



Soul Matters

Edited for the Washington Ethical Society

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Healing



Our Exercises

Option A:

Admit Exhaustion

One way we allow healing into our lives is to widen our view of what it means to be in pain. Too often pain is equated only with dramatic ruptures such as sudden loss or a devastating diagnosis. But often – maybe even more often than we all admit – it’s about the slow creeping of us never allowing ourselves to rest and replenish.

So this month, finally do it: **Admit to yourself that you are exhausted! And do something about it!**

To get you there, carry John O’Donohue’s poem, A Blessing For One Who Is Exhausted (<http://www.dailygood.org/story/734/a-blessing-for-one-who-is-exhausted-john-o-donohue/>) with you throughout this month. Read it regularly. Meditate on it whenever you can.

In the first part of his poem, he offers numerous phrases to capture the nature of exhaustion. In the second half he offers phrases that describe many ways to rescue yourself from it.

**Come to your group ready to share
one line from the poem that captures the nature of your exhaustion
and
one line that captures the way out you are committing to.**

Maybe even consider committing yourself to doing *each* of the healing tasks that O’Donohue recommends. In other words, make it a checklist and do each of them (in your own way) before your group meets:

- take refuge in your senses
- open up to small miracles
- watch the way of rain
- imitate the habit of twilight
- draw alongside the silence of stone
- stay clear of those vexed in spirit

Option B:

Rethink Kindness

We also need to widen our view of kindness. Too often we think of it as “sweet.” Sometimes we even give into our culture’s tendency to mock and make light of it. But there is nothing sentimental or silly about remembering that most pain is hidden. Everyone walks around with wounds we are unable to see. Thus kindness isn’t helpful here and there; it’s needed everywhere we look. In fact, if everyone is walking around with invisible wounds, we actually allow and cause great damage when we forget to be kind.

So this month, here’s your assignment: **Remember that kindness is needed everywhere you look.** Commit to taking kindness a bit more seriously than you have in the past. Remind yourself regularly that it’s not about being polite or sweet; it’s about healing unseen wounds – maybe even yours.

Here’s some guidance and inspiration to keep you on track:

- Naomi Shihab Nye’s poem, **Kindness**: <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/kindness>

- **The Power of True Kindness:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8OMGsVnqvyA>
- **Kindness Boomerang - "One Day":** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nwAYpLVyeFU>
- **35 Powerful Images of Kindness Found Within Conflict:** http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kindness-blog/35-powerful-images-of-kin_b_6013278.html
- **From Anne Lamott's, *Traveling Mercies*:** "On the first Sunday of Advent our preacher, Veronica, said that this is life's nature, that lives and hearts get broken, those of people we love, those of people we'll never meet. She said the world sometimes feels like the waiting room of the emergency ward, and that we, who are more or less OK for now, need to take the tenderest possible care of the more wounded people in the waiting room, until the healer comes. You sit with people, she said, you bring them juice and graham crackers."

Option C: Show Others Your Healing Place

Healing also happens when we expand our understanding of where it comes from. We know it comes from the people who love us, but it often also comes from the places we love. To honor this, you are invited this month to share your healing place with your group. This of course will serve as a way of re-connecting you to this space and reflecting on why it means so much.

In particular, here's your assignment:

Turn your healing place into a tangible and portable form!

In other words, take a picture of your place and bring it into your group. Or maybe instead of a picture, bring in an object from your healing place, or something that represents it. For instance: a shell from "your beach," a leaf from "your forest," your dog's leash representing your walks, your ski pole or maybe even the paddle from your canoe.

And don't forget that music creates its own healing space! Maybe your healing place is not a physical space but a state of mind that you only have access to when you play that healing song. If so, bring it in and play that song for your group.

Here's some inspiration to help you on your way:

- **The Science of Healing Places** <http://www.onbeing.org/program/the-science-of-healing-places/4856>
- **Healing Songs (in addition to the ones featured later in this packet):** <https://www.theguardian.com/music/musicblog/2013/mar/14/readers-recommend-songs-healing>

Option D: Open Your Eyes to a Politics of Healing

As the political race rushes into its last leg, everyone is focused on winning. It's a "race" after all; so taking sides and beating the other side becomes the frame. But with a winner right around the corner, maybe it's time to start focusing on *understanding* the other side. In fact, none of us will "win" if we fail to find the healing that comes with understanding.

So this month, you are invited to engage one particular person's quest toward political healing: psychologist, Jonathan Haidt. He offers a unique frame for understanding the Left-Right political divide. Your assignment:

**Explore Jonathan Haidt's way of framing the political divide,
then see if it heals a real life political divide in your life!**

Here's a list of works by and about Haidt for you to read. Remember, your task is not to come to your group with a book report or analysis of Haidt's theory. It is a story, not an analysis, you are asked to share. A story about how looking anew at "the other side" healed an actual relationship in your life.

The Righteous Mind, by Jonathan Haidt (How misunderstanding political mindsets divides us and how understanding them can heal us! - <https://www.amazon.com/Righteous-Mind-Divided-Politics-Religion-ebook/dp/B0052FF7YM#nav-subnav>)

Articles by or referencing Haidt:

- <http://www.vox.com/2016/2/5/10918164/donald-trump-morality>
- <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/calling-truce-political-wars/>
- <http://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2016-07-20/the-republican-convention-translated-for-liberals>
- <http://freitashugo.blogspot.com.br/2016/03/howtomakeaconservative.html>

Your Question

As always, don't treat these questions like "homework" or a list that needs to be covered in its entirety. Instead, simply pick the one question that speaks to you most and let it lead you where you need to go. The goal of these questions is not to help you analyze what healing means in the abstract, but to figure out what being a part of a community of healing means for you and your daily living. So, which question is calling to you? Which one contains "your work"?

1. **When was the last time you visited your "healing place"?** When in pain, sometimes we need to be around people who love us. Other times we need to be surrounded by places we love.
2. **Are you exhausted?** Have you been running on empty for so long that you no longer notice? Is it time to notice? Is it time to rest and restore, and let yourself heal?
3. **Is it time to admit to yourself that you are in pain?** Is it time to stop pretending? Is it time to tell others you are in pain?
4. **Is taking on the care of the broken things of the world breaking you? What do you need to do to take care of yourself?**
5. **Are you looking for love in all the wrong places?** Is love's power to heal and make whole eluding you because it's left the building or because your definition of it is too narrow?
6. **Are you ready to heal from your failure?** ("Failure should be our teacher, not our undertaker. Failure is delay, not defeat. It is a temporary detour, not a dead end. Failure is something we can avoid only by saying nothing, doing nothing, and being nothing." - Denis Waitley)
7. **What if talk of healing needs to wait?** ("Let us not rush to the language of healing, before understanding the fullness of the injury and the depth of the wound." - Dr. Yolanda Pierce)
8. **What's your question?** Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to hear it.

Recommended Resources

As always, this is not required reading. We will not analyze or dissect these pieces in our group. They are simply meant to companion you on your journey this month, get your thinking started, and maybe open you to new ways of thinking about what it means to be *a community of healing*.

Healing

Definition: to make healthy, whole, or sound; to become well

Synonyms: alleviate; reconcile; soothe; repair; mend; revive

Wise Words

It's not forgetting that heals. It's remembering. ~ **Amy Greene, *Bloodroot***

from Kindness

Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside,
you must know sorrow as the other deepest thing.

You must wake up with sorrow.

You must speak to it till your voice catches the thread of all sorrows
and you see the size of the cloth.

Then it is only kindness that makes sense anymore,

only kindness that ties your shoes
and sends you out into the day to gaze at bread,

only kindness that raises its head
from the crowd of the world to say

It is I you have been looking for,
and then goes with you everywhere
like a shadow or a friend.

~ **Naomi Shihab Nye**

Full poem here: <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/kindness>

Each of us has a unique part to play in the healing of the world. ~ **Marianne Williamson**

Sometimes our transformations bring out the best in us, and sometimes they do not. When the ground breaks open because of an earthquake, you can be certain that everything — absolutely EVERYTHING — will be upturned, unearthed, or cracked open. When you get cracked open, you will not always love what you discover about yourself. ... You wish you were different.

And wishing that you were different always, always, always hurts. This is all very natural. But we can choose in these difficult moments of self-doubt and regret and confusion whether or not we are going to hate ourselves for any of it, or whether we are going to practice self-love. ... [Because] self-honesty without self-love is

nothing but self-abuse. ~ **Elizabeth Gilbert, *full reflection here:*** <https://www.facebook.com/GilbertLiz/posts/1077287702353344:0>

Blessing for Getting the News

I don't know
how it will be
for you.

For me,
when the news came—
when it sat down
across from me in the
waiting room
at 4 a.m.,
wearing scrubs and
speaking words awful
and full of
strangeness—
it came with
a humming in
my head,
an endless, echoing buzzing
that would never
entirely leave. ...

I do not know
how it will be
for you.

But ... when the news comes,
may the humming
in your head
give way to song,
even if it will be
long and long
before you can
hear it,
before you can
comprehend the love
that latched onto you
in the rending—
the love that bound itself to you
even as it began its leaving
and has never
let you go.

~ **Jan Richardson; [janrichardson.com](http://paintedprayerbook.com)**

Full poem here: <http://paintedprayerbook.com/2016/07/27/blessing-for-getting-the-news/>

from A Blessing For One Who Is Exhausted

Draw alongside the silence of stone
Until its calmness can claim you.
Be excessively gentle with yourself.

Stay clear of those vexed in spirit.
Learn to linger around someone of ease

Who feels they have all the time in the world.

Gradually, you will return to yourself,
Having learned a new respect for your heart
And the joy that dwells far within slow time.

~ **John O'Donohue**

Full poem here: <http://www.dailygood.org/story/734/a-blessing-for-one-who-is-exhausted-john-o-donohue/>

When you don't give people the chance to say "I hurt," they end up saying "I hate." ~ **Rev. Don Wheat**

When there's a fresh wound in your heart, keep it open until it heals. Air it out. Understand it. Dive into it. Be fierce enough to become it. If you ignore it, it won't be able to breathe. If you ignore it, it will merely deepen, spread and resurface later, wanting to release. And when later happens, it will hurt even more, because when later happens, you won't know what you're bleeding for. Remain with it until it clears, and watch the beauty pour into your openness. Remain open to feel lightness. Remain open to feel free. ~ **Victoria Erickson**

Trauma victims cannot recover until they become familiar with and befriend the sensations in their bodies. Being frightened means that you live in a body that is always on guard. Angry people live in angry bodies. The bodies of child-abuse victims are tense and defensive until they find a way to relax and feel safe. In order to change, people need to become aware of their sensations and the way that their bodies interact with the world around them. Physical self-awareness is the first step in releasing the tyranny of the past... As I often tell my students, the two most important phrases in therapy, as in yoga, are "Notice that" and "What happens next?" Once you start approaching your body with curiosity rather than with fear, everything shifts." ~ **Bessel A. van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma***

To heal means to rediscover that divine idea, that place of wholeness, within each of us. Our task in recovery or in the spiritual journey is to peel away the layers between us and the deeper Self. We can use the image of a vast ocean that is barricaded away by a dam that keeps us from knowing it exists. Even though our intellect may

learn there is an ocean, we cannot conceive of it because we have never directly experienced it. And then, for an instant, we transcend the barrier, and we see and feel the ocean directly. Once this has happened, we become strongly motivated to experience it again. ~ **Christina Grof**

Broken things have been on my mind as the year lurches to an end, because so much broke and broke down this year in my life, and in the lives of the people I love. Lives broke, hearts broke, health broke, minds broke. On the first Sunday of Advent our preacher, Veronica, said that this is life's nature, that lives and hearts get broken, those of people we love, those of people we'll never meet. She said the world sometimes feels like the waiting room of the emergency ward, and that we, who are more or less OK for now, need to take the tenderest possible care of the more wounded people in the waiting room, until the healer comes. You sit with people, she said, you bring them juice and graham crackers. ~ **Anne Lamott, *Traveling Mercies***

Failure does come with healing... Failure should be our teacher, not our undertaker. Failure is delay, not defeat. It is a temporary detour, not a dead end. Failure is something we can avoid only by saying nothing, doing nothing, and being nothing. ~ **Denis Waitley**

The Way It Is

There's a thread you follow. It goes among things that change. But it doesn't change. People wonder about what you are pursuing. You have to explain about the thread. But it is hard for others to see. While you hold it you can't get lost. Tragedies happen; people get hurt or die; and you suffer and get old. Nothing you do can stop time's unfolding. You don't ever let go of the thread. ~ **William Stafford**

Cure vs. Healing

Cure may occur without healing; healing may occur without cure.
Cure alters what is; healing offers what might be.
Cure is an act; healing is a process.
Cure seeks to change reality; healing embraces reality.
Cure takes charge; healing takes time.
Cure avoids grief; healing assumes grief.

Cure speaks; healing listens.
~ Fred Recklau, *Partners in Care: Medicine and Ministry Together*
Full list here: http://www.spirituallygrowingwithcancer.org/Cure_vs_Healing_page.html

Letting ourselves be forgiven is one of the most difficult healings we will undertake. And one of the most fruitful. ~ **Stephen Levine**

When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, "Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping." To this day, especially in times of "disaster," I remember my mother's words and I am always comforted by realizing that there are still so many helpers – so many caring people in this world. ~ **Fred "Mr." Rogers**

from A Litany for Those not Ready for Healing

By Dr. Yolanda Pierce

Let us not rush to the language of healing, before understanding the fullness of the injury and the depth of the wound.

Let us not rush to offer a band-aid, when the gaping wound requires surgery and complete reconstruction.

Let us not offer false equivalencies, thereby diminishing the particular pain being felt in a particular circumstance in a particular historical moment.

Let us not rush past the loss of this mother's child, this father's child, someone's beloved son.

...

Instead

Let us mourn black and brown men and women, those killed extrajudicially every 28 hours. ...

Let us be silent when we don't know what to say.

Let us be humble and listen to the pain, rage, and grief pouring from the lips of our neighbors and friends.

Full litany here: <http://kineticslive.com/2014/11/28/a-litany-for-those-who-arent-ready-for-healing%e2%80%8f/>

“At the Meeting House: Unitarian Universalism and HIV/AIDS”

Is healing possible when physical healing is not possible? When Rev. Kim Crawford Harvie got her first call to be the minister in Provincetown, Massachusetts, she thought it would be similar to the small town church of her childhood. Only a few days into her ministry Rev. Kim was thrust into the crisis that would come to dominate her ministry: HIV/AIDS. Rev. Kim tells some of the stories of her time in Provincetown and shares some of the lessons she learned from ground zero.

pamphletpodcast.org/at-the-meeting-house

“Disarming A Robbery ... With A Glass Of Wine” Invisibilia podcast/video

Healing through the simple magic of not responding in kind. “A few friends were enjoying a backyard dinner party when an uninvited guest appeared -- and things took a frightening turn. What do you do in the face of confrontation? Alix Spiegel, host of NPR's "Invisibilia" podcast, explains the concept of non-complementary behavior” -- the kind of behavior used by Ghandi, Martin Luther King Jr., and others who respond to hatred with love. Watch what happens when a customary script is flipped.”

<http://www.karmatube.org/videos.php?id=7201>

Guided Meditations for Healing the Body, Mind, and Spirit by Stephen Levine

<http://www.livingdying.org/practices-and-meditations/>

Healing Through a Haircut

Meet Josh Coombes, hairdresser for the homeless.

http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-36918094?ns_mchannel=social&ns_campaign=bbctrending&ns_source=facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/BBCtrending/videos/1135299739867211/>

“How my mind came back to life — and no one knew” TED Talk by Martin Pistorius

Imagine being unable to say, "I am hungry," "I am in pain," "thank you," or "I love you," — losing your ability to communicate, being trapped inside your body, surrounded by people yet utterly alone. For 13 long years, that was Martin Pistorius's reality, after contracting a brain infection at the age of twelve. He had

Videos & Podcasts

become a ghost. But then a strange thing started to happen — his mind began to knit itself back together.

https://www.ted.com/talks/martin_pistorius_how_my_mind_came_back_to_life_and_no_one_knew?language=en

“Restoring the Body: Yoga, EMDR, and Treating Trauma” with Bessel van der Volk for OnBeing

Through his longtime research and innovation in trauma treatment, psychiatrist, Bessel van der Kolk, shares what he's learning about how bodywork like yoga or eye movement therapy can restore a sense of goodness and safety.

<http://www.onbeing.org/program/restoring-the-body-bessel-van-der-kolk-on-yoga-emdr-and-treating-trauma/5801>

Brene Brown on Blame

You are probably a bit of a blamer - most of us are. But why should we give it up? In this very short video, inspirational thinker Brené Brown considers why we blame others, how it sabotages our relationships, and why we desperately need to move beyond and heal the damage of this toxic behaviour.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZWf2_2L2v8&app=desktop

The Body's Grace

An unusual take on healing the mind-body connection with author and yoga teacher Matthew Sanford. He's been a paraplegic since the age of 13. He shares his wisdom for us all on knowing the strength and grace of our bodies even in the face of illness, aging, and death.

<http://www.onbeing.org/program/matthew-sanford-the-bodys-grace/185>

The Science of Healing Places

The light and smells in places like hospitals can often depress us. And, our favorite room at home keeps us sane. But why? Immunologist Esther Sternberg explains the scientific research revealing how physical spaces create stress and make us sick — and how good design can trigger our "brain's internal pharmacies" and help heal us.

<http://www.onbeing.org/program/the-science-of-healing-places/4856>

When Love Arrives

A spoken word poem about the healing power of love.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mdJ6aUB2K4g>

10 Best Songs for Healing Broken Relationships – Beliefnet.com

<http://www.beliefnet.com/entertainment/music/10-best-songs-for-healing-broken-relationships.aspx#>

Articles

The Role of Spirit in the #blacklivesmatter Movement: A Conversation with Activist and Artist Patrisse Cullors

Black Lives Matter chapters and affiliated groups are expressing a type of spiritual practice that makes use of the language of health and wellness to impart meaning, heal grief and trauma, combat burn-out and encourage organizational efficiency.

<http://religiondispatches.org/the-role-of-spirit-in-the-blacklivesmatter-movement-a-conversation-with-activist-and-artist-patrisse-cullors/>

“Songs when you need them: Ysaye Barnwell and the music of community, resistance, and power”

How art can help heal us.

<http://www.uuworld.org/articles/ysaye-barnwell-songs>

“The Nature of Healing” an interview with Stephen Levine

<http://www.intuition.org/txt/levine.htm>

35 Powerful Images of Kindness Found Within Conflict

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kindness-blog/35-powerful-images-of-kin_b_6013278.html

Unconscious Reactions Separate Liberals and Conservatives

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/calling-truce-political-wars/>

After a Century In Decline, Black Farmers Are Back And On the Rise

These Black farmers don't stop at healthy food. They're healing trauma, instilling collective values, and changing the way their communities think about the land.

<http://www.yesmagazine.org/people-power/after-a-century-in-decline-black-farmers-are-back-and-on-the-rise-20160505>

Movies & Television

Wild (based on the book by Cheryl Strayed)

With the dissolution of her marriage and the death of her mother, Cheryl Strayed has lost all hope. After years of reckless, destructive behavior, she makes a rash decision. With absolutely no experience, driven only by sheer determination, Cheryl hikes more than a thousand miles of the Pacific Crest Trail, alone. And it heals her.

<https://www.amazon.com/Wild-Michiel-Huisman/dp/B00S6MBGY8?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B00S6MBGY8&linkCode=as2&redirect=true&tag=spirprac-20>

Dolphin Tale (Family)

In an inspiring story of the bond between animals and humans, a boy named Sawyer discovers an injured dolphin, who is brought to a marine hospital and named Winter.

Unfortunately, her injuries cost Winter her tail, without which she may not survive. But with Sawyer's devotion, a marine biologist, and the brilliance of a prosthetist charged with creating a new tail, Winter may receive a second chance at life.

<https://www.amazon.com/Dolphin-Tale-Blu-ray-Morgan-Freeman/dp/B004EPZ01Q?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B004EPZ01Q&linkCode=as2&redirect=true&tag=spirprac-20>

Songs

“Beautiful Dawn” by the Wailin’ Jennys

This song is poetry harmonized: “There’s only one way to mend a broken heart...”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gBYrRPSGRs>

“When You've Got Trouble” by Liz Longley

Healing by remembering you’re not alone: “When you’ve got trouble, I’ve got trouble too.”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a_zP8y9-3X4

“I Hurt Too” by Kate Herzig

Another beautiful song about the interconnectedness of healing: where you are hurting, I am hurting; your healing is my healing.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oSdIIWQRdJ0>

Also by Herzig: “**Lost and Found**” (healing from heartbreak): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LINKTcBOFgY>

“Thank U” by Alanis Morissette

A song about healing that comes from the widest embrace. When we take the time to reflect on all of our experiences, what may have seemed a negative thing, can sometimes later be seen as a necessary step in a process that ultimately led to a greater good. Sometimes the greatest healing comes from simply saying thank you to what did not seem like a gift at the time.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOgpT5rEKIU>

Healing Songs

<https://www.theguardian.com/music/musicblog/2013/mar/14/readers-recommend-songs-healing>

Books

***Nothing Gold Can Stay: The Colors of Grief* by Mark Belletini**

In twenty-two simple yet profound reflections, seasoned minister Mark Belletini explores the many and varied forms of grief.

<http://www.uuabookstore.org/Nothing-Gold-Can-Stay-P17551.aspx>

Restored to Sanity: Essays on the Twelve Steps by Unitarian Universalists

Unitarian Universalist writers reflect on their healing while walking the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and other Twelve-Step programs. All tell their stories with great honesty and humility, providing inspiration and hope for those who struggle with addiction and for their friends and family members. Each Step is explored with two separate heartfelt essays, plus a meditation or prayer.

<http://www.uuabookstore.org/Restored-to-Sanity-P17542.aspx>

***The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* by Bessel A. van der Kolk,**

See book quotes here: https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/290396.Bessel_A_van_der_Kolk

***The Righteous Mind*, by Jonathan Haidt**

How misunderstanding political mindsets divides us and how understanding them can heal us.

<https://www.amazon.com/Righteous-Mind-Divided-Politics-Religion-ebook/dp/B0052FF7YM#nav-subnav>

Articles by or referencing Haidt:

<http://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2016-07-20/the-republican-convention-translated-for-liberals>
<http://freitashugo.blogspot.com.br/2016/03/howtomakeaconservative.html>
<http://www.vox.com/2016/2/5/10918164/donald-trump-morality>
<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/calling-truce-political-wars/>

***Here If You Need Me: A True Story* by Kate Braestrup**

“Here If You Need Me is the story Kate Braestrup's remarkable journey from grief to faith to happiness - as she holds her family together in the wake of her husband's death, pursues his dream of becoming a minister, and ultimately finds her calling as a chaplain to search-and-rescue workers. A celebration of the small miracles that happen every day when a heart is grateful and love is restored.”

https://www.amazon.com/Here-If-You-Need-Me/dp/0316066311/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?_encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=

List of books for children and families about healing:

<https://amzn.com/w/39N5UTK7073E6>

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