

The Ongo Book 2.0: Everyday Nonviolence

“In a hurried and harried world, here are some basic and potentially powerful ideas about how to remain stable and unrocked. My guess is they will become more valuable as our various external crises deepen, and some of the distractions on which we currently lean begin to show their shallowness.”

– **Bill McKibben**, author of *The End of Nature* and *Deep Economy*
and Co-founder of 350.org

“*The Ongo Book: Everyday Nonviolence* is a beautiful and practical book balanced with inspiration, simple yet complete teachings, and practices on every aspect of an integrated spirituality. I find the practices clearly explained, guiding the dedicated practitioner with precise maps to the inner landscape and the landscape of interpersonal relationships. For many years, in my own evolution and teaching, it has been very clear to me that, in order to actualize our spiritual evolution, we need the support of a community who share our vision and values. *The Ongo Book* provides a practical support for this vision.”

– **Robert Gonzales**, Founder of the Center for Living Compassion and
former board president of the Center for Nonviolent Communication

“The socially-engaged Buddhist peace movement adopted the slogan, ‘There is no Way to peace, peace is the Way’. This is a call to live and embody the aspirational goals of a spiritual life. This book is a companion along the path. The contemplative exercises celebrate a peaceful, respectful way to listen deeply; build bridges of understanding; and develop clear, compassionate communication skills to live harmoniously with others.”

– **Subhana Barzaghi**, Zen Roshi, Insight Meditation teacher,
and psychotherapist

“Never before have I experienced such a tangible, simple, yet transformative practice. In using these practices my heart has opened in a way I never imagined possible! If the entire world population could embark on this 12-week journey then we would inhabit a much kinder, wiser, and nonviolent place.”

– **Melissa Bernstein**, Co-founder of Melissa & Doug and Lifelines

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Foreword

Shantum Seth



I first met Jesse and Catherine ten years ago on a pilgrimage. This pilgrimage that I have been curating for 35 years is along the footsteps of the two historical figures that I think of as my two greatest teachers, the Buddha and Gandhi.

The photograph on the cover of the first edition of *The Ongo Book*, the planting of a Bodhi tree sapling, was taken on that journey. It is significant that the image is that of a sapling and not of a seed. Because the seed that came to us from the Buddha is already a healthy sapling. It is not something new that we are starting. We have been handed a sapling from a centuries-old tree, and all we have to do is to cultivate the sapling. With this book, we are being given the tools to do our part.

My other great teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh, often spoke of seeing the clouds, the rain, the sunshine, the earth, all in a leaf. If we took out one of those elements, then the leaf would not exist. This realization of what he calls “our inter-being,” underlines our sense of interconnectedness and our universal responsibility. What we say, what we do, what we think, have repercussions beyond our imagination. On this fragile little planet, we are all interrelated and coexistent. If we destroy ourselves, then we take all other species with us. What’s timely about *The Ongo Book* is that our survival is uncertain. It offers practices on how to live harmoniously and in loving community.

What I particularly like about this book is the way it offers practical exercises on how to build community – like conducting circle sharing in such a way that each person feels included and can share freely.

Both the authors, Catherine and Jesse, are natural facilitators, and their book can guide many others. There is a great sense of ease and playfulness that comes naturally to them. Catherine can

connect effortlessly with young people, who grow to trust and love her very quickly. It's a gift – not everyone has this skill. Jesse has a certain stability, a rock-like center, which allows Catherine's dance.

We recognize a common bond between the four of us – the two authors, my wife, Gitu, and me. We all share the same aspiration to make the world a better place, not just for ourselves but for others and for future generations. We have a common idealism, a similar sense of purpose.

Over the years we've known them, Jesse and Catherine have connected us to other friends in their circle who share the same sense of purpose. Both Jesse and Catherine have a way of building trust, and people naturally gravitate to them. This, the making of a "Beloved community," a Sangha, built on practices in nonviolence, is what this book is about – helping each other to live and breathe easy, and creating a more harmonious and loving world.

We've been at war and in conflict for a long time, even within ourselves, and that has been a great cause of suffering in the world, for individuals, within families, and for society at large. There is much despair, anger, hatred, and brutality.

It is tough to keep the light of nonviolence alive in the midst of such darkness, skepticism, and ridicule. I know it to my own cost. How many times have people dismissed me with a scoff: "You're an idealist, the world is going to destroy itself anyway, this is the Kali Yuga."

But I do believe that the potential of basic goodness exists in all human beings. I also see that there is a basic human need to belong and to connect and to feel that connection. We can see it in the youngest of children. Our effort is to keep that goodness alive in ourselves and to touch it in others. It's what we were born to do. This book helps us to do that.

– Shantum Seth

March 2022

Shantum Seth received the 'lamp transmission' from Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh ordaining him as a *Dharmacharya* (Teacher of the Dharma) in 2001, and he has been teaching in India and across the world. He has also been leading "In the Footsteps of the Buddha" pilgrimages and other multifaith and transformative journeys since 1988 and is considered the foremost guide to the sites associated with the Buddha. He is actively involved in social, environmental, and educational programs, including work on cultivating mindfulness in society, with educators, the Central Reserve Police Force, and the corporate sector among others, pioneered by the non-profit trust Ahimsa, of which he is one of the founders. Previously having lived in England, the USA, and France (in a monastery) for over 14 years, he now resides with his wife, Gitanjali, and daughters in Dehradun, in the foothills of the Indian Himalayas.

Foreword

Lucy Leu



I live in a world where there is so much to learn, to read, to gain, to see, to do, and to acquire – a world of fast foods, quick fixes, new skills, the latest discoveries and promising techniques. I am sometimes overwhelmed, seeking to consume all the wisdom and knowledge I see out there in the world.

Catherine and Jesse offer something different here. Extending a gentle hand, they lead me into a journey where each step is its own reward. I am invited to pause, I find my footing, I encounter the unknown inside. I relax into a spaciousness where fresh understanding lands and seeps through the layers of who I am. I change from inside out. And my world changes.

This journey is, as the authors say, “for those who want to *be* nonviolence in the real world.” The felt sense of nonviolence in the body is a relaxed, open state of goodwill grounded in a knowing that, in its essence, this self is not separate from other selves. Connection (or interconnectedness) is central to Nonviolent Communication (NVC) and the Dharma lineages reflected in *The Ongo Book*. However, nonseparation is not something that my brain (however smart) or my will (however strong) can accomplish. While I might study Buddhist concepts, read about nonviolence, or even master the use of words and expressions posited by Nonviolent Communication, my life and my world will only transform when the teachings spring into life from within the heart. Although the journey extends across a lifetime, *The Ongo Book* provides a sturdy 12-week scaffolding that allows me – alone, or even more powerfully, with the shared intention and presence of fellow travelers – to experiment with, experience, and integrate new ways of being and seeing offered by wise teachings.

To me, *The Ongo Book* is not a book to read in the usual sense. It is a clear, bright guide that takes me on a journey to discover myself being held in new light. If I am willing to take time to return

again and again and look, I will see unfamiliar angles, facets, and potentials in that face I take to be me. I might realize that I am not the person I see in the mirror – not the (good, kind, competent, intelligent, strong) “self” I think I am nor the (bad, stupid) one I’d like not to be. There is simply the fullness of being, profound connectedness within and with “others,” and a felt sense of belonging to a continuously changing and vibrant flow – this dynamic mystery we call Life.

I am inspired by the authors’ inclusion and honoring of their many teachers and the humble acknowledgment that “there is nothing new here in this book.” Though our sources of wisdom may be age-old, each generation longs to be addressed in their own language and through the forms and culture that have evolved in their lifetime. When I take the Ongo journey to embody the teachings, I transform not only myself and my world, but water the soil from which next generations will emerge. We are in an age of precipitous change – how we each live our one precious life will shape the future of humanity. I am so grateful that *The Ongo Book* is here to support us as a friend.

– Lucy Leu,
March 2022

Lucy Leu is the former board president of the Center for Nonviolent Communication, the editor of the internationally bestselling *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life*, author of the *Nonviolent Communication Companion Workbook*, and co-creator of the *NVC Toolkit for Facilitators*. She co-founded the Freedom Project, bringing NVC and mindfulness trainings to prison inmates and those reintegrating into society. Lucy began practicing Vipassana Insight Meditation in 1986. Introduced to relational meditation through Insight Dialogue in 2008, she has been actively engaged in practice and service with the Insight Dialogue Community. She is privileged to live on the unceded ancestral lands of the Coast Salish peoples (aka Vancouver, British Columbia).

*“For our brief time on this wonderful planet,
we must bow deeply to one another,
to Earth,
and to all other sentient beings,
and resist with the power of love
anything that creates or stands as a barrier
between ourselves and the whole kingdom of life.”*

– Alycee J. Lane

Welcome to Ongo

An Invitation

"We are all just walking each other home."

– Ram Dass

Peace. Compassion. Wisdom.

When you read these words, what comes to mind?

Do you think of your life, or someone else's? Do you think of where you live and work, or somewhere removed from your daily experience? Do you think of something that you live daily, or something that you wish for?

As meditation teachers, nonviolent direct-action educators, and Nonviolent Communication Certified Trainers, we have led trainings on six continents and worked with thousands of people. Wherever we go, people generally ask us the same question in various ways: "What I'm learning today is great, but how can I practice it in my everyday life?"

What if peace, compassion, and wisdom weren't just nice words that you visit from time to time, but your actual day-to-day experience? What if your home was your temple and your life was your spiritual teacher?

For us, these aren't abstract concerns. We ask questions like these ourselves every day, in our marriage, and in our relationships with relatives, neighbors, and coworkers. As teachers, we feel a responsibility to explore in our own lives what we are inviting our students to do; to be present with our breath and our feelings in the middle of heated discussions; to face our emotional wounds and our deeply held beliefs and take ownership for how they affect our relationships with others; to empathize with the needs of others and speak up for our own, even when we're afraid.

What has become clear to us is that, though most of us generally enjoy the “get away” feeling of a workshop or retreat, the big learning begins when we return home. Enlightenment is a great idea, but we all really want to know how to have a compassionate discussion about money with our spouses, or how to wisely address basic issues in our communities. In Kabul, Afghanistan, in 2007, amidst an ongoing U.S.-led military invasion and Taliban suicide bombings, the hottest topic in our nonviolence training for peace leaders was how to have an honest conversation with one’s neighbors about garbage and sewage.

Ongo was created in 2010 as our answer to this call to bring spiritual practice home. The term *Ongo* pays homage to the Japanese Zen tradition of “ango” (安居). Ango comes from the ancient Buddhist tradition of *Vassa*, a three-month period of intensive spiritual contemplation and practice, held during the Indian monsoon season. During the months when it was difficult to travel due to washed-out roads, and small animals and plants were most vulnerable to being invisibly trampled, the Buddha and his disciples would settle in one place to deepen their training in wisdom and compassion.

We have updated this tradition to meet the needs of ordinary people today. We call it “Ongo” as shorthand for *ongoing* spiritual practice. Although we recommend taking retreats or pilgrimages away from home and believe this can have powerful effects on one’s life, we wanted to provide the support of a retreat within people’s daily lives. We wanted to create a spiritual community whose care and connection could be felt even when someone was at home or at work. We wanted the teachings and practices we offered to make sense in the context of those everyday relationships and pressures.

Each day of our lives holds opportunity for us to awaken our hearts and minds to peace. You hold in your hands an invitation to discover that possibility of practice within your own life.

This book offers the “how to get there from here” while staying home. Within its pages are twelve weeks of inspiration, step-by-step guidance, and ways to create support and companionship. There are no prerequisites other than the willingness to say yes to the journey.

These practices were derived primarily from Buddhism, particularly Soto Zen and Vipassana, and Nonviolent Communication. Some of them also come from other bodies of wisdom and lineages, like Nonviolence, the Twelve Steps, the work of Stephen and Ondrea Levine, and Indigenous Elders with whom we have worked directly. We believe all the teachings we share are indigenous to many nations across the earth. We respect the carriers of these traditions. We also honor that there is nothing new here in this book. Like a story passed through generations, each retelling reflects the generation of its time and an evolution needed for humanity. In sharing this work, we honor the teachers who were called by compassion to share this wisdom with others. We honor those who came before them, who may have gone to great lengths to keep this wisdom alive.

Ongo does not require you to subscribe to any particular religion or belief system. In fact, our hope is that it opens up new depth and possibilities for you within your own faith or spiritual practice, whether that's prayer, meditation, yoga, or simply being kind to others.

Imagine living your spiritual practice in everything that you do – in movement and in stillness, in words and in silence. Imagine there being no separation between a spiritual retreat and your life. This book invites you into that reality through a progression of short, simple, and doable practices for you to incorporate into your daily life over the course of three months.

This book continues the evolution of Ongo and how we are sharing those practices. It's our best attempt at making the support, companionship, and wisdom of Ongo accessible to anyone, anywhere in the world. In its pages, we hope you will find more than answers for your life questions – we hope you will find a spiritual path where your questions deepen and the answers emerge through your own insights and discoveries.

You hold in your hands an invitation.

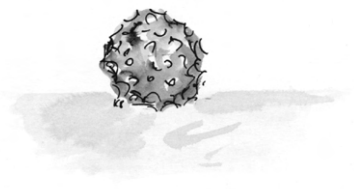
An invitation to step onto your path of peace, compassion, and wisdom.

An invitation to discover what this journey means to you.

How to Use This Book

The Quick-Start Guide

- 📖 **Read “Welcome to Ongo”** (page 1).
- 📖 **If doing Ongo on your own**, read “The Solo Practices: General Directions” (page 7). Then, choose a date to begin your twelve weeks of Ongo practice and start with “Week 1 Solo Practices” (page 29).
- 📖 **If doing Ongo with one other person**, both of you read “The Solo Practices: General Directions” (page 7) and “Preparing for Buddy Practice” (page 9). Then, together, choose a date to begin your twelve weeks of Ongo practice and start with the “Week 1 Buddy Practice” (page 26) and “Week 1 Solo Practices” (page 29).
- 📖 **If doing Ongo with an existing group**, read “The Solo Practices: General Directions” (page 7) and “Preparing for Buddy Practice” (page 9). After the first group gathering, you will begin with the “Week 1 Buddy Practice” (page 26) and “Week 1 Solo Practices” (page 29).
- 📖 **If you would like to do Ongo with a group, and there is no existing group**, read “Creating a Circle of Support: How to Start an Ongo Group” (page 11).
-  **If doing Ongo with a group that is meeting online instead of in-person**, use the guidance offered in “Leading Group Practice Online” (page 281), in addition to the instructions above.



Week 1

The Ongo Circle

“Entering an ongo or practice period away from the busyness of life is to stop and give honor to ancestors, family, and community.

It is a way to cultivate the light you inherited a thousand years ago from the first awakened ones. It is a chance to offer flowers and incense, to bow to the gift of life.”

– Zenju Earthlyn Manuel

Preparation – All participants:

- ✦ Bring to this first Group Gathering a written intention that expresses what calls you to Ongo at this moment in your life and what you are hoping to walk away with in your learning by the end of the Ongo journey.
- ✦ Bring your planner, calendar, or schedule book, if you use one.



Preparation – Group Guide (the organizer of this Ongo group):

- ✦ A day or two before the Group Gathering, remind everyone of the day, time, and place of the gathering and the invitation to bring an intention (see above).
- ✦ Read “Leading Group Practice” (page 13) and do the points listed under “Responsibilities of the Guide.”



Opening Meditation

Invite everyone to take their seats in the circle.

Read the following, to the group:

Welcome, everyone, to our Ongo Circle. We gather in a circle because on a circle, we each have a place and can all be equally seen and heard. Here, we all belong and we all matter.

Let us begin by each saying our name into the circle. As each person speaks, welcome them with your presence by silently listening and allowing the length of a full breath before the next person says their name. I will start by sharing my name and taking a breath, and then we will continue around the circle to my left.

Say your name into the circle. Take a full breath. Silently invite the person to your left to continue the round by sharing their name.

Once everyone in the circle has shared their name, read:

The purpose of the Ongo group is to offer learning, support, and companionship in our practice of wisdom and compassion. One of the ways that we support each other is through our consistent presence and commitment. We ask that we all show up to the majority of the Group Gatherings and Buddy Practices, and do the majority of the Solo Practices.

Another way we support each other is by caring for the vulnerability that naturally comes with practicing something new and unfamiliar. We can create a safe and trusting space for sharing honestly about our learning process. To support that sense of safety and trust, we ask that whatever is shared in our Ongo Group Gatherings be treated as confidential and not spoken of outside these gatherings without permission from the person who shared. We ask that we support one another not to fall into habits of gossip, criticism, or unwanted advice. Instead, let us do our best simply to see each other's vulnerability and notice where it mirrors our own.

A third way we can help each other is by stepping up and stepping back. What that means is that if you are hearing others' voices more often than your own, try stepping up and sharing more, and if you are hearing your own voice more often than others', step back and listen more. In this way, we support both an equality and diversity of voices in our group.

Are you willing to agree to these three requests of commitment, confidentiality, and consideration for all voices?

Pause to check if all agree. If not all are in agreement, ask if there is a simple change to the agreement that would be acceptable for all. If there isn't, we suggest that, for ease and meaningful use of everyone's energy, the group continue only with those participants who are willing to agree to the requests described above. Our experience is that Ongo groups require some form of commitment, confidentiality, and consideration for participants to have a real sense of support from the group.

After all agree, read:

Look around at your Ongo community. This will be our circle for the Ongo journey. On this journey, we support one another, and we each also take responsibility for our own seat. As we practice, deep material from our lives may come up to be practiced with. It is up to you to determine for yourself how much you are willing to work with in the

moment. Let yourself be stretched but not overwhelmed. If you do get overwhelmed, please let us know, so we can help hold that with you. One of the ways we can help is by offering loving-kindness.

Each week, our gatherings will begin with a meditation to help us arrive, settle, and remember our group purpose. Today, we will do a loving-kindness meditation together that we can return to whenever needed, including moments of individual or collective overwhelm. Loving-kindness is about connection, an offering of unconditional love for ourselves and others. In this, we are not trying to achieve a certain feeling or belief. We are gathering all our attention behind an intention: to connect to and offer the energy of love and kindness that already exists in life, and in our own heart.

Loving-kindness Meditation

Invite everyone to settle into a comfortable seated position.

Ring a bell to signal the beginning of the meditation.

After a moment of silence, read the guidance below to the group. Read in a way that supports the group to relax into the guidance, allowing space and breaths of silence between sentences.

Close your eyes or simply let them soften, choosing a point where the gaze can rest. Let your energy settle into the body.

Take a few deep breaths, then let the breath fall into its own comfortable rhythm.

Wiggle your toes to gain a sense of where your feet are, and give your neck a stretch to awaken the spine, allowing more space.

As we continue, anytime you feel disconnected or distracted, wiggle your toes to return to the sense of where you are sitting, right now, safe, and belonging in this circle.

Let your belly soften with each breath.

Now, turn your attention to the energy of loving-kindness that lives in you.

Offering this energy of loving-kindness to yourself, say, in the quiet of your own heart, May I be safe. Be healthy. Be happy. Be at ease.

Repeat these phrases to yourself in silence.

Allow a few minutes of silence, then read:

If you get distracted, gently notice and return to the breath and the phrases, May I be safe. Be healthy. Be happy. Live with ease.

Now, call to mind someone who has helped you. Maybe you have never even met them, but they have inspired you from afar. They could be an adult, a child, a pet.

Offering this energy of loving-kindness, say to them in your heart, May you be safe. Be healthy. Be happy. Be at ease.

Allow a few more minutes of silence, then read:

With the breath, notice the softening of your belly.

Now, call to mind a dear friend. This can be the first friend that comes to mind.

Turn the energy of loving-kindness towards them. Say in your heart to them, May you be safe. Be healthy. Be happy. Be at ease.

Allow a few more minutes of silence, then read:

Now, a group of new friends. Turn your inner attention to this Ongo group.

With the energy of loving-kindness, say to them, in the quiet of your heart, May you be safe. Be healthy. Be happy. Be at ease.

May the support of this community, and the teachings and practices offered throughout Ongo, grow peace, wisdom, and compassion in our hearts, in our beings.

Allow a few more minutes of silence, then read:

Now, let's turn our attention, our loving-kindness, to all beings everywhere.

May all beings, known and unknown, be safe. Be healthy. Be happy. Be at ease.

May all beings be free from suffering.

I will now ring the bell three times: once to remember gratitude for ourselves, once to remember gratitude for each other, and once to remember gratitude for everything else that supports us to gather in this way together. After the third ring, we will close this meditation by putting our palms together in front of our hearts and offering a simple bow to express this gratitude. The bow is a gesture of humility and respect in many traditions.

Ring the bell three times, pausing the length of an inhalation in-between each strike of the bell.

Place your palms together in front of your heart and offer a bow to the circle.

Sharing and Listening

Read this guidance to the group:

We each were invited to bring a written intention that expresses what calls you to Ongo at this moment in your life, and what you are hoping to walk away with in your learning by the end of the Ongo journey. Starting with whoever feels moved to share first, let's go around the circle now and hear from each other our Ongo intentions. When you share, say your name again and your intention. I ask that we support each other by listening with curiosity and full presence to whoever is sharing, rather than thinking about other things. I also ask that we do not crosstalk, ask questions, or comment on each other's sharing. To support everyone to have time to share, I suggest we keep our sharing to about three minutes each.

Who feels moved to start?

Invite the person who starts to share their name and their Ongo intention.

Continue around the circle until everyone, including you, has shared.

Harvest

Ask the group, "What touched you while sharing and listening to one another?"

Invite anyone who feels moved, including you, to speak. It's okay if no one responds right away or if there is some silence between people sharing. In that silence, the energy may be gathering for someone to speak. Allow space for this by simply breathing and listening until you sense that there is nothing more that wants to be said.

Close by offering gratitude to everyone for their sharing and listening.

Setting up Ongo Buddy Practices

Read to the group:

This week, we will meet with another Ongo member, either by phone or in person, for our first Ongo Buddy Practice. We will continue to meet once a week with that same person through Week 4 of Ongo. Each month, we will change Ongo Buddies so that we will have the opportunity to deepen our Ongo experience by working one-on-one with different community members

Today, we will select our first Ongo Buddies. Our only recommendation is that family members and life partners wait until the third month to be partnered together in order to care for the vulnerability at the beginning of the learning process and the deep bond of those relationships. Beyond that, the goal here is not to find “perfect pairings” but rather to let an intuitive process unfold. Let’s each take a minute now in silence to breathe and imagine, from this circle, which three people you feel called to practice one-on-one with.

After a minute of silence, read:

Now, breathing into the vulnerability that can come with asking someone to be our friend, turn toward one of the three people. With this as our beginning, let’s discuss who the pairings will be for this first month. We will have different Ongo Buddies in months two and three, and magic can happen when we don’t over-think this process, so we’ll just take five minutes for this discussion.

Keep track of time. Let the group know when there’s just one minute left for the discussion.

After everyone has a Buddy, read:

After this meeting, please take a moment to connect with your Buddy to schedule your first meeting together. Be sure to read the pages on “Preparing for Buddy Practice” before your first Buddy meeting, if you haven’t already. Finally, if in the coming weeks, you or your Buddy aren’t showing up consistently for your Buddy Practice together, please reach out to the group and ask if someone else might be willing to be your backup for the month.

Setting up Ongo Solo Practices

Read to the group:

Each week, there are three Solo Practices that we will do on our own time and two Rememberings that expand on the teachings of those Solo Practices. Past Ongo participants found that having a consistent time for Solo Practice each day supported them to remember to practice and feel a greater sense of connection to Ongo throughout their week. We recommend setting aside 30 minutes, three days a week, for Solo Practices. We also recommend setting aside a few minutes for reflection on the days that there are Rememberings. Many find that early morning, before the start of the day, can be a clear and peaceful time for practice. Whenever you choose, aim to find times when you can be both rested and awake.

Invite everyone to take a few minutes to schedule their Solo Practice time for the week and create reminders in their calendar, phone, or on a piece of paper.

Remind everyone to read “Solo Practices: General Directions” (page 7), if they haven’t already.

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Closing

Ask for a volunteer to guide the group next week. That person will be the Group Guide for Week 2’s Group Gathering.

Remind that volunteer to read the pages on “Leading Group Practice” (page 13) and Week 2’s Group Gathering pages before the next meeting. Everything they need to know will be in those pages.

Invite everyone to take three full breaths in silence together.

Invite everyone to each share their name and one word that describes what they are taking with them from this first Ongo Group Gathering. Start with the person on your left and go around the circle clockwise until everyone, including you, has shared.

To-Be List

“Nonviolent Communication requires that we take our time to come from our divine energy rather than our cultural programming.”

– Marshall B. Rosenberg, Ph.D

Many of us lead daily lives that emphasize *do*-ing and “getting things done” and not as much on *be*-ing and what we want the spirit behind our actions to be. This way of living can feel mechanical and lifeless because we are disconnecting from who we are. By contrast, when we “do” from a place of being connected to the energy of our Needs, our words and actions come alive with a sense of depth and meaning and our lives can feel richer and fuller.

Today...

Settle into present awareness of the body and the breath. Rest there for a few minutes.

Now, look at your “To-Do” list for the day or week. If you don’t have one, take a moment to jot down what feels important to take care of today.

Consider what energy you would like to come from, what you would like “To Be” as you do these “To Do’s.” What Needs would you like to be in touch with and have expressed through your actions and words today or this week? **Looking at the Needs Wheel, write down the Needs you would like “To Be” next to your “To Do’s.”**

For example, our list might look like this:

<i>To Do</i>	<i>To Be</i>
<i>Clean the house</i>	<i>Play, Beauty</i>
<i>Respond to client messages</i>	<i>Connection, Presence, Empathy</i>
<i>Pay bills</i>	<i>Ease, Trust, Order</i>

Treat this To-Be list the same way you would treat an important To-Do list, carrying it with you and/or posting it in a place where you’re sure to see it.

Check off a To-Be item whenever you notice that you’re being that quality. Unlike a To-Do item, you can check off a To-Be item multiple times!

Empathy

*“For me, empathy is the thing which removes blocks to action,
not the thing which makes me feel better.”*

– Dominic Barter

If you are paired with a family member, close friend, or partner, take a moment at the start of this practice to acknowledge each other’s willingness and courage to be vulnerable allies on this path of learning. Remember that you are not here to teach each other or give any feedback other than the instructions in the practice. Instead, allow each of you to have your own pace with the learning. If something gets stimulated in a way that you can’t be present to each other like you were for your previous buddies, then pause the practice. You can choose to return to the practice at another time or invite one of your previous buddies to join in the practices to offer support. Go gently.

Opening Meditation

Take a few minutes to meet your new Buddy, perhaps sharing something with them that they might not know about you yet.

After, decide who will time a five-minute silent sitting meditation.

Sit in silence together, being with the breath, the body, and the earth.

Whoever is keeping time signals the other when five minutes have passed.

Close with a bow of appreciation to your Buddy for sitting with you.

Sharing and Empathic Listening

Check if either of you would like a refresher on the Empathy Buddy Practice. If so, you can take turns reading out loud just the reading part under “Sharing and Empathic Listening” from the Week 2 Buddy Practice on page 46.

Then, decide who will share first and who will listen first. Have the “Needs Wheel” on page 271 in the Appendix accessible.

1. **Sharer shares about something happening in their life that's present on their heart and mind.** This could be something small or big, painful or joyful. The only request is that it be something that is alive and meaningful to the sharer.
2. **Listener listens with curiosity, mindful presence, intention to connect, and a focus on needs, all in silence.** If the mind jumps to advice, judgment, consoling, sympathy, or commiseration, breathe and return to curiosity, mindful presence, intention to connect, and a focus on needs.
3. **When the sharer comes to a breathing place, a pause, the listener looks at the Needs Wheel and offers confirmation with a simple, empathic guess about the feelings and needs that are being expressed.** *For example, "Are you feeling sad because you're needing acceptance?" or "Am I hearing a need for trust?" or "Are you needing to be seen?" or "I'm connecting to needs of respect and consideration; how are these landing for you?" or just Needs words, as in "Love?" or "Compassion?"* Offer just one line – one Need – at a time. Let it be received, then take a breath.
4. **Breathe together.**
5. **Sharer continues sharing whatever is still alive and present in their heart to say about the situation. When there is a pause, the listener offers confirmation with simple, empathic guesses about the feelings and needs that are being expressed.**
6. **Continue until sharer feels complete, often indicated by a relaxing of the energy.** It's important in this process that the listener follow the sharer's lead and does not try to be "right" about their guesses or analyze the sharer's story. Let the guesses simply be reflections of your presence with the sharer rather than an anxious exercise in trying to reflect every word you hear.
7. **Then switch roles.**

Closing Harvest

After both have had an opportunity to share and to listen, Harvest by sharing any learnings about yourselves and any appreciations from being listened to in this way.

Buddy Support

Discuss how you would like to support each other this month with doing the daily Solo Practices. This could look different for each Buddy, based on what each finds most supportive. *For example, one Buddy might want to send a daily text message or email to the other after they've done their Solo Practice. Another might want to have a short, weekly phone call to share their experiences of doing the Solo Practices that week.*

Also, discuss whether there is any mutual interest or openness to having empathy calls with each other outside of the regular Buddy practice. *For example, scheduling a second weekly call just for empathy, or agreeing to be available to each other for “on-call” empathy.*