm asking you not to do that. Use the momentum of this discovery to begin taking action. Just small, intentional steps that stimulate memory: "My core needs matter. I'm going to honor them." These steps become your personal action framework, your unique plan for weaving your core needs into your actual life.

First Steps Toward Honoring Your Core Needs

So, what might those first steps look like? They're different for every woman, because every woman's core needs and circumstances are unique. But here are some examples to inspire your thinking.

- If creative expression is your core need, your first step might be to set aside one hour this week to engage in something creative.

- If music is your core need, your first step might be to create a playlist of songs that make you feel alive and listen to it intentionally this week.
- If nature is calling, your first step might be to spend thirty minutes outside, without your phone, just receiving what the natural world has to offer. Touch the trees.
- If touch is essential, your first step might be to schedule a massage or exchange hugs with a trusted friend or practice self-massage.
- If movement is your pathway, your first step might be to close your eyes, listen for energies that are always around us, begin to sway, and let your body move however it wants to move. Lose yourself and find your Self in the experience.

The common thread in all of these first steps is that they're small enough to be do-able , they're specific enough to actually happen, and they're meaningful enough to matter. Pick something that you feel drawn to do. Just one. Commit to it this week. Just a few minutes a day is a good start. Notice how you feel when you honor this need. Let that feeling become your evidence that your core needs truly do make a difference. And from there, build. Week by week. Need by need. It's slowly, gently, intentionally weaving these practices into your life. That's how transformation happens. One small, brave choice at a time.

Mantra

“I return to myself, again and again.”
“I am worthy of my own attention and care.”

Journal Exercise

I encourage you to write a short letter to yourself. Summarize what you've learned so far. How has the quiz helped you?

Now that you have remembered your core needs, let's explore how to honor them in daily life.



Chapter 6: Honoring Your Core Needs



Women. We empower each other.

Step into the wholeness of who you truly are and the expanded potential waiting to unfold.

Shifting from External Authority to Inner Leadership

You don't need anyone's permission to honor your core needs. Not your partner's. Not your boss's. Not your children's. Not society's. Not mine. **The only permission you need comes from within.** And yet, I know how hard it is to truly believe that. We've been so thoroughly conditioned to seek external validation and external approval. The idea of making a major decision, even a decision about our own wellbeing, without someone else's okay feels transgressive. We hedge. We ask permission. We apologize. We minimize. We explain our needs as though we need to justify them.

But what if you didn't? What if you simply claimed your core needs as non-negotiable and moved forward from there? One definition of inner leadership is the ability to know what's true for you and honor that knowing, regardless of external pressure or approval. Personal Life Leadership always means that you listen to your own inner voice before you listen to anyone else. You would trust your own wisdom about what you need. Giving yourself permission to prioritize yourself without guilt or apology would be your norm. This is radical for many women. It feels like betrayal. It feels like selfishness because that's what we've been told. But it's actually the foundation of your transformation. You cannot honor your core needs from a mindset of needing to seek someone else's permission. You can only honor them from a place of reclaimed inner authority and self-love.

You are Your Own Best Expert on Your Needs

From whom have you been asking permission all these years?

- Maybe you've been waiting for your partner to say it's okay to take time for yourself.
- Maybe you are waiting for your children to be older. That's your excuse for feeling guilty for prioritizing your needs.
- Maybe you've been waiting for your boss to give you permission to work less or for society to approve of your priorities.

And . . . you haven't gotten what you need. Those people may care about you, but they're not the experts on your needs. You are. You're the one who feels the hunger in your spirit when your core needs aren't being met. You're the one who feels the aliveness that comes when they are. The sooner you claim yourself as the expert on your own needs, the sooner you can begin to enjoy life more. This doesn't mean being reckless or dismissive of others' needs. It means recognizing that your needs deserve consideration, too.

You're not less important than everyone else. Your wellbeing matters. You're allowed to take up space and ask for what you need. You're allowed to be selfish in the best sense of that word: self-caring, self-honoring, self-loving.

Overcoming Guilt, Resistance, and Self-Sabotage

Even as you're reading these words and are nodding in agreement, I know that some part of you is listing all the reasons why you can't honor your core needs. You're too busy. You don't have enough time. You have too many responsibilities. Your family needs you. Your job requires everything you've got. You don't deserve this kind of care. You're not important enough. You should be grateful for what you have. You should be doing something more productive. You should be taking care of everyone else first. I know these objections. I've felt them myself most of my life. I've heard them from hundreds of women.

Reflection Question: name your specific objections. Write them down. What are the reasons you've been using to justify not honoring your core needs? Really look at them. Examine them. Ask yourself: Is this really true? Or, is this a story I've been told and have come to believe about myself? Where did this objection come from? Is it mine, or is it someone else's voice in my head?

This process of naming and examining your objections is powerful. It creates space between you and the objection. It lets you see it more clearly. And when you can see it clearly, you can question it. You can challenge it. You can choose something different.

Reframing Selfishness as Self-Love

Honoring your core needs is not selfish. It's self-love. It's self-respect. It's an act of integrity toward your own soul. And self-love is not the opposite of love for others. It's actually the foundation of it. When you honor your core needs, when you restore and replenish yourself, you become a better version of yourself in your relationships. You're not running on fumes. You're not bitter about all you've given away. You're not disconnected and resentful. You're full. You're present. You're able to give from genuine abundance rather than from obligation. So, the question isn't whether you can afford to honor your core needs. The question is whether you can afford not to. **What will it cost you in terms of your health, your joy, your relationships to continue abandoning yourself?** What will it cost the people you love to have a depleted, resentful version of you? And what becomes possible when you become a woman who honors herself?

The more you love yourself, the more love you have for others. —The Mother of Creation as channeled by Anne Tucker

Saying No to Make Space for Yes

Practically speaking, you cannot honor your core needs without saying no to some other things. You simply don't have infinite time and energy. And most of us are already over-committed, over-scheduled, and over-obligated. So, an early practical step

toward honoring your core needs is to get clear about what you're saying no to. This is where boundary-setting comes in. A boundary is simply a clear statement of what you will and will not do.

And boundaries around your core needs are non-negotiable.

They're not up for negotiation.

They're not flexible depending on someone else's request.

They're firm and consistent because they're essential.

So, you might say no to extra work projects during times you've designated for creative practice.

You might say no to social obligations when you need solitude and nature.

You might say no to requests for your time when you've committed those hours to touch and embodied care.

These no's are not cruel or unkind. They're loving to yourself and ultimately to everyone else, because you're modeling self-respect and integrity.

Setting boundaries can feel uncomfortable at first. You might worry about disappointing people. You might feel guilty. You might second-guess yourself. I can promise you that the discomfort of saying no is temporary.

The liberation that comes from honoring your core needs lasts.

When the people in your life see that you're serious about

meeting your needs, they adjust. They respect you more. And often, you find out that the world doesn't actually fall apart when you stop saying yes to everything.

Building Non-Negotiable Time for Your Core Needs

Once you've identified what you're saying no to, it's time to build in yes for your non-negotiable time for your core needs. This means actually putting time on your calendar for your practices. Not someday. Not when you have time but specific, scheduled, protected time.

If your core need is creative expression, you might block out Tuesday and Thursday evenings for two hours of creative time.

If it's music, you might claim Monday mornings for listening to music or playing an instrument.

If it's nature, you might schedule a walk in the woods every Sunday morning.

If it's touch, you might schedule monthly massages or weekly time with a partner focused on embodied connection.

If it's movement, you might claim certain mornings or evenings for dance or yoga or walking.

The key is making it non-negotiable. Which means that you don't cancel it unless there's a genuine emergency. You don't skip it because something else came up. You treat it with the

same seriousness you'd treat an important appointment or commitment. Because it is important. It is essential.

Making time for your core needs is not a luxury. It's maintenance. It's medicine. And like any medicine, it works best when taken consistently.

Start small. Really small is more than okay. Fifteen minutes of dedicated time to talk to a tree (that's a thing) or establish solitude or listening to music alone.

What if you are into painting? At the beginning of your core needs journey you could take thirty minutes to do a couple of quick sketches or to set up your art space or to do photography for possible future paintings. That time is for you.

Look hard at your calendar. Find just one or two hours per week. But make those hours sacred. Protect them fiercely. Show yourself and everyone else that your wellbeing matters enough to be on the calendar. That's how you build the habit. That's how you normalize honoring your core needs. And over time, as you experience the benefits, you might find yourself wanting to expand that time, to create even more space for what makes you feel like yourself.

Weaving Core Needs Into Your Rhythm

You don't need to wait for big blocks of time to honor your core needs. You can also weave them into the rhythms of your daily

and weekly scheduling. Small practices, consistently done, create powerful shifts.

So, what might these look like?

If creative expression is your core need, you might spend fifteen minutes sketching in the morning before the day gets busy. Set an alarm because you will lovingly, adoringly lose yourself/find your Self once you begin!

If sound is essential, you might listen alone to a 2-minute song with an intention of absorbing the moment, letting all else go.

If nature calls, you might spend your lunch break sitting outside away from people or walking barefoot in the grass, just you grounding with the earth. Notice the panoply of sensations. Notice what images or knowings come to you.

If touch matters, you might ask for a shoulder massage from your partner or practice self-massage before bed. Of course, you can book a massage but, also, consider joining or starting a consensual, nonsexual massage group that, perhaps, meets monthly or bi-monthly. Another idea is to have only one or two friends join you to practice a single massage technique.

If movement is your pathway, you might dance along a local bike trail and enjoy movement among the trees. Take an online course in somatic techniques and then your core need sessions can be 15 minutes or 30 minutes of ethereal, deeply restorative time.

The point is not to add more complexity to your life. Instead, you'll want to introduce small moments with intention. Weave your core needs into the life you are currently living. Remember that honoring your core needs doesn't always require grand gestures or big time commitments. Sometimes, the most powerful practice is the small, consistent one that you can actually sustain.

Small Practices That Create Big Shifts

I want to tell you about one of our past circle sisters, Claire. She identified music as one of her core needs, but she felt like she didn't have time for it. She worked full-time. She had children. She was exhausted. She and I brainstormed small practices. She started listening to one song—just one particular song—every morning while she drank her coffee before anyone else woke up. Two minutes. That was all. But every single morning, she allowed herself to feel that music, to let it move through her. She was remembering herself.

Within a week, she told me that those two minutes had become the anchor of her entire day. She felt more grounded, more connected, and more like herself. By the end of the month, she had expanded to ten minutes of 432hz toning. And that ten-minute daily practice was reshaping her entire experience of her life. This is what small, consistent practices can do. They're not impressive. They don't look like much. But over time, they create profound shifts.

Your small practice will rewire your nervous system. It will remind you of who you are. It becomes the thread that holds on to the Real You even as life gets chaotic.

What small practice could you begin today? What one thing could you commit to doing consistently, starting now, that would honor your core needs? It doesn't have to be elaborate. It just has to be real and consistent. Start there. That's all that's required.

Say three times at the beginning and at the end of your day:
"I am who I am and that is enough."

You'll notice synchronicities and shifts in your life.

—Bashar, 2025

When Life Interrupts Your Intentions

You're going to get off track. You're going to have seasons where honoring your core needs feels impossible. Life is going to happen. A crisis. An illness. A demanding project at work. A family situation.

I don't want you to go back to sleep. What I want you to do is meet yourself with radical compassion. Life disrupts. That's what a human life does but you can come back. You can return to your practices. You can remember yourself. And coming back, even after a long absence, is powerful. It's not starting over. It's remembering. It's a return. A return is always available to you.

I've had clients who took a break from their creative practice for six months and then came back to it. I've had women who got so busy they forgot about their nature walks for an entire season and then, when things shifted inside themselves and out, they returned to the forest. I've watched people lose their commitment to movement and then find their way back to deliberate exploring with their bodies. Every single time, they came back.

The need was still inside them and so was the satisfying remedy. The soul has nothing but unconditional love for you; it is You. It is always sending you good ideas and guidance if only you took dedicated self-love time to hear them. By the way, your body has built in soul memory. How your body feels is always a good clue about your level of happiness. So if life has disrupted your practice, I'm encouraging you to gently return to it.

When you do fall off track—and you will, at some point—the most important thing you can do is respond with self-compassion rather than self-judgment.

Your inner critic might show up: "You should have kept going. You're undisciplined. You don't really want this. You're never going to change." That voice is loud and it's harsh. And it doesn't help. It just adds shame on top of the disruption.

Answer back with kindness. I want you to talk to yourself the way you would talk to a beloved friend who had fallen off track. Speak with kindness and understanding, and with

encouragement to begin again. You might say to yourself, "I got busy. That happens but I'm back now. I remember how good this feels." Shame and guilt create more resistance and disconnection. But compassion? Compassion opens the door.

Mantra

"I say no to what drains me, so I can say yes to what fills me."
"I am worthy of time, space, and care."

Journal Questions

1. What core needs have I been ignoring or minimizing?
2. What beliefs have kept me from honoring my needs?
3. What would change in my life if I treated my core needs as non-negotiable?
4. What small practice can I commit to this week to honor my core needs?
5. How do I feel when I honor my needs versus when I ignore them?

Journal Exercise

Boundary Inventory: List three things you need to say no to in order to make space for your core needs. Then, write a loving affirmation for each boundary (e.g., "I say no to overcommitting because my peace matters.").



Chapter 7: Connecting in Sisterhood

*When women support each other,
incredible things happen.*



We are incredible!

The Healing Power of Women's Circles

Women's circles are sacred. When we, women, gather it is a sacred act. We jointly raise our frequency and the Universe is instantly there to match us. We are more and we are more and more and more. We bathe ourselves in higher energy and we are even more.

You are on your transformation journey. Discovering your core needs and beginning to satisfy them has become your very effective strategy for experiencing True Self again.

I have seen you laughing with the other women in our circle, holding nothing back. I have seen you with tears. Other women met your need with some of their own release. We held each other. A particular kind of healing and growth can only happen in community. We will remind you as you journey farther that you are never alone to do this work. Promise that you will remind other women, as well, that they are not alone.

Women's circles are always a divine expression. It's where vulnerability is honored, where judgment is left at the door, where each woman's story matters.

Creating this kind of space requires intentionality. It requires agreements about confidentiality. It requires presence: really listening to each other rather than thinking about what you're going to say next. We, sisters of the sacred circle, meet each woman exactly where she is without trying to fix her or convince her of anything or attempting to change her. If you're creating a

circle with friends or colleagues, spend time at the beginning establishing these agreements.

Most of us spend so much energy focusing on how we appear to others that we forget what it feels like to be fully seen and still accepted. We're so used to performing that authenticity feels dangerous. But in a true circle, vulnerability is the gateway to connection. Your sisters feel your humanity. And they recognize themselves in your struggle. They think, "Oh, she feels that, too. I thought I was the only one." That recognition, that relief, that sense of connection makes community real.

Just be present for your sisters. You don't need to have all the answers. You just need to care enough to really listen.

If you're not currently part of a women's circle, I encourage you to consider creating one or seeking one out. That's because that safety, that witnessing, that connection is heavenly for us, all.

Receiving and Giving Support

One of the hardest things to do for many women is asking for help. We're trained to be strong, to handle things ourselves, to not be a burden to anyone except ourselves. So, we silently struggle. We pretend everything's fine. We don't tell anyone when we're drowning. And in that silence, we become more isolated. We become more disconnected. We forget that asking for help is not weakness. It's honesty. It's wisdom. It's how real relationships are built. In a circle of sisterhood, asking for support is not just allowed, it's encouraged.

You might ask for advice about honoring your core needs when you feel resistance.

You might ask for encouragement when you're doubting yourself.

You might ask for witness when you're processing a difficult emotion.

You might ask for practical help: childcare so you can have time for your creative practice or a walking buddy for some of your nature time or someone to celebrate with when you achieve a breakthrough.

This asking is not selfish. It's how community works. It's how we all rise together.

Practice asking. Pay attention to when you need support and make the effort to reach out. Be specific about what you need. Trust that the women around you want to support you, just as you want to support them. Recognize that in asking, you're actually giving others the gift of being needed, of making a difference, of being part of something meaningful.

And when other women ask for your support, give it generously. Show up for them. Encourage them. Celebrate their discoveries and their brave choices. Be the person who believes in them when they doubt themselves. Be the friend who holds their

vision when it's hard for them to hold on to it. Be the sister who says, "Yes, you can do this. I'm with you."

Again, let me say that this kind of support is very healing. It's what transforms individual effort into movements. It's what makes change stick. When a woman knows that other women are believing in her, she can do hard things. She can take risks. She can honor her core needs even when it feels uncomfortable. She can claim her truth even when society tells her to shrink. So, be that person for someone else. Be present. Be encouraging. Be the loving witness and supporter that you yourself need. Notice how, in supporting others, you become more solid in your own knowing. In encouraging others, you encourage yourself.

Releasing the Myth of Scarcity

Women have been taught to compete with each other; society encourages us to not see each other as allies. It is generally believed that there's a limited amount of love, approval, success, beauty, and resources and if you get some, that means less for me. So, we compete for the approval of men, for recognition and achievement, and out of fear of not being thought of as "good." We judge each other's choices. We diminish each other's accomplishments. We keep ourselves small so that men won't see us as a threat. And in that competition, we lose each other. We lose the power of sisterhood. We lose the strength that could have come from unity.

Have you ever seen that comic strip that has three characters: two large dogs and one fox. The two dogs have plenty of food between them and left to themselves they were happy to share. However, the fox thinks, "Share? No. I want all of it or most of it and I know how to get what I want." Soon, the fox had gotten a lively conversation going with the dogs. It didn't take much for a seemingly friendly chat to become a rousing discussion, which with a little help became a fight between the two large dogs. As they growled and began to nip at each other the fox made off with most of the food. There was little left for the two hungry dogs.

If women are tripping each other up by lying about each other or withholding information that could have been useful to someone they have participated in making themselves and other women weaker. Commonly, women will refuse to turn and help another woman at the office.

Do you not know that we are seen as easy pickin's? And worse, women who don't act collaboratively have taken their eyes off the prize. Society finds us a lot easier to control if we are working against each other. Think about these truths the next time you fail to help another woman when you could have or you thought it fun to gossip and pass judgment. We are all weaker and made more vulnerable for our lack of generosity. Behaving so is actually against our true nature. For women all over the world kindness and a will to share are natural proclivities. Women love to love by helping others. We love to give and receive the sisterly embrace.

Keep in mind that the Universe is abundant. I know what you are thinking; scarcity, right? The earth has only finite resources and, of course, some people are going to have more than others, right? That's what they taught me in my first economics course back in the seventies. But, in fact, Thomas Malthus (British, 1700s) got it all wrong.

There's enough recognition for all of us. There's enough success for all of us. There's enough beauty, love, and space for all of us to stretch and breathe in. When I succeed, it does not diminish your potential for success. When I honor my core needs, that doesn't take away from your ability to honor yours. In fact, the opposite is true. My success is always going to be an inspiration to you. My courage makes you braver. My transformation opens the door for yours.

This shift in perspective—from scarcity to abundance, from competition to connection—is revolutionary. It means you can genuinely celebrate another woman's win without feeling like it's a loss for you. It means you can admire another woman's journey without feeling jealous or threatened. It means you can lift other women up without you feeling diminished.

And when you make this shift, everything changes. As you shift so goes the energy all around you. Yes, that's the way it works in our universe. Suddenly, there's so much more energy available. Energy that used to go into competing and judging and

diminishing can now go into supporting and celebrating and connecting.

Every woman's core needs are unique. Every woman's path is distinct. And that diversity is beautiful. It means that we each have something different to offer. We each embody different gifts. We each light up different aspects of what it means to be a whole human in the world. One woman's core need might be creative expression, and through her art, she heals the world. Another woman's core need might be nature, and she becomes an environmentalist, a healer of the earth. Another woman's core need might be movement, and she teaches dance or yoga, transforming others through embodied practice. Another woman's core need might be sound, and she becomes a musician or a healer through sound.

The diversity of our needs doesn't separate us. It creates a rich tapestry. It means that together, we can hold more wholeness. Together, we can address more of what the world needs. So celebrate the differences. Celebrate the woman whose path looks nothing like yours. Celebrate her for being so fully herself. Because in doing so, you give yourself permission to be fully yourself, too.

Sisterhood in the Streets: Keeping What is Sacred Going

Sisterhood doesn't happen in isolation. It's built through ongoing connection:

- It's built through regular contact, through showing up for each other over time, through weathering difficulties together, and celebrating joys together.
- It's built through the daily, seemingly mundane acts of reaching out, checking in, being present.

So, if you've found your people—the women who understand you, who support you, who see you—invest in those relationships. Make time for them. Prioritize them. Don't wait for them to reach out first. Reach out yourself. Send a text. Make a call. Suggest a walk or a coffee or just a conversation. Let them know they matter to you. And receive them when they reach out to you. Make time for them even when you're busy. Show up for them even when it's inconvenient. That's what builds real sisterhood. That's what creates bonds that last.

I think about the women in my life who have sustained me. The ones who checked in when I was struggling meant everything to me. The ones who showed up even when I didn't ask them to do it, have shaped my inner landscape, for sure. That's because their presence gave me that little bit more assurance to be able to do what I needed to do. The ones who made space for me in their lives over the years and decades poured love into me.

I hope that I gave just as much because I certainly intended to do so. Through the years and even now my love for my journey sisters has only grown. I write for you. Whenever I speak publicly I speak for us and give these messages all the love in my heart. I hold nothing back in my support of us, women.

Practically Speaking, how do we keep our connections alive?

Here are some ideas to spark your thinking:

- You might create a regular gathering such as a weekly walk together, a monthly dinner, a quarterly women's circle.
- You might create a group chat where you share daily encouragement or ask for support.
- You might do a buddy system where you check in with one particular sister on a regular basis.
- You might exchange letters or voice memos.
- You might share your core needs journey with each other and ask about how it's going.
- You might celebrate each other's breakthroughs and support each other through challenges.
- You might read books together and discuss them.
- You might create accountability partnerships around honoring your core needs.
- You might simply make a commitment to reach out to one woman per week, just to say hello.

The form doesn't matter as much as the consistency. What matters is your intentionality. What matters is the clear signal that this relationship, this woman that you feel connection with, matters to you. And what matters is the reciprocal willingness to invest time and energy in the connection.

Sisterhood is not passive. It's active. It's something you choose again and again. And each time you choose it, you strengthen it. Each time you show up, you deepen it. Each time you reach out, you build it. So, pick one or more sisters from our sacred circle or

from a group of sisters in your area and commit to staying connected. Don't do it in a way that feels like obligation, but in a way that feels like love. Watch how that connection becomes one of the most sustaining forces in your life.

Mantras

“One joy, flowing through all.”

“Joy flows through me, amplifying joy we share.”

Journal Prompt

What do you want to share with your circle sisters about your sisterhood experiences? For what do you want to thank them? How will you keep sisterhood in your life?



Chapter 8: Living from Your Core Self



Your pond is clear.

I lead my life from my core.

Expressing True Self in the Physical World

You've traveled far. Through these pages, you've awakened from a kind of spiritual sleepwalking into awakened consciousness. You've identified your specific core needs. You've begun to honor them. You've built connections rooted in truth and authenticity. And now, as you and I and our sisters begin to bring the circle to its closing, you will not be surprised when I say that this is not an ending. It's the beginning of a lifelong practice of self-transformation that extends far beyond these pages.

This is where Eva Pierrakos's wisdom from The Pathwork speaks again: "This time of self-transformation as a spiral journey, not linear, not hierarchical, but circular, is moving higher and higher into layers of Truth as we evolve."

Your core needs are not something you solve once and then move past. Instead, they evolve with you. They deepen as your consciousness expands. Your self-knowledge becomes even more refined. Core needs are part of your still evolving inner world. Actually, as you enjoy the ecstasy of creative play or, perhaps, movement that's become sacred for you or touch that is uplifting or whatever your core need is you'll know by your experience where your frequency or vibration is. How high is high? I'll want to hear about your personal discoveries.

It's an ongoing practice of turning inward, listening to what your soul is asking for, honoring that asking, and then adjusting as life unfolds and reshapes itself. Some days, you'll embody this practice beautifully. You'll feel grounded, radiant, present. Other

days, you'll fall back into old patterns. You'll forget yourself. And in those forgettings, you're not failing. You're gathering data. You're noticing where your consciousness still needs to expand. That's essential information. There is no failing.

I know by experience that the pleasures of pursuing my core needs creates an opening or portal to the Universe's gifts, which, of course, include an endless reserve of knowledge and wisdom. You'll see.

Returning Again and Again to Yourself

The Pathwork teaches us that transformation happens not through achieving perfection, but through the courageous act of returning to ourselves, again and again. The women who transform most profoundly are the ones who lose their way and find it again. They're the ones who get busy, forget their practices, and then remember. And when they remember, they do so with even more tenderness, more wisdom, more understanding of how to make their core needs real within their particular lives. You and I are talking about love this time instead of mistaken ideas about willpower and/or determination.

I get to say thank you. You've been kind and generous to me and to the other women in our circle. Thank you for following along on our shared journey. You've allowed me to lead us through experiences that were very personal to each of us. Experience is what matters here. There is no new replacement belief system in these pages. There is no religious dogma for you to agree with or disagree with. Instead, miracle of all

miracles you've had experiences with me and the sisters of the circle. I'm drawing attention to your experiences because that is what will keep you coming back to your core and True Self.

Even if you become distracted again by the world's noise or personal level pressures you will always remember You. More specifically, you'll remember how you feel as You, The True Self. Once you know by experience who you really are, you also always know the way home. How you felt once you were free of worldly fetters was invaluable and powerful. You freed yourself! And freedom is pretty enticing. Women want freedom no matter what some might say to the contrary. Freedom is a basic human right—end of an old story. Freedom.

Ultimately, freedom is what you experienced when you rediscovered True Self. The immense pleasure that you experience whenever you lose yourself/find your Self in a core need activity creates one hell of a memory. You got yourself there. You can return to those amazingly good feelings and sensations whenever you want. Once you know, you can always find your way back to yourself.

As Pierrakos teaches, real transformation comes from loving acceptance of ourselves exactly as we are, right now, while simultaneously committing to evolving beyond what limits us. That's the paradox you're stepping into: perfect just as you are and endlessly becoming more fully yourself.

Witnessing Your Own Transformation at Work

Begin to pay exquisite attention with the kind of gentle witnessing you would offer to any precious creation that's beginning to unfold:

- As you continue honoring your core needs, you'll start noticing subtle changes. Your body will feel different, less armored. You will feel more at home in your own skin.
- Your breathing will deepen into fullness naturally. The chronic tension you didn't even know you were holding will begin to release.
- You might sleep better.
- You might observe that you are less reactive, more able to pause before responding.
- You might notice that you're laughing more freely or that there's more light(ness) moving through your being.
- You might hear yourself speaking your truth more readily, apologizing less, taking up more space.

Watch for these shifts that matter most. It's a quiet revolution happening in your nervous system, your relationships, and your daily wellbeing.

You might observe that you're making different choices. Your choices now honor your wellbeing rather than just accommodating everyone else's needs.

You might also notice that your decision making process has altered. When you're faced with a choice, you pause and check in with your core:

"Does this honor my real needs? Does this align with my True Self? Or, am I abandoning myself again?" Or,

"If I choose this path instead of that one will I still be Me?"

"What does my gut say?" "Do these conditions call to me?"

"Are these the conditions that I need to flourish?" Or,

"How will this choice help me or what benefit does it bring?"

This kind of conscious decision-making becomes your new normal. It ripples outward. The people closest to you will feel the difference, even if they don't have words for it. You've become more solid. More grounded. More present.

As other people present their wants and needs to you possibly in the form of persuasion, horse trading, reciprocity, you will find that a pause and then consideration of these questions will aid you greatly. You won't tend to mindlessly capitulate to someone else's will or automatically be over giving or, otherwise, feel compelled to say yes. Say yes when it is truly your choice to do so. Say yes only when conditions are right for you by your own determination.

As other people present their wants and needs to you possibly in the form of bullying or coercion or guilting or shaming and other controlling behaviors and manipulations your pause and considering these questions will help you to stand your ground, firmly and calmly. You will have trained yourself to check in with your own inner wisdom. You will no longer be in the habit of folding when someone wants you to believe that you are powerless and that you have no choice but to give in to their demands. Your internal grasp on reality says otherwise. What they are presenting is just noise. It is untrue and you know it. You have the power of soul remembrance. You know who you are and no one can take that knowing from you. In such cases, you can calmly walk away.

Celebrating How Far You've Come

So many of us were taught that the journey toward transformation should look like quiet suffering followed by sudden breakthrough. But that's not how the Universe actually works. The real transformation happens across our accumulated small choices, day-to-day.

Sisters, I say its time to celebrate. Celebrate now (as well as later). You were living according to scripts written by others. You were disconnected from the voice of your soul. And now? Now, you know who you are. Now, you're listening. Now, you're building a life that honors your truth. Write yourself a letter. Tell a trusted sister what you've accomplished. Acknowledge the bravery it took to turn inward when the culture is screaming at you to keep looking outward. The courage it took to question

the narratives you inherited should be celebrated. The vulnerability it took to share your journey with other women was so amazing.

The Pathwork teaches that self-love and self-acceptance are the foundation of all spiritual growth so love yourself for this work.

Celebrate yourself fiercely. Because you're worth celebrating. The Pathwork speaks of this as moving from a defensive, contracted state into an expansive, open state. From a place of fear into a place of love. And that transition, once begun, can't be undone. You've tasted freedom. You won't go back.

For so long, many of us have been operating in survival mode. Survival was about staying small, about compliance, and about making yourself less threatening so not to cause waves. You're moving out of mere survival though and into something more like thriving.

Thriving is about flourishing. It's about creating a life that actually is an expression of who you really are, not just a series of obligations checked off a list. You are pursuing dreams that matter to you. When you are thriving you and others are building relationships based on authentic mutual respect. Thriving is about making time for beauty, for play, for creativity, and for contemplation. It's about waking up each morning and feeling like your life belongs to you.

And Dreams May Come

As you move into this new space of thriving, you might also discover dreams that you didn't know were possibilities for you. There might be desires that have been whispering around the edges of the life that you have been living, waiting for the right moment to speak:

- Maybe you've always wanted to take a sabbatical,
- Maybe you want to launch a creative project that both terrifies and excites you,
- Maybe you want to change careers to something aligned with your values,
- Maybe you want to write,
- Maybe you want to teach,
- Maybe now is the time to heal from trauma that's been holding you hostage,
- Maybe you want to take steps to deepen a spiritual practice,
- Maybe you want to relocate to be near nature or community.

These dreams might feel completely unrealistic right now. They might seem to require resources you don't have or circumstances that seem impossible to change. But I happen to know that when you start honoring your core needs, when you start operating from alignment with your soul, your entire life reorganizes around that alignment. Opportunities appear. People show up. Resources become available. All because you're operating from a different frequency. You're no longer broadcasting desperation or resignation. You're broadcasting, "I matter. My life matters. I deserve to be happy. I have the right

to prioritize my own personal happiness.” And the universe responds to that frequency.

So, don't dismiss your dreams yet. Don't tell yourself they're impossible. Instead, hold them with reverence. Let them show you the direction your soul wants to travel. And then take small steps in that direction. Now. Today. Because the life you're dreaming of—the one that makes your heart beat faster when you imagine it—that life is more possible than you think. It's waiting for you to believe you deserve it.

Becoming a Living Example for Others

One of the most powerful effects of honoring your core needs is that your very presence becomes permission for others. You don't have to preach or convince or explain. Your Being does the work. When someone sees you showing up for yourself, when they witness you taking time for what matters to you, speaking your truth, setting boundaries, living from your center, they receive a different message than what society typically insist upon. They get the message that it's possible. They get the idea that a woman doesn't have to shrink herself to be “good.” They see that it's possible to honor yourself and show up as a good partner, a good parent, a good friend, a good person. That message is revolutionary for many women.

I think about the women I've watched transform by honoring their core needs. And I think about how that transformation rippled outward into their families, their friendships, their workplaces, and their communities. Their daughters saw them

and learned that women have needs, too, and these should be respected. Their sons saw them and learn to respect women differently. Their friends saw them and felt permission to examine their own lives. Their life partners saw them and started showing up differently. One woman's courageous return to herself becomes an invitation for everyone in her orbit. You become a living embodiment of what's possible when a woman refuses to abandon herself.

The Pathwork speaks of this as "service through being." It's the idea that by doing your own spiritual work, by becoming more conscious and authentic, you automatically elevate the consciousness of those around you. You don't have to try and you do not have to convince anyone. You just have to be Real You.

Inspiring Transformation in Your Circle

As you move through your life, living from your core self, you'll naturally begin to inspire transformation in your spheres. The people around you will notice. They'll ask questions. "What's different about you? You seem so grounded lately. What changed? I want to feel like that, too. How did you do it?" If they ask, you can share your story. You can invite them into this journey. You can give them this book. You can create a sacred circle with them. You can support them as they begin to discover and honor their own core needs.

This is how transformation spreads, not through force, or conviction, but through invitation and through inspiration.

You'll find that transformation happens through the infectious nature of wholeness.

The Pathwork teaches that we're all interconnected, that healing one person heals the whole. So, as you transform yourself, you're simultaneously transforming your circles, your communities, your world. You don't have to do anything special or dramatic. You just have to keep showing up for yourself. Keep honoring your own core needs. Keep coming home to your truth. Your Light radiates out to everyone you touch. That's revolutionary work. That's how we change the world.

You've Been Born Anew

As we come to the close of this leg of the journey together, I want to speak something sacred into your being. In some very real sense, you've been born anew. You've awakened into consciousness. You've remembered your True Self.

Reconnecting with your core needs has been the means to get you there. Honor what makes you feel alive and whole is a kind of rebirth.

You're building new neural pathways, new habits, new ways of relating to yourself and others. That's integration. That's the messy, beautiful process of becoming. The Pathwork speaks of this integration as a spiral—we may circle back to familiar territory, but at a higher level of consciousness each time. So, be gentle with yourself. Be patient. You are Divine.

There is only the ongoing practice of listening to your soul and honoring what it's asking for. You know now to trust your own inner knowing.

You're stepping into a new life now. It's a life that honors you. A life grounded in The Pathwork principle that "the gift of accepting yourself fully as you are now becomes the foundation for all transformation."

I'm so honored to have been with you on this journey. I'm so glad you're taking these steps. And I know, without a doubt, that the woman you're becoming—the woman who knows herself, who honors herself, who lives from her core—has already changed the world, just by Being, and just by showing up. You are embodying the truth of what it means to be a whole, alive, honoring woman. Thank you for your courage. Your circle sisters and I thank you for saying yes to yourself and welcome home.

Our Closing Ritual

This ritual marks the completion of our core needs book and our sacred circle. It marks the beginning of a new phase of self-honoring:

1. Gratitude Round. We bathe ourselves in the spirit of sharing as each of us speaks of her gratitude (for the circle, for herself, or for a sister).
2. Closing Words. “We release this circle with love. What was shared here stays here. What was healed here continues to unfold. We carry this connection with us.”
3. Extinguish the Candle. Each of us has stood and claimed one of the burning candles in the room. Blow out your candle in order to release the energy of our circle. Sit where you are or continue to stand in silence for a moment to honor the closing.

Namaste, My Sisters



RESOURCES

The Pathwork of Self-Transformation. Eva Pierrakos. Bantam Books. 1990.

It shows us how to accept ourselves fully as we are now, and then to move beyond the negativity, or “lower self,” that blocks our personal and spiritual evolution. It offers a practical, rational, and honest way to reach our deepest creative identity.

Empowering Women —A Guide to Loving Yourself, Breaking Rules, and Bringing Good into Your Life. Louise Hay. 2019.

The modern world is full of change and upheaval. However, in this inspirational book, Louise Hay reveals that true changes come from within. She points out that when we, as women, are willing to shift our internal ground, we operate on a much more expanded level in life.

Quotation from Bashar was taken from a channeled message that came through Darryl Anka, bashar.org.

Quotations from The Mother of Creation were taken from channeled messages that came through Anne Tucker, annetucker.com.

Trust Your Vibes oracle deck. Sonia Choquette. Hay House. 1970.

Trust Your Vibes and Awaken Your Intuitive Abilities lecture. Sonia Choquette. Hay House. 1970.

Intuition is the natural sixth sense bestowed upon everyone, without exception. Your intuition is always available to help you in all areas of your life. You just have to connect with it.

Why Humming and Chanting May Help Lower Your Anxiety and Inspire Calm. Amanda Lieber. Daily Om.

We've been taught to seek healing from outside help, but as it turns out, all you many need are your breath and your voice to reach a harmonious inner balance of body, mind, and spirit.

Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom. Christiane Northup. Hay House. 2007.

(It) . . . explores the unity of mind and body and the crucial role of the human spirit in creating health. You'll learn: how thoughts, beliefs, and emotions can have organ-specific consequences and which ones can promote health and well-being; why a woman's own intuitive understanding of her body is as important as her doctor's assessment . . .

● Creative Expression ● Music and Sound ● Nature and Stillness
● Touch and Body ● Movement



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