



MAKING TRANSFORMATION YOUR OWN

A STUDY GUIDE for *Rhythms of Change*

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INTRODUCTION

My experience as a practitioner of meditation and Oriental medicine has shown me that to live our wholeness we must come into relationship with all aspects of ourselves. Yet we live within a system that encourages us to be dissatisfied with ourselves and to focus our attention almost exclusively on the outer world. Many of us respond by constantly trying to improve ourselves, seeking to be more, better, or different in some way. We move from one seminar, technique, or book to another, looking for answers outside of ourselves. For most of us, this never ending cycle offers no lasting transformation.

Here is what I know to be true: Finding our way to meaning, purpose, or fulfillment does not just happen by working hard in the outer world. It is essential for us to also cultivate our capacity for self-reflection and learn to use our consciousness to effect change from the inside out. To do this, we must learn to value the happenings in our inner lives as equally meaningful as those in our outer lives. We must make a choice and resolve to be whole. The integration and living of both feminine being and masculine doing is the way to bring about authentic change, for ourselves and for the world.

Once we are aligned with our being, and with life, the actions we take as we move into the world will come more naturally and be more effective.

This study guide is the companion to my book, *Rhythms of Change, Reclaiming Your Health Using Ancient Wisdom and Your Own Common Sense*. In the book, I discuss the Five Phases of Change as metaphors for elemental qualities of energy that are constantly in relationship to one another in nature and within us. Each phase has a corresponding season as well as time of life when it is most apparent, but this is an open system that responds to the need of the moment and reflects what needs attention to take the next step on your path. The Metal phase, for example, is a time of contraction inward as we move past middle age, but the Metal teachings may be activated at any time of life when we experience loss, illness, or a longing for connection to spirit or something beyond the superficial. Coming into relationship with this wisdom helps us understand the challenges of each phase and the most effective strategy to meet them.

Ultimately, each of us has to find our own way to integration. I have created this study guide to give you some practical tools for the process of transforming what you know into how you live on a daily basis. I have included four paths of exploration that have been effective for myself and my clients, starting with the most simple approach and moving toward more in-depth self-study. These are the four paths included in this study guide:

- PATH I MAKING IT EASY: JUST ONE THING
- PATH II USING THE FOUR R'S FOR CHANGE
- PATH III YOUR PERSONAL ALCHEMY POSTER
- PATH IV IN-DEPTH SELF-STUDY

I have worked and played with each path myself so I know from experience that one is not better, or more effective, than any other. Simply respond to what feels right to you in the moment as you approach each path and you will find what works best for you.

I invite you to approach this guide with open curiosity and much patience. Inner work has its own pace and cannot be rushed. Many of us are in a hurry to change. We may believe we understand and thus quickly move on to the next thing. But you must reflect and do the work and play that make it yours, that make it come alive within you. Take your time and allow your reflections and practices time to digest and be integrated into your daily life before moving on to the next step.

We begin by coming back into relationship with our feelings, needs, longings, and personal reflections rather than striving to change or fulfill them. As the Sufi poet Rumi says,

*Don't seek the water; increase your thirst,
so water may gush forth from above and below.*

Self-reflection and listening to the still, small voice within is unfamiliar territory for many of us and may be challenging at first to navigate. My hope is that this study guide will assist you on this journey to reconnect to your being, the feminine principle that balances all your masculine doing in the world.

My wish is that you make transformation your own, reclaim your wholeness, and return to a way of living that makes sense, for the well-being of all.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Each of you will find your own ways to engage the paths of exploration in this study guide, and the amount of time you spend on each path will vary greatly. You may choose to do this individually or in a small group that meets weekly or twice monthly for several hours each time.

If I were with you as you embark on this journey, I would like to take your hand and guide you to do the following:

1. Begin by completing the Self-Assessments, Questionnaires, and Keyword Exercise in Part One before moving onto the paths of exploration. This will give you an idea of where you are on a continuum of balance and imbalance in each phase and important touch stones to remind you of what each phase means to you. This information will guide you when deciding which phases to focus more attention on as you move through the study guide.
2. Look over the four paths briefly, along with the samples I have included, and begin your journey by noticing, and responding to, what interests you at this time.
3. Do one path at a time, in any order you like. Take one week to complete each of the first three paths, and one week per phase in Path IV. Spend more time if you like in the places that interest or challenge you, finding your own ways to engage with the material.
4. Use all your senses, not only your rational mind, and include your feelings, intuitions, and dreams. Use journaling, quiet contemplation, shared meals, discussions with family and friends, music, dance, drawing, movement, collage, and aromatherapy, and create art and spaces in your environment that evoke and remind you of your relationship to all aspects of yourself.
5. Get a journal or notebook to use with this study guide. It is for your eyes only, so you can be honest with yourself and know you will not be judged in any way. Writing on a computer is fine, but you will also need a place to gather other materials, objects, and images that present themselves along the way. This is exploration, play, and practice, so include everything that calls to you, not only the thoughts and words. Recording this in your journal, and perhaps displaying important take aways and images on a poster, gives you a map for your journey, a map you may return to as often as needed to find your way back home to yourself.
6. Finally, if you are walking this path on your own, schedule times to gather together with one or more friends to discuss your responses, feelings, and insights and learn from one another.

FIVE PHASES QUESTIONNAIRES AND SELF-ASSESSMENTS

Complete the questionnaires and self-assessments for each phase. These are meant to give you a general idea of where you are on a continuum of balance and imbalance in each phase. Not to worry if you find yourself out of balance in one or more phases! I encourage you to begin the practice of accepting where you are right now, imbalances and all. This is the practice of wholeness, right here, before we even take the first step on the path. “The end is present at the beginning,” is a profound truth.

We are all on a journey of learning to integrate what we know into how we actually live each day and the imbalances can be your most profound guides, if you approach them with an attitude of open curiosity.

For the Questionnaire, the more often you respond “No,” “Never,” or “1-2 month” will show more balance in that phase. If these are your responses 80 percent of the time, 16 out of 20 questions, you are living in balance in that phase.

For the Self-Assessment: If you can say yes more often than no (at least 80 percent of the time) to the questions, congratulations! You embody many of the essential qualities of balance in this phase.

EARTH QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following questions based on your current situation

- | | | | | |
|--|-------|-----------|----------|-------|
| 1. Difficulty regulating weight | Yes | No | | |
| 2. Fatigue, lethargy, or inertia | Never | 1-2 month | 1-2 week | Daily |
| 3. Tired after eating | Never | 1-2 month | 1-2 week | Daily |
| 4. Cravings for sugar or carbs | Never | 1-2 month | 1-2 week | Daily |
| 5. Mental foginess or difficulty focusing | Never | 1-2 month | 1-2 week | Daily |
| 6. Energy and mood fluctuations during the day | Never | 1-2 month | 1-2 week | Daily |
| 7. Irritability between meals | Never | 1-2 month | 1-2 week | Daily |
| 8. Abdominal pain, gas, or bloating | Never | 1-2 month | 1-2 week | Daily |
| 9. Loose stools | Never | 1-2 month | 1-2 week | Daily |
| 10. Poor appetite | Never | 1-2 month | 1-2 week | Daily |
| 11. Lingering hunger after meals | Never | 1-2 month | 1-2 week | Daily |
| 12. Easily worried or obsessed | Never | 1-2 month | 1-2 week | Daily |
| 13. Overwhelmed by details | Never | 1-2 month | 1-2 week | Daily |
| 14. Tender muscles | Never | 1-2 month | 1-2 week | Daily |
| 15. Heaviness of head and limbs | Never | 1-2 month | 1-2 week | Daily |
| 16. Symptoms worsen in humid, damp weather | Yes | No | | |
| 17. Prolapse of stomach, intestine, uterus, vagina, or bladder | Yes | No | | |
| 18. Easily Bruise | Yes | No | | |
| 19. Heavy menstruation | Yes | No | | |
| 20. Lack of muscle tone or strength | Yes | No | | |

SELF-ASSESSMENT
WHERE ARE YOU IN THE EARTH PHASE?

1. Do I care for and feel centered in my body?
2. Have I learned to identify and satisfy my authentic needs?
3. Is there balanced nourishment, both giving and receiving, in my life?
4. Have I found a way to contribute to my community?
5. Do I eat moderately and at regular intervals, and feel energized after eating?
6. Do I accept reasonable limits and balance all forms of consumption?
7. Do I eat a breakfast with protein and healthy fats, with little or no sugar?
8. Am I at a healthy weight, with an active body?
9. Do I cook and eat whole foods on a daily basis?
10. Do I practice moderation and experience gratitude in my life?

WOOD QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following questions based on your current condition

1. Symptoms are worse with stress	Yes	No		
2. Symptoms are better with movement & exercise	Yes	No		
3. Easily frustrated, angered, or irritated	Yes	No		
4. Pushy & domineering or timid & afraid to assert self	Yes	No		
5. Indecisive or impulsive decision making	Yes	No		
6. High stress level	Yes	No		
7. PMS or breast tenderness	Yes	No		
8. Neck & shoulder tension	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
9. Feeling depressed	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
10. Headaches, especially on the sides of the head	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
11. Pain or tenderness in ribside, abdomen or breast	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
12. Touchiness from heat, wind, noise, bright light	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
13. Numbness, tingling of limbs when asleep or inactive	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
14. Muscle cramps of pelvis, sides, hips, calves, feet	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
15. Inflexible, rigid, or stiff body	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
16. Dry eyes, vision issues, or blurry vision	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
17. Symptoms worsen in spring or windy conditions	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
18. Dry or hard stool, tension or cramping in colon	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
19. High pitched or loud ringing in the ears	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
20. Dizzy, queasy, or flushed	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily

SELF-ASSESSMENT
WHERE ARE YOU IN THE WOOD PHASE?

1. When faced with an obstacle, do I look clearly at all options and gain perspective before acting?
2. Do I make effective plans and decisions to further my life's vision?
3. Do I wake up refreshed, with a good appetite and ready for the day?
4. Do I have balanced self-assertion—neither too timid nor too pushy?
5. Is my body flexible enough to move freely and easily?
6. Are my hormones in balance, my moods and energy stable?
7. Do I have a sense of harmonious flow, without excess tension, in my life?
8. Do I engage in regular, uplifting physical activity that strengthens me?
9. Do I move congested energy through exercise, dance, art, or another method?
10. Do I practice kindness, learn from mistakes, and forgive myself and others?

FIRE QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following questions based on your current condition

1. Poor circulation	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
2. Red or very pale face	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
3. Cold hands & feet	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
4. Insomnia or trouble sleeping	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
5. Vivid dreams or nightmares	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
6. Palpitations, especially when nervous, upset, or fatigued	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
7. Confused mind, rapid speech, or stuttering	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
8. Tendency to anxiety or despair	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
9. Restless & excitable or very withdrawn	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
10. Symptoms worsen in summer or with excess heat or stimulation	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
11. Moods swings, laughs easily, cries easily	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
12. Excitement, anxiety, or fatigue cause light, restless sleep	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
13. Craving for cool drinks, juicy or hot, spicy foods	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
14. Sores of mouth or tongue	Yes	No		
15. Easily overheats and perspires	Yes	No		
16. Easy blushing of face, chest, neck and ears	Yes	No		
17. High blood pressure	Yes	No		
18. Frequent urination or bowel movements from nervousness	Yes	No		
19. Easily confused or disoriented	Yes	No		
20. Burning, sensitivity, or irritation of mouth, tongue, urethra, vagina, or anus	Yes	No		

SELF-ASSESSMENT
WHERE ARE YOU IN THE FIRE PHASE?

1. Have I found a way to fully express myself that has meaning for me?
2. Do I have enough self-discipline to control my behavior in order to reach my goals?
3. Do I have balanced control—neither micromanaging nor relinquishing all responsibility?
4. Do I feel warmth, love, and enthusiasm in my life?
5. Is my circulation good, with warm hands and feet?
6. Do I sometimes act based on a feeling in my heart rather than solely from my rational thoughts?
7. Do I fall asleep and stay asleep most nights without difficulty?
8. Do I do yoga, meditation, or other practices to focus the energy of the heart?
9. Am I more active in the day and more quietly receptive at night?
10. Do my days include some form of play and laughter?

METAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following questions based on your current condition

1. Shortness of breath	Never	1-2 month	1-2 Week	Daily
2. Respiratory allergies	Never	1-2 month	1-2 Week	Daily
3. Runny nose or stuffy sinuses	Never	1-2 month	1-2 Week	Daily
4. Morning attacks of coughing or sneezing	Never	1-2 month	1-2 Week	Daily
5. Phlegm in chest or throat	Never	1-2 month	1-2 Week	Daily
6. Excessive grief and melancholy	Never	1-2 month	1-2 Week	Daily
7. Unable to keep commitments	Never	1-2 month	1-2 Week	Daily
8. Shortness of breath, chest pain, or wheezing from fatigue or exertion	Never	1-2 month	1-2 Week	Daily
9. Constipation or dry stools	Never	1-2 month	1-2 Week	Daily
10. Dryness and tightness of mucous membranes or skin	Yes	No		
11. Tendency to be sedentary	Yes	No		
12. Tendency to be disorganized	Yes	No		
13. Urge to urinate after laughing, coughing, or sneezing	Yes	No		
14. Easily disappointed or offended	Yes	No		
15. Sensitive to wind, cold, and dryness	Yes	No		
16. Frequent throat clearing or laryngitis	Yes	No		
17. Frequent or lingering illness, colds, coughs, sore throats	Yes	No		
18. Symptoms usually worsen in autumn or in dry climates	Yes	No		
19. Skin rashes, eczema, or hives	Yes	No		
20. Symptoms worsen in autumn or in dry climates	Yes	Sometimes	No	

SELF-ASSESSMENT
WHERE ARE YOU IN THE METAL PHASE?

1. Do I feel valued?
2. Have I added value to another's life or to the world?
3. Am I deeply connected to life and able to let go when necessary?
4. Am I organized, principled, and able to keep my commitments?
5. Do I allow myself to fully feel grief and sadness when they arise?
6. Am I physically active, with strong respiratory and immune function?
7. Do I consume water and healthy oils to provide essential moisture?
8. Do I practice mindful breathing?
9. Do I find inspiration in art, nature, music, relationship, or other ways?
10. Do I journal and acknowledge the beauty in everyday moments?

WATER QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following questions based on your current condition

1. Excess work, exercise, sex, alcohol	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
2. Lack of stamina and endurance	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
3. Forgetfulness and mental dullness	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
4. Excessive need for sleep	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
5. Puffiness or dark circles around eyes	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
6. Low humming or buzzing in ears	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
7. Sore throat from fatigue or in the morning	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
8. Diminished libido or lack of sexual secretions	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
9. Profuse or scanty urination	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
10. Puffiness or swelling of feet and ankles	Never	1-2 Month	1-2 Week	Daily
11. Weak low back, hips, or knees	Yes	No		
12. Weak hearing	Yes	No		
13. Any bone problems	Yes	No		
14. Infertility, poor childhood development, or premature aging	Yes	No		
15. Symptoms worsen in winter or in cold climates	Yes	No		
16. Loss or thinning of hair, including pubic	Yes	No		
17. Early cessation of menses, irregular cycle	Yes	No		
18. Decreased range of motion of spine and joints	Yes	No		
19. Diminished motivation, easily defeated, or feelings of apathy	Yes	No		
20. Excessive fear and insecurity	Yes	No		

SELF-ASSESSMENT
WHERE ARE YOU IN THE WATER PHASE?

1. Am I aware of my attitudes about power, money, sex, and death?
2. Do I wisely use the resources of mind and body, not depleting them by excess?
3. Do I have balanced willpower, neither too cautious nor too reckless in pursuing my goals?
4. Do I have strong concentration and physical endurance?
5. Are my bones, hearing, low back, and knees strong?
6. Have I found ways to connect to my unconscious mind?
7. Do I hold some energy in reserve, never going to “empty”?
8. Do I make choices to simplify my life when possible?
9. Do I include periods of rest and unstructured time in my life?
10. Do I disconnect from devices and retreat in some way to regenerate?

KEYWORD EXERCISE

Keywords are reminders, or touch stones, of what is important to you and of how this material relates specifically and uniquely to you. You will use this completed exercise as you explore each of the four paths in the study guide. As you go through the study guide you may discover more words that are important for you so please include them as they come up.

I have listed the general keywords for each phase from the text, *Rhythms of Change*. I encourage you to review the chapter on each phase and add your own keywords for each phase. The words do not have to make sense to anyone else, as long as they are evocative reminders for you. There is an example at the end from my own work with Earth phase keywords.

EARTH

Centered in body, transitions, taste, matter, mother, body, food, moderation, spleen, muscles, flesh, dampness, humidity, nourishment, needs, whole foods, transformation, maturity, satisfaction, gratitude, worry, obsession

Your Keywords:

WOOD

Getting out of the way, expansion, spring, sight, vision, perspective, flexibility, liver, tendons, ligaments, wind, self-assertion, anger, plans, decisions, harmony, movement, renewal, birth, forgiveness, kindness

Your Keywords:

FIRE

Expression, expansion upward, maximum yang, summer, speech, speaking truth, light, passion, rational mind, intuition, heart, blood vessels, circulation, heat, control, goals, dreams, courage, sleep, manifestation, growth, play, joy, despair

Your Keywords:

METAL

Value, contraction inward, autumn, smell, discrimination, father, authority, lungs, skin, mucus membranes, dryness, attachment, inhale, exhale, harvest, decline, shift attention from material to spiritual world, mindful breathing, journaling, reflection, inspiration, sadness

Your Keywords:

WATER

Diving deeply, contraction downward, ultimate yin, unconscious, darkness, winter, hearing, listening, stillness, silence, kidneys, spiritual wisdom, self-awareness, bones, cold, storage, dormancy, rest, retreat, equanimity, fear

Your Keywords:

EXAMPLE EARTH KEYWORDS

Here is an example from my own work with the Earth phase of the types of images and associations that might arise for you when thinking about keywords for each phase.

Text: Centered in body, transitions, taste, matter, mother, body, food, moderation, spleen, muscles, flesh, dampness, humidity, nourishment, needs, whole foods, trans-formation, maturity, satisfaction, gratitude, worry, obsession

My Keywords: *Child, unconditional love, survival, bonding through nursing, touch, connection. Lack of and lasting effects. Preverbal, deep in body and psyche. Sewing, cooking, shelling peas with mother, not much talking, simply being together, sharing meals with family and friends, nature. Boundaries, giving too much or not enough. Stay in relationship with others and stay centered in self. Okay to feel needs, not sign of weakness, even when not met. Allow others to need. Body as friend, trusted companion. Arrogance of strong body, shame of illness, weakness. Resist belonging to a person, a place. Sense of belonging in the moment, in nature, lying on ground and feeling held by gravity, embraced by the Earth.*

PATH I

MAKING IT EASY: JUST ONE THING

Here's the deal. I want you to succeed at integrating the wisdom of the Five Phases and making it your own. So this first path is short, simple, and practical. My hope is that satisfaction here will encourage you to explore the other three paths and be delighted with what you learn about yourself in the process.

Each of the five phases (Earth, Wood, Fire, Metal, and Water) has certain key principles and attributes that can be distilled into simple practices for transformation. For each phase, I have provided below one simple task each for exploring your relationship to physical health, emotional intelligence, and spiritual maturity. The daily habits, inquiries and practices are meant to support you in going directly to the heart of the matter in each phase, beginning right now.

If you are feeling playful, focus on a new phase each day for five days to get a sense of your relationship to each one. Then return and spend an entire week on each of the phases that hold the most interest or challenge for you. Alternately, begin by spending a week on each phase and use the power of repetition to integrate in a simple, direct manner.

I encourage you to do all of the following for optimal learning:

- Record your responses in a journal.
- Gather the images, objects, and art that evoke and remind you of your learning.
- Make a chart and post it to receive visual reminders on a daily basis.
- Gather together with one or more friends to discuss your responses, feelings, and in-sights and learn from one another.

Refer to the Questionnaires, Self-Assessments, and Keywords Exercise and the corresponding chapter in the text as you explore this path.

THE EARTH PHASE

Physical health: Whole foods

Daily habit: What will you do to include whole foods in your diet?

Emotional intelligence: Nourishment and needs

Inquiry: What are your feelings, thoughts, and beliefs about nourishment and needs and how do they show up in your life?

Spiritual maturity: Gratitude

Practice: Create a statement of gratitude for one thing you are aware of at this time. Follow the

guidelines in the text or whatever feels right to you to practice gratitude on a daily basis, or at least once per week. Share your experience of this practice with a friend and in your journal.

THE WOOD PHASE

Physical health: Movement

Daily habit: What will you do to include at least 20 minutes of movement most days?

Emotional intelligence: Self-assertion and anger

Inquiry: What are your feelings, thoughts, and beliefs about self-assertion and anger and how do they show up in your life?

Spiritual maturity: Forgiveness

Practice: Name an aspect of yourself, or a person or situation in your life, that would benefit from you softening and being offered forgiveness. Follow the guidelines in the text or whatever feels right to you to practice forgiveness at least once a week. Share your experience of this practice with a friend and in your journal.

THE FIRE PHASE

Physical health: Restful sleep

Daily habit: What will you do to move toward enjoying restful sleep most nights?

Emotional intelligence: Control and joy

Inquiry: What are your feelings, thoughts, and beliefs about control and joy and how do they show up in your life?

Spiritual maturity: Play

Practice: Name an aspect of yourself, or a person or situation in your life, that would benefit from you not taking yourself so seriously and instead being more playful. Follow the guidelines in the text or whatever feels right to you to practice play at least one time per week. Share your experience of this practice with a friend and in your journal.

THE METAL PHASE

Physical health: Mindful breathing

Daily habit: What will you do to include 15 minutes of mindful breathing most days?

Emotional intelligence: Attachment and sadness

Inquiry: What are your feelings, thoughts, and beliefs about attachment and sadness and how do they show up in your life?

Spiritual maturity: Journaling

Practice: Name an aspect of yourself, or a person or situation in your life, that would benefit from you turning your focus inward and reflecting deeply. Follow the guidelines in the text or whatever feels right to you to practice journaling at least one time per week. Share your experience of this practice with a friend and in your journal.

THE WATER PHASE

Physical health: Rest

Daily habit: What will you do to include at least 30 minutes of rest and unstructured downtime, with no distractions or devices, most days?

Emotional intelligence: Willpower and fear

Inquiry: What are your feelings, thoughts, and beliefs about willpower and fear and how do they show up in your life?

Spiritual maturity: Retreat

Practice: Name an aspect of yourself, or a person or situation in your life, that would benefit from you slowing down and spending time in silent contemplation. Follow the guidelines in the text or whatever feels right to you to practice retreat at least one time per week. Share your experience of this practice with a friend and in your journal.

PATH II

USING THE FOUR Rs FOR CHANGE

This path requires introspection, the ability to think about your thoughts and how you organize your experience. Here you will identify and clearly articulate what you want, who and what your resources are, and what the most resonant attitudes and actions are for you at this time.

Doing this practice reminded me of an underlying principle of inner work: Expanding our capacity for self-awareness is not a linear or rational process. Carl Jung said it best, “The right way to wholeness is made up of fateful detours and wrong turnings.” You will not reap the optimal benefit from this study guide if you approach it with an attitude of efficiently getting it done and moving on to the next thing. Adopting a more receptive, introspective attitude toward the process is a signal that you long for real transformation, and life will respond by sending you experiences to assist you in knowing what your next step is. Paying attention to the deeper meaning held in these experiences fuels the flame of increased self-awareness even more.

For me, this meant I would sometimes come back to my initial responses and change them significantly after observing what a dream or an interaction with a friend was showing me. I realized I had once again focused on what is habitual and was unconscious of what I was avoiding until new experience revealed it to me. Even when we are trying to be aware, our automatic patterns are there! But if we pay attention, life and the psyche come in and show us what needs to be looked at and the adjustments we need to make.

The “four Rs” to apply to each phase for this practice are Receive, Remember, Reflect, and Return. Read *To Change or Not To Change* in the text to remind you why these principles are so powerful as a model for lasting transformation. As you do the work, you will know you have chosen something that is resonant for you when it feels reasonably natural, not necessarily easy, to implement. Take several hours for your initial responses to each of the four R’s. Then return to refine and articulate your responses more clearly for yourself, weaving in the insights that come to you while going about your daily life. Give yourself an entire week to complete this model.

Refer to the Four Rs at the end of the discussion of each phase in the book. Use the information in the Questionnaires, Self-Assessments, and Keywords Exercise as you explore this path.

I encourage you to do all of the following:

- Record your responses in a journal.
- Gather the images, objects, and art that evoke and remind you of your learning.
- Make a chart and post it to receive visual reminders on a daily basis.
- Gather together with one or more friends to discuss your responses, feelings, and insights and learn from one another.

RECEIVE. Receptivity leads to relationship. Be open to forming new relationships that inspire and sustain hope. Receptivity is essential for transformation and healing, yet many of us are completely unaware of the myriad ways we resist being open to what life gives us. Allow yourself to receive the relationships, experiences, emotions, and ideas that life sends you to guide the next step on your journey.

PRACTICE

For each phase, list your relational resources, both current and potential, that can help you with the main issues of that phase: friends, family, teachers, mentors, classes, groups, associations.

REMEMBER. Remembrance leads to repetition. It takes a lot of repetition in these new relationships to yourself and others before new patterns of behavior become automatic and seem natural. When you forget to practice the behaviors that support you, simply remember to come back to what you know works for you. If you remember your relational resources, purpose, and the habits that support it, eventually it will be natural to repeat the behaviors that serve your highest self.

PRACTICE

For each phase, list both a “being” (attitude) and a “doing” (action) that support the integration of the wisdom of that phase that you commit to practicing.

REFLECT. Reflection leads to reframing. Many of us are in a hurry to change. We may believe we understand and thus quickly move on to the next thing. But you have to reflect and do the work that makes it yours, that makes it come alive within you. When you have grasped the specific meaning that is uniquely yours, reframing your worldview will be the natural outcome.

PRACTICE

For each phase, journal your answers to the following questions:

What are the takeaways?

What are you resisting?

What is the risk to take, the next step?

RETURN. Return to yourself, to the body, and to the Earth phase during transitions from one season or phase to the next. Take whatever time you need to digest and assimilate what you have learned here and make it your own. This is the way to lasting transformation.

PRACTICE

Get a calendar and mark the beginning of each season and corresponding phase, and write a few of your own keywords on each month that will help you return to your learning in that phase. For the Earth phase: mark one week before and after the Summer and Winter Solstices and the Spring and Autumn Equinoxes. Wood: Spring Equinox, Fire: Summer Solstice, Metal: Autumn Equinox, and Water: Winter Solstice.

When you have completed this entire path, answer the final inquiry:

What did you notice about yourself as you worked through this path?

FOUR Rs SAMPLE

Here is an example of what your journal might look like as you work through the Four Rs for each phase. Notice how the sample responses integrate specific concepts with the people, places, and things that support them. Only one to two phases are completed to give you an idea; for optimal benefit fill in all phases for yourself. You can be very brief, as shown here, or go into more detail to remind you of why you chose these particular people and situations.

RECEIVE/Relational Resources

Earth: Nourishment and getting needs met with husband, sisters, women friends, nature, meditation group. Local foods—Mana, farmer’s market, SSW farm. Community contribution—volunteer with kids at school, women helping women.

Wood: Self-assertion and renewal with Megan, Sylvia, Sandy, Martin, Robert. Movement with yoga teachers and studio, shaking medicine, dance.

Fire:

Metal:

Water:

REMEMBER/Repeat

Earth:

Being—

Doing—

Wood:

Being—

Doing—

Fire:

*Being—*Natural/easy to express when energy moves freely. It doesn’t have to be serious and more work to do. Lighten up, not take self and expression so seriously.

*Doing—*Drawing, coloring, playing. Evenings for music, reading—not media

Metal:

Being—Inner value strengthens with age only if lived consciously/embodied knowing of impermanence: now is only time available, don't waste it.

Doing—Create routine and structure to carefully organize the day's important work

Water:

Being—

Doing—

REFLECT

1. What are the takeaways for you?
2. What are you resisting?
3. What is the risk to take, the next step?

Earth:

Wood:

Fire:

Metal:

Water:

My takeaways—This is where I have felt both most comfortable (as an introvert it feels natural to go inward and be still and silent) and most uncomfortable (having to face my issues with power). I spent time reflecting on how this unconscious power dynamic has influenced my life and pushed me to do things for the wrong reasons. Doing an active imagination with a dream I had over a year ago allowed the feelings I had been avoiding to come up, and I listened. I understood that for me power is not about doing something in the world, or having power over anyone or even myself in a forceful way. I found it is about using my energy and self-awareness to cultivate relational presence and understanding.

What I am resisting—Doing what I know is necessary and engaging my will to stand for what I value rather than what this culture values, all this outward doing, pushing, and efficiency. Like most of us, I have resisted my inner world, believing satisfaction can only be found in doing work in the world.

Next steps—To listen deeply to nature, life, people, and my inner world knowing there is so much wisdom available to me if I would only listen more attentively, without the preconceptions and conditioned responses of a lifetime. To consciously value this inner world and my connection to it.

What did you notice about yourself as you went through this path?

I liked stating clearly my resources and this exercise prompted me to reach out to others on a more consistent basis. Also to volunteer with kids at a school because I want to give back and it gives me joy to be with them. As soon as I articulated what I was resisting, I knew the next step to take. A lot more spontaneity occurred. Several times upon waking in the morning, I saw something in my house that did not look or feel “right,” and simply began to do what felt right to me—without question, doubt, or thought. I simply responded to what I felt needed to happen in that moment, and it was very freeing and fun for me. I created a personal “reminder space” with photos of people and artworks I love, postcards from places I have traveled that were meaningful to me, and books I treasure. This is a feeling space for myself to balance my tendency to be efficient and practical.

PATH III

YOUR PERSONAL ALCHEMY POSTER

Alchemy is the process of transforming something common into something special. In the Middle Ages, the word referred to a process of changing base lead into gold. Here we are talking about an inner alchemy, a process of transforming the dross (excess, impurities, the inauthentic) to get to a clearer, more pure essence of who you are.

This inner work requires a container, the alchemical vessel. The physical body is one aspect of this vessel: When we know the sacred nature of the body and its vital role in our transformation, we make more mature, conscious choices about what we consume and how we care for the body. Psychologically, this work also requires an attitude of willingness to confront and accept whatever we find within. Reclaiming the shadow, the rejected and unacknowledged parts of the self, is an essential part of the alchemical process, as the energy needed for transformation is often bound up in our shadow material.

This path will benefit from a greater reliance on intuition and quick, instinctive responses as a way to explore your own inner wisdom. I suggest you find a quiet place, take a deep breath, feel the energy move down from the head into your heart and lower abdomen. Read each step and write down what first comes to you without censoring yourself and then move on to the next step. Go back later to clarify your responses after some self-reflection or asking for input from a trusted friend. We often do not see ourselves clearly and need a loved one's insight into our "invisible" values and attributes.

I encourage you to do all of the following:

- Record your responses in a journal.
- Gather the images, objects, and art that evoke and remind you of your learning.
- Make a chart and post it to receive visual reminders on a daily basis.
- Gather together with one or more friends to discuss your responses, feelings, and insights and learn from one another.

Use the information in the Questionnaires, Self-Assessments, and Keywords Exercise as you explore this path.

Follow this eight-step process to create your personal alchemical poster of transformation.

STEP ONE

AUTHENTIC NATURE

Principle: Become aware of and acknowledge your values and authentic nature.

How to: Think of a time when you felt fully yourself, not necessarily happy or at ease, but engaged and alive. Write down your responses to the following questions: What was important about what was happening? What made the experience flow? What held your interest? What must be a part of your way of living for you to be who you truly are? List all the quality and value words that come from your answers. Circle the ones that you feel are your core values. (They do not have to make rational sense, as long as they are resonant or meaningful to you.)

Your response: I am _____. I need _____.

STEP TWO

THE BODY AS ALCHEMICAL VESSEL

Principle: Acknowledge and honor the sacred nature of the body and its vital role in transformation.

How to: Make more mature, conscious choices about what you consume through all your senses and how you care for the body. Re-read the Earth phase section in *Rhythms of Change* (especially pages 37/39), and The ONE Thing for each phase: Whole foods, Movement, Sleep, Mindful breathing, Rest. I know you want to move forward, but please read each of these sections and observe what your current relationship is to them. Armed with your common-sense knowing of what your body needs in order to be strong, clear, and vital, make a list of three to five mature choices that support meeting these needs. What will you do and when? What resources do you need to enlist to help you succeed in making these choices your new normal?

Your response: I know _____. (x 3-5)

I commit to _____. (x 3-5)

STEP THREE

LIFE THEME

Principle: Learn from all your life experiences and formulate a positive interpretation that resonates with you.

How to: Look at the people and situations sent to you in this lifetime. Write out your responses to the following questions: What is the common theme, the kernel of wisdom that life is offering you? Think of the recurring struggles and challenges you have experienced. What has been difficult for you in this life?

Your response: Life wants me to _____. I am here to _____.

STEP FOUR

BEING AND DOING

Principle: We often over-focus on our outer lives at the expense of our inner lives. It is essential to integrate being and doing in order to live our wholeness.

How to: Refer to the Four Rs at the end of the discussion of each phase in the text and to your responses to the questions in the Four Rs model if you completed it earlier. For each phase, pick at least one attitude and one action that supports the integration of being and doing. Notice what you resist and add that to your list.

Your response: I commit to _____ attitude (one for each phase) and _____ action (one for each phase)

STEP FIVE

FLOW

Principle: Flow states help us integrate new ways of being.

How to: Engage one or more unfamiliar actions or ways of being to access this kind of energy. It is important to find something that is challenging enough to engage you without being so demanding that you will give up. (See the sample for examples of activities that engage flow.)

Your response: I will _____.

STEP SIX

SHADOW WORK

Principle: Reclaim the energy stored in the shadow, the rejected and unacknowledged parts of the self.

How to, Part I: Think of a situation or person who disturbs, annoys, frightens, angers, or frustrates you. Record your response to the following questions: What lies beneath my surface reactions? What is at the core of my feelings? What is it about this I cannot live with? Now think of people or situations that enliven you. What qualities or abilities do you admire in them? Shadow aspects may be light/positive aspects of ourselves as well as dark/negative ones.

Your response: My shadow has these attributes: _____

How to, Part II: Reclaim your shadow and the energy it contains. See the sample at the end for an example of how to do this. Make it resonant by creating or finding images and objects or talismans that remind you of what you are reclaiming for yourself.

STEP SEVEN

RELATIONSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Principle: Relationship and accountability take this alchemical process from mere ideas to actual change.

How to: Choose one person you trust and share what has been revealed to you through this alchemical process. Stay in contact with this person to maintain the relationship, both to these aspects of yourself and with this chosen person. If it feels right, make a plan that answers the following: What actions will you take to maintain the relationship? When? How will you stay in contact with this person (e-mail, phone, scheduled meetings)?

Your response: What I want to remember from this process is _____.

I will contact _____ (name of person) by _____ (date and method) and enlist them to be the person I will be in relationship with and accountable to. We will repeat this contact and accountability on a regular basis for at least three months.

STEP EIGHT

USE THIS KNOWING!

Principle: Use your insights as the basis for all important choices and decisions in order to stay aligned with what is most resonant in your life.

How to: Put your written responses to the above seven steps on poster board or a chart you create and place where you will see it on a daily basis. Include images, poetry, or drawings that inspire you or support integrating these insights into your daily life. When faced with an important choice or decision, return to this poster to remember who you are, what is important to you, and what life wants for you and from you. Ask yourself: Will this choice be aligned with my personal alchemy? If not, be conscious and careful if you decide to move forward.

Your response: I completed this and posted it for myself on _____(date).

What did you notice about yourself as you worked through this path?

SAMPLE PERSONAL ALCHEMICAL POSTER

Authentic Nature

I am curious, clear, giving, earthy, powerful, devoted, loving, empty, and fierce.

I need solitude, nature, movement, freedom, compassion, space, connection to what is real, and to contribute for the good of all.

Body as Vessel

I know caffeine, even in small amounts, makes me irritable, pushy, and interferes with restful sleep. I commit to using caffeine sparingly, if at all, and never on an empty stomach.

I know my brain and body get numb and foggy by too much sensory stimulation through devices. I commit to limiting screen time after work to an hour, or two at most, and not close to bedtime.

I know I need movement on a regular basis or I feel heavy and stagnant physically and emotionally. I commit to walk, do yoga, and/or swim 4x per week.

Life Theme

Life wants me to use the solitude I have experienced in this life to look inward and forge a strong connection to something real and to not be distracted from this vision by outer circumstances and superficial appearances.

I am here to live both the wisdom of the body and connection with the divine and to use what I have been given in service to others.

Being and Doing

Earth

Wood

Fire:

Being: Natural for me to express when energy moves freely, allowing spontaneity. It is not work in a burdened way, but engaged and alive. Lighten up and not take self or expression so seriously!

Doings: Drawing, coloring, playing, writing. Evenings for music and reading

Metal

Water

Flow

I will go deeper into my yoga practice, exploring it from the inside out, following what delights and interests my body as my favorite yoga teacher did. I will get out my Arabic language book and resume practicing the calligraphy I like so much.

(Examples of ways to engage flow: learn a foreign language, musical instrument, or dance; put yourself in a rich, unpredictable environment; challenge your body with a new exercise or sport; read 20 pages on a topic outside your usual field of interest; deep embodiment of a specific practice you currently engage in: mindful walking, art, writing, gardening, yoga, dance, meditation, and so on.)

Shadow aspects

Aspects of my shadow: Creativity, devotion, power, knowing

Example of this process: I notice that I admire my artistic friends and repeatedly hear myself saying, “I am not creative.” Thus creativity reveals itself as a possible shadow aspect that I project onto others. In response, I make a choice to reconnect to my natural creativity and get curious about what it may want to show me. I sit in a private place and close my eyes. I allow the image of my sister Helen, an artist and educator, to arise in front of me. It could have been any of a number of creative people, but she showed up, so I go with her. I see her sitting in front of me, and allow myself to feel what it is like to be with her. Images arise of us baking brownies, marveling at the quality of light while snorkeling together, laughing as the boat is sinking under us. Ah, this is the same energy as when she is “doing art.” I realize this is why she seems to be having such fun when she is making her art pieces. I thought she was working, but it seems she is playing with what comes in the moment, using her training, techniques, and natural talent.

I continue to feel this energy grow as I sit with all these images. When I feel it is as large as it wants to get, I see myself walking into this immense energy field of creativity/Helen/life and become one with it. It feels natural to be here, energized and full of possibilities. I sit and rest in this place for a while, exploring this new space inside myself. I am a bit stunned by how intense the experience was, and I know I have now begun the process of reclaiming the energy of creativity for myself.

I remember a friend gave me a beautiful set of colored pencils and a coloring book of Spanish tiles. They have been sitting in my closet, my mind telling me: "How silly! I am not into coloring!" I notice the tone sounds a bit like my father. (Hint: When you hear your mind talking to you, ask yourself whose voice it is. The tone will often alert you that it is not your authentic voice, but someone else's belief system you have internalized.) I immediately retrieve the pencils and book from the depths of my closet and put them on my "reminder space," where I see them everyday. I choose the one I like the most, an exquisite Moorish geometric pattern, and enjoy not thinking, not judging, but simply enjoying the time I spend with this simple activity.

Relationship and Accountability

What I want to remember from this process is to always come back to myself, to own both my light and dark aspects as much as I can, to live the wholeness that is possible. To value the play as much as the work, to value the joy of being in this beautiful world as much as the responsibility to contribute to it.

I will contact my friend S. by phone on a weekly basis and enlist her to be the person I will be in relationship with and accountable to. We will repeat this contact and accountability on a regular basis for at least three months.

Use This Knowing

I completed this and posted it for myself on July 21st.

PATH IV

IN-DEPTH SELF-REFLECTION

This model requires more time and self-reflection. Here we will approach the material in much more detail and you will use your discrimination to decide what is relevant to engage and what you prefer to skip over until another time.

I suggest that you read the section for each phase in the text as you proceed with the corresponding part of the study guide. Each section of the study guide will present bulleted takeaways followed by suggestions for your exploration. As you work through this section, refer to the information in the Questionnaires, Self-Assessments, and Keywords Exercise.

If you are doing this individually, I suggest you spend at least one week, with multiple one to two hour sessions, for each phase. If working with a study group, several two to three hour sessions may be needed to complete each phase. Do the phases in any order that feels right to you, depending on your personal circumstances. You may want to complete each phase during its corresponding season, the Wood phase in spring for example. When you are experiencing the physical or psychological issues associated with a particular phase is a good time to return to it and revisit what you learned, perhaps finding your way to go more deeply into the material.

I encourage you to do all of the following:

- Record your responses in a journal.
- Gather the images, objects, and art that evoke and remind you of your learning.
- Make a chart and post it to receive visual reminders on a daily basis.
- Gather together with one or more friends to discuss your responses, feelings, and insights and learn from one another.

THE EARTH PHASE

- Always active, especially during transitions
- Energy is neutral, balanced
- Everything is subject to process of digestion: food, experiences, thoughts
- Ability to transform what life offers to be fully integrated being
- Strong Earth phase is essential to extract the lessons from all phases

Mark your calendar: Transitions between seasons: one week before and after the Summer and Winter Solstices and the Spring and Autumn Equinoxes, eight weeks total.

ENGAGE THE ENERGY

Sit in a place you will not be disturbed in a quiet, protected space, inside in a chair or outside on the earth. Imagine your energy flowing into your belly and hips, grounding you in the center of your body. Or you may lie face up or down on the ground, surrendering to the pull of gravity. With your body on the ground, you will have a visceral sense of the direct relationship between your body and the earth. Feel into the substance, weight, and heaviness that is your physical body. Breathe into your belly, low into the abdomen, below the navel, and sink into the depths of your physical beingness, into your own earthiness. Take your time. What is this like for you? Record what you notice.

BEING CENTERED

To fully engage with the energy of the Earth phase, keep the following in mind:

- Physical body is mater: both matter and mother
 - Mothering: Capacity for taking care of, nourishing, comforting, loving, connecting to the body and one's needs
 - Body is where everything is created, grounded, and birthed
 - If not fully embodied, nothing can be created and birthed through us
 - Allow yourself to belong here: in this body, on the earth, in this moment
1. What is your experience of being mothered? And to belonging? Start a list of these experiences, leaving room to add as they come to you.
 2. Give an example of a time you felt very centered and one when you didn't. What were the circumstances that created these experiences?

CENTRAL ISSUE: NOURISHMENT

As infants and young children, the mother is our real as well as symbolic connection to our source of nourishment and survival. If we experience a “good enough” mother, we feel loved, cared for, comforted, and nourished. This experience shapes how we perceive ourselves and the world, whether

we feel worthy of love and if the world is a safe place for us, or not. As we mature into adults, our responsibility is to create a relationship with this mothering energy within ourselves and with life to get the support we need to meet our needs. We must learn what it means to have just enough of the right thing to satisfy the authentic need we experience. And to remember that we are nourished externally by consuming food and experiences and internally by contributing so others may also thrive.

The following quotes demonstrate the deeper lessons of the Earth phase:

Mother Earth needs us to keep our covenant. We will do this in courts, we will do this on our radio station, and we will commit to our descendants to work hard to protect this land and water for them. Whether you have feet, wings, fins, or roots, we are all in it together.

—Winona LaDuke

...how can we take this step toward spiritual maturity? First, we need to acknowledge the fundamental reality that we are connected to each other, that spiritual gifts are given for the sake of the whole. Second, we can acknowledge the obvious needs around us...Our world is dying not just through exploitation and greed but through a denial of the sacred that unifies us all, the sacred that gives meaning and purpose to every life, at every moment. We have separated spirit and matter and thus live in a world starved of spirit.

—Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee

Exercise

1. Give examples of what is easiest for you to give and to receive: time, food, money, other? How does this serve your sense of being nourished and supported?
2. How can you take more responsibility for getting your needs met? Give an example of a need that makes you feel vulnerable, one you have avoided thus far.
3. What is your way to engage with the oneness of life, to witness the obvious needs around us, and to contribute to the well-being of all?

BELIEFS ABOUT NEED & NOURISHMENT

These core beliefs may be unconscious, based on perceptions and experiences from childhood. Awareness of them will loosen their control over your life. Some ways core beliefs about need and nourishment may manifest in our lives include:

- Encouraging self and others to do everything for ourselves, not relying on others for help
- Being constant nurturers and caregivers, focusing attention outward to not feel our own needs
- Equating need with weakness and satisfying our needs with selfishness
- Believing it is more spiritual and evolved to give rather than receive

Exercise

1. Write in a stream of consciousness fashion for 10-20 minutes about your core beliefs and experiences around need and nourishment. What sensations, images, memories, words, teachings come up? Circle the key words that have most meaning to you.
2. How do these beliefs show up in your life? How do they serve you? At what cost?

Daily habits

- Begin your day by repeating one Earth affirmation of your choosing. Example: “I am enough,” “It is okay to need,” “I am worthy of support,” “I can count on others for help.”
- Be attentive to how your core beliefs around need and nourishment show up in your life. Talk to your loved ones about this issue and ask for their support in making these beliefs more conscious so they do not control your life.

BEING WITH EARTH ENERGY

Feeling satisfied with what is available to us in the present moment is possible when we practice the following:

- Allow yourself to deeply feel your needs and those of the earth, knowing they are interconnected
- Care for and honor the body and consciously receive what life offers
- Reach out and connect with others to get your needs, and theirs, met and to contribute to life

Practice

When you know a situation requires you to act to get a need met, experiment with the following suggestions:

- Role-play with a friend to practice words and body postures that help you identify your needs and act to get them satisfied. Now imagine the setting where the interaction will take place: the people, ambient sounds, colors, all the details. Take a deep breath and speak out loud the words you need to say. Imagine possible responses and your reaction to them. Accept that the outcome may not be what you want, but know you have done your part by showing up nevertheless. After the experience, write down what you learned about yourself.

EARTH IMBALANCE

How many of the following apply to your current situation?

- Stuck in childlike dependence and weakness
- Unable to identify nor satisfy own needs, want others to do it for us

- Collapses and uses need to manipulate others
 - Frequently needy, appealing for sympathy but never feeling satisfied
 - Over consume but don't get to authentic satisfaction, or can't sustain satisfaction
 - Weak digestion: nausea, poor appetite, abdominal pain, gas, bloating, loose stools
 - Often tired, especially after eating
 - May be overweight or overly thin (undernourished), excess accumulation of things
 - Difficulty setting boundaries and staying with a regular schedule to get needs met
 - Easily worried, obsessed, dissatisfied, with feelings of "not enough"
 - Overthinks emotional material that yields no productive action
 - Continuum of complete inertia to unrelenting momentum
1. Circle all of the above attributes that apply to you now. Pick one that you want to bring toward more balance. What will you do to take the first step?
 2. What is your experience of the above symptoms of imbalance? Read Janet's Story in the Earth Phase section of *Rhythms of Change*. Contemplate and journal: In what ways is this your story too? How do these behaviors serve you? What are you gaining? What are you avoiding? At what cost?

EARTH-BALANCING GUIDELINES

Record in your journal how many days each week you follow the guidelines listed below and note how you feel. Identify the habits that come easily for you and also those you find challenging. The next day, begin practicing the challenging ones to see what happens.

Daily habits

- Consume mainly warm, cooked, whole foods
- Eat a breakfast that includes protein and healthy fat
- Eat moderately and at regular intervals, never skipping meals
- Avoid sugar, raw and cold foods, and excess dairy, meat, and fats
- Avoid waste (of food, time, energy, money) and excessive accumulation
- Practice moderation and establish a routine for regular meals, exercise, work and rest
- Set reasonable boundaries to balance giving and receiving

CHALLENGE: TRANSFORMATION AND MATURITY

To explore the challenge of this phase, notice what the meaning is for you in each of the following suggestions:

- Make mature choices to balance all forms of consumption, including mental stimulation, with moderate physical exercise and rest

- Transform your behaviors to live with rhythmic moderation
- Learn to identify and satisfy your authentic needs for nourishment
- Accept reasonable limitations of what body and mind can do at any given moment/Learn when to say “no”
- Become more conscious of the consequences of your choices

Exercise

1. Write in stream of consciousness fashion for 10-20 minutes on this topic. What sensations, images, memories, words come up? Circle the keywords that have most meaning to you.
2. List two ways you experience this challenge in your life. What is the first step to facing this in your life?

THE ONE THING: EAT WHOLE FOODS, BEGINNING WITH BREAKFAST

The essential practice to embody the lessons of the Earth phase:

- Make a conscious choice to love yourself, the body, and the earth by nourishing yourself with whole foods
- Recognize that whole foods enhance your ability to concentrate, be alert, and maintain stable energy and mood throughout the day, while reducing anxiety and depression
- Choose whole foods and take a stand against the corporatization of agricultural, pharmaceutical, and medical institutions that leave our vitality and health, and those of the planet, out of the equation
- Make a conscious choice to nourish the body in the morning with a breakfast that includes protein and healthy fats, stabilizing blood sugar for the day.

Daily habits

- Begin transitioning to a whole foods diet by eating one or more of your favorite whole foods each day, beginning with breakfast.
- Share your experiences with a friend or family member and ask for their support in developing your new habits.
- After one week, write down what works for you and what doesn't in your efforts to move toward identifying and satisfying your authentic nutritional needs.

GRATITUDE

Consciously recognizing what life gives us is essential if we want to reclaim our wholeness. Notice what happens as you include the following into your life on a daily or weekly basis:

- Observe what is available in the present moment, with ordinary people and situations

- Recognize when you have enough and allow yourself to feel satisfaction
- Focus on what you have in this moment rather than on what is lacking
- Include everything that life brings and gives to you: the joy as well as the sorrow

Practice

Name one aspect of yourself, or a person or situation in your life, that would benefit from your gratitude. Share this with a friend and/or in your journal.

How will you continue this practice over the next few weeks?

THE FOUR Rs OF EARTH PHASE TRANSFORMATION

RECEIVE the relationships that will support you. Review your relational resources— friends, family, teachers, mentors. Ask one person who respects the qualities of the Earth phase to be your partner for this phase. Talk to this person about what interests you from this phase. Practice accountability to make the contact more effective: Tell your person what you will do with this Earth phase wisdom and when you will do it. Then set a date for an email or phone call to stay in relationship for at least three months. When you next contact them, answer this question: “What did I learn about myself by do-ing, or not doing, what I agreed to do?”

REMEMBER and repeat the lessons you have learned about the Earth phase: Expand your capacity for authentic nourishment which comes from balanced consumption, knowing we are connected to everything, and contributing so others and the earth may thrive. Engage moderation in all aspects of your life to allow the spaciousness to feel satisfied with who you are and with what you have now. Practice making mature choices to not waste your resources nor those of the earth. Use whatever resonates with you to be centered in the body, come into relationship with balanced nourishment, feel your needs and those of the world, and transform your behaviors.

REFLECT: Journal your responses to the following inquiries: What are the most im-portant ideas, feelings, values, and words for you in the Earth phase? What are the challenges for you? The gifts? What are you resisting? How does this serve you? What is the risk to take, the next step? What are you willing to do, and when?

RETURN to yourself, to the body, to what you know supports the natural satisfaction of the Earth phase. Read Protocol for Balancing Blood Sugar in Part Two of Rhythms of Change. If this information resonates with your situation, commit to following the protocol for a week or more. Observe and make note of your responses.

Return to the Earth phase after each season and during transitions to remember those lessons before moving on to the next phase.

Finally, what did you notice about yourself as you worked through your in-depth Earth phase self-study?

THE WOOD PHASE

- Spring - Energy is expansive, moving up and OUT
- Compels seeds to open deep in the thawing ground, to push up and out
- Humans push OUT against limitation to give birth to truer version of ourselves
- Access Wood energy at any time of life, not only youth

Mark your calendar: Spring Equinox

Engage the energy

Stand up, outside with bare feet if possible. Or sit comfortably in a chair if you prefer. Imagine the energy moving up from the ground, into your feet, legs, up into your belly and chest, and OUT into your arms. Now slowly, take a few breaths while your arms push out a bit, making room for yourself to grow. Now push with more strength and further out, imagining you are pushing out against whatever keeps you small, weak, or blocks your growth. Feel the boundaries of this new, larger space you have created. Take your time. What is this like for you? Record what you notice.

GETTING OUT OF THE WAY

To fully engage with the energy of the Wood phase, keep the following in mind:

- To renew and allow life to come through us, we must get out of the way
 - When frustrated, the way forward blocked: sit back, take a breath, calm the mind
 - Take a step away from the situation to gain perspective
 - Observe and gather information from the body and the environment
 - Wait to act until see what the situation calls for on every level
1. What is your experience of getting out of the way? Start a list of these experiences, leaving room to add as they come to you.
 2. List two ways life or your body signal you when it is time to step back and gain perspective. Give an example of a time you didn't pay attention to the signals and one when you waited to gain perspective before acting. What were the circum-stances that created these experiences?

CENTRAL ISSUE: SELF-ASSERTION

Self-assertion is defined as the act of expressing or defending your rights, claims, or opinions in a confident or forceful way. Self-assertion, anger, and creativity are manifestations of the energy of the Wood phase. It is the mobilization of energy we use in the face of obstacles to our growth, or violations of our boundaries or sense of self. It is an issue of whether we cultivate our strength to make the plans and decisions necessary to have an effect on our own lives and on the world around us, or not. This energy has a powerful and transformative aspect if used correctly.

The following quotes demonstrate the deeper lessons of the Wood phase:

I have learnt through bitter experience the one supreme lesson to conserve my anger, and as heat conserved is transmuted into energy, even so our anger controlled can be transmuted into a power which can move the world.

—Gandhi

To die every day to every problem, every pleasure, and not carry over any problem at all; so the mind remains tremendously attentive, active, and clear.

—Jiddu Krishnamurti

1. Give an example of a time when you were able to use this energy effectively.
2. Name the people and situations that trigger anger or the need for self-assertion. (If you think you never get angry, spend more time on this one as everyone has this energy within. Frustration, impatience, irritability and annoyance may be the words you use for this energy)
3. What is your way to keep your consciousness attentive to what life is asking of you and to have an effect on the world?

BELIEFS ABOUT ANGER & SELF-ASSERTION

These core beliefs may be unconscious, based on perceptions and experiences from childhood. Awareness of them will loosen their control over your life. Some ways core beliefs about anger and self-assertion may manifest in our lives include:

- Deciding this is too harsh, edgy, dangerous, or damaging
- Diffusing energy in others, avoiding it in ourselves
- Acting timid, polite, or quiet with goal of being liked or included
- Acting arrogant, pushy, and domineering, at odds with others to promote own agenda

Exercise

1. Write in a stream of consciousness fashion for 10-20 minutes on your core beliefs/experiences around anger and self-assertion. What sensations, images, memories, words, teachings come up? Circle the key words that have most meaning to you.
2. How do these beliefs show up in your life? How do they serve you? At what cost?

Daily habits

- Begin your day by repeating one Wood affirmation of your choosing. Example: “It is okay to be angry,” “I can be strong and assert myself,” “I can make a difference,” and “I can say NO.”
- Be attentive to how your core beliefs around anger and self-assertion show up in your life. Talk to your loved ones about this issue and ask for their support in making these beliefs more conscious so they do not control your life.

BEING WITH WOOD ENERGY

Self-assertion and anger mobilize us to make plans and decisions that will effectively move us forward. If this is unknown territory for you, practice the following:

- Know your needs and personal boundaries
- Express yourself clearly and disagree when necessary
- Speak your truth and calmly stand your ground
- Strengthen yourself to have an effect on your life and on the world

Practice

When you know a situation is going to require you to use self-assertion, experiment with the following suggestions:

- Role-play with a friend to practice words and body postures that help you access the ability for asserting yourself. Now imagine the setting where the interaction will take place: the people, ambient sounds, colors, all the details. Take a deep breath and speak out loud the words you need to say. Imagine possible responses and your reaction to them. Accept that the outcome may not be what you want, but know you have done your part by showing up nevertheless. After the experience, write down what you learned about yourself.

WOOD IMBALANCE

How many of the following apply to your current situation?

- Inflexible, rigid, and stiff: body and/or mental attitude
- May experience hormonal imbalance, shoulder or neck tension, headaches
- Quick to anger, frustration, negativity, or depression
- Timid and afraid to assert oneself, or
- Too pushy and domineering
- Struggles with indecision or impulsive decision-making
- Unable to mobilize the energy to make plans and decisions to evolve
- Lacks a vision or life purpose
- Unable to clearly see the truth of one's situation
- Holds on to past hurts, resisting renewal and moving forward

Exercise

1. Circle all of the above attributes that apply to you now. Pick one that you want to bring toward more balance. What will you do to take the first step?

2. What is your experience of the above symptoms of imbalance? Read Barbara's Story in the Wood Phase section of *Rhythms of Change*. Contemplate and journal: In what ways is this your story too? How do these behaviors serve you? What are you gaining? What are you avoiding? At what cost?

WOOD-BALANCING GUIDELINES

Record in your journal how many days each week you follow the guidelines listed below and note how you feel. Identify the habits that come easily for you and also those you find challenging. The next day, begin practicing the challenging ones to see what happens.

Daily habits

- Fresh lemon juice in water in the morning and throughout the day
- Add raw veggies and cooked greens
- Eat lightly, with fewer heavy meats and fats
- Exercise 30 minutes most days, more vigorous if needed
- Avoid sugar, alcohol, and caffeine
- Take a step back to gain perspective
- Practice kindness and forgiveness

CHALLENGE: RENEWAL AND BIRTH

To explore the challenge of this phase, notice what the meaning is for you in each of the following suggestions:

- Be attentive to what each day, each moment, brings
- Do what is necessary to let go of mental & physical rigidity
- Clearly see what is ready to be born within you and in the world
- Open yourself to what wants to come next
- Take action to renew yourself and your purpose in life

Exercise

1. Write in a stream of consciousness fashion for 10-20 minutes on this topic. What sensations, images, memories, words come up? Circle the key words that have most meaning to you.
2. List two ways you experience this challenge in your life. What is the first step to facing this challenge?

THE ONE THING: VIGOROUS MOVEMENT

The essential practice to embody the lessons of the Wood phase:

- Give yourself the strength and energy that come from daily movement
- Remove stagnation on all levels and open deeper feeling and psychic channels
- Reverse sluggish digestion and elimination, increase oxygen flow and blood circulation
- Take a walk, ride a stationary bike, go to a yoga class, swim, or simply move your arms and legs while sitting in a chair. Put on music and dance. Find your way to move!

Daily habits

- Begin incorporating movement into your life, building up to 30 minutes on most days. Record your response to practicing these new behaviors.
- Share your experiences with a friend or family member and ask for their support in developing your new habits.
- After one week, write down what works for you and what does not in your efforts to move toward more strength, flexibility, and movement.
- Watch Bradford Keeney, PhD on YouTube: “Shaking Medicine” and then try it yourself!

FORGIVENESS

The practice of forgiveness helps free us from the chaos of unresolved emotion that binds us to the past and may prevent us from moving forward in our lives. Notice what happens as you include the following into your life on a daily or weekly basis:

- Allow perspective on the situation when you step back
- Return to kindness by saying the word “soften”
- Write out the story, including feelings of hurt, anger, or guilt
- “I release you. I forgive you. I am moving forward in my life.”
- Allow this kindness to yourself and others

Practice

1. Name one aspect of yourself, or a person or situation in your life, that would benefit from your forgiveness. Share this with a friend and/or in your journal.
2. How will you continue this practice over the next few weeks?

THE FOUR R_s OF WOOD PHASE TRANSFORMATION

RECEIVE the relationships that will support you. Review your relational resources— friends, family, teachers, mentors. Ask one person who respects the qualities of the Wood phase to be your partner for this phase. Talk to this person about what interests you from this phase. Practice accountability to make the contact more effective: Tell your person *what you will do* with this Wood phase wisdom and *when you will do it*. Then set a date for an email or phone call to stay in relationship for at least three months. When you next contact them, answer this question: “*What did I learn about myself by doing, or not doing, what I agreed to do?*”

REMEMBER and repeat the lessons you have learned in the Wood phase: Expand your capacity for moving out into the world, learning through your own experience and mistakes. Take your power back from parents, peers, and the culture, clearly seeing your conditioning and biases. Engage a broader perspective to see what effect your words and actions have on others and on your life circumstances. Cultivate your strength and flexibility to make the plans and decisions that are right for you. Use whatever resonates with you to get out of the way, come into relationship with balanced self-assertion and anger, and renew yourself to allow life to come through you.

REFLECT: Journal your responses to the following inquiries: What are the most important ideas, feelings, values, and words for you in the Wood phase? What are the challenges for you? The gifts? What are you resisting? How does this serve you? What is the risk to take, the next step? What are you willing to do, and when?

RETURN to yourself, to the body, and to what you know supports the natural kindness of the Wood phase. Read the Protocol for Balancing Hormones in Part Two of *Rhythms of Change*. If this information resonates with your situation, commit to following the pro-tocol for a week or more. Observe and make note of your responses.

Return to the Earth phase after each season and during transitions to remember those lessons before moving on to the next phase.

Finally, what did you notice about yourself as you worked through your in-depth Wood phase self-study?

THE FIRE PHASE

- Summer: Energy is expansive, moving UP
- Everything at full growth, ripeness, and peak of expression
- We naturally reach UP toward the light of consciousness
- Tap into passion to work/DOING

Mark your calendar: Summer Solstice

Engage the energy

Stand up, or sit comfortably if unable to stand. Imagine your energy expanding, moving UP. Mindfully explore extending up with your arms, one at a time, then together. Stretch your whole body up, imagining yourself being pulled toward the light and warmth of the sun. Feel your feet firmly planted on the ground; this grounding allows the upward reach. Play with one foot grounded and the other on tip toe, as you reach upwards with all your strength. Just like a strong tree, with roots deep in the earth, we move up toward the light of the sun, expanding to our full height. Reach up as high as you can, striving to reach something or someone who is very important to you. Take your time. What is this like for you? Record what you notice.

EXPRESSING YOURSELF

To fully engage with the energy of the Fire phase, keep the following in mind:

- Engage energy and effort to fulfill your dreams
 - Cultivate self awareness to know authentic self and express it
 - Honor your unique expression, however humble or ambitious
 - Do what is meaningful to you and do it fully
1. What are the natural ways you express yourself? How do you alter expression to be acceptable? Start a list of these experiences, leaving room to add as they come to you.
 2. Give an example of a time you fully expressed yourself and one when you didn't. What were the circumstances that created these experiences?

CENTRAL ISSUE: CONTROL

Following the heart to joy and meaning requires courage, work, and self-discipline. We cultivate control to discover and then manifest what is true for us as we strive to reach our goals in life. Yet we must balance control with the willingness to be honest and vulnerable, allowing life and love to shape and change us. In the Fire phase, we learn that we must rely on intellect, analysis, and rational thought, and also cultivate the inner knowing of the heart through connection to the irrational, dreams, and intuition.

The following quotes demonstrate the deeper lessons of the Fire phase:

The most fundamental aggression to ourselves, the most fundamental harm we can do to ourselves, is to remain ignorant by not having the courage and the respect to look at ourselves honestly and gently.

—Pema Chodron

The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short; but in setting our aim too low, and achieving our mark.

—Michelangelo

Exercise

1. Give an example of a time when you were able to effectively use control and discipline to accomplish your goal.
2. In what habitual ways do you avoid following the heart to joy and meaning?
3. What is your way to engage your control to courageously look at yourself and to align yourself with your highest aim in this life?

BELIEFS ABOUT JOY & CONTROL

These core beliefs may be unconscious, based on perceptions and experiences from childhood. Awareness of them will loosen their control over your life. Some ways core beliefs about joy and control may manifest in our lives include:

- micromanaging others to gain a sense of control in outer world, “control freak”
- relinquishing all responsibility to self and others, “free spirit”
- avoiding responsibility of self-discipline and sustained intimacy
- feeling unworthy of authentic, lasting joy; settle for transient happiness or stimulation

Exercise

1. Write in a stream-of-consciousness fashion for 10 to 20 minutes about your core beliefs and experiences around joy and control. What sensations, images, memories, words, or teachings come up? Circle the key words that have most meaning to you.
2. How do these beliefs show up in your life? How do they serve you? At what cost?

Daily habits

- Begin your day by repeating one Fire affirmation of your choosing. Example: “I can experiment and explore,” “I am loved for who I am, not just for what I do,” “It is okay to be playful and joyful,” “I can do what makes me happy and still be loved.”
- Be attentive to how your core beliefs around joy and control show up in your life. Talk to your

loved ones about this issue and ask for their support in helping you to make these beliefs more conscious so they do not control your life.

BEING WITH FIRE ENERGY

Joy is expansive and allows us to feel connected to other people, to life, and to spirit. This energy naturally wants to go up and out into the world, yet we must also learn to contain it to use for our growth. Practice the following:

- Calm and focus your heart and mind in the present moment.
- Avoid too much talking, connecting, and doing as they scatter this energy.
- Cultivate and expand your range of joy that comes from within and does not depend on others.
- Quiet radiance, clarity, devotion, and peace as well as excited exhilaration

Practice

When you know a situation is going to require you to use control, experiment with the following suggestions:

- Role-play with a friend to practice words and body postures that help you access your control. Now imagine the setting where the interaction will take place: the people, ambient sounds, colors, all the details. Take a deep breath and speak out loud the words you need to say. Imagine possible responses and your reaction to them. Accept that the outcome may not be what you want, but know you have done your part by showing up nevertheless. After the experience, write down what you learned about yourself.

FIRE IMBALANCE

How many of the following apply to your current situation?

- Poor circulation, red or very pale face, cold hands, feet
- Insomnia, high blood pressure, or heart palpitations
- Micromanages life or tends to relinquish all control
- Easily overheated and restless, or cold and withdrawn
- Confused mind, anxiety, despair
- Lack of joy in the present moment or in simple things
- Difficulty with contacting, and then expressing, authentic self
- Remains on the surface of life, without a sense of deeper meaning
- Scattered energy: excessive talking, laughing, and/or doing
- Lacks focus and discipline to accomplish goals

Exercise

1. Circle all of the above attributes that apply to you now. Pick one that you want to bring toward more balance. What will you do to take the first step?
2. What is your experience of the above symptoms of imbalance? Read Daniel's Story in the Fire Phase section of *Rhythms of Change*. Contemplate and journal: In what ways is this your story too? How do these behaviors serve you? What are you gaining? What are you avoiding? At what cost?

FIRE-BALANCING GUIDELINES

Record in your journal how many days each week you follow the guidelines listed below and note how you feel. Identify the habits that come easily for you and also those you find challenging. The next day, begin practicing the challenging ones to see what happens.

Daily habits

- Stay hydrated
- Be more active during the day and more receptive in the evening
- Get enough sleep, be in bed before 11:00 p.m
- Avoid the heat and stimulating effects of caffeine, alcohol, marijuana
- Calm the heart with slow yoga, soft music, devotional chanting
- Trust life to unfold on its own

CHALLENGE: GROWTH AND MANIFESTATION

To explore the challenge of this phase, notice what the meaning is for you in each of the following suggestions:

- Embrace your dreams
- Tap into your passion
- Unite the wisdom of heart and mind to fully live your life
- Wholeheartedly want to grow and develop your consciousness
- Work diligently to manifest who you are in the world, without overdoing

Exercise

1. Write in a stream of consciousness fashion for 10-20 minutes on this topic. What sensations, images, memories, words come up? Circle the key words that have most meaning to you.
2. List two ways you experience this challenge in your life. What is the first step to facing this challenge?

THE ONE THING: SLEEP

The essential practice to embody the lessons of the Fire phase:

- Be active while the sun is up (the yang part of the day), and slow down and be more receptive as the sun sets (yin time).
- Move or exercise daily to satisfy the body's need for physical activity.
- Eat your last meal of the day by 7:00 pm or two to three hours before sleep so digestion is complete.
- Be sure to include adequate protein and healthy fats at dinner to avoid unstable blood sugar which can interfere with sleep.
- Turn off all devices one to two hours before bed. Bright screens are very stimulating to the mind and may disrupt melatonin, the sleep hormone.

Daily habits

- Begin including the above suggestions for restful sleep, giving yourself at least seven to eight hours of uninterrupted sleep most nights. Record your response to practicing these new behaviors.
- Share your experiences with a friend or family member and ask for their support in developing your new habits.
- After one week, write down what works for you and what does not in your efforts to move toward more restful sleep in your daily life.

PLAY

Making time to play is essential if we want to reclaim our wholeness. Notice what happens as you include the following into your life on a daily or weekly basis:

- Find your ways to lighten up and not take yourself and life so seriously.
- Engage in an activity that connects you to others: music, cards, sports, cooking, etc.
- Go outside and engage with whatever presents itself: birds, wind, dogs, rain, etc.
- Be open to moments of spontaneous laughter and joy.

Practice

1. Name one aspect of yourself, or a person or situation in your life, that would benefit from your play. Share this with a friend and/or in your journal.
2. How will you continue this practice over the next few weeks?

THE FOUR Rs OF FIRE PHASE TRANSFORMATION

REMEMBER the relationships that will support you. Review your relational resources— friends, family, teachers, mentors. Ask one person who respects the qualities of the Fire phase to be your partner for this phase. Talk to this person about what interests you from this phase. Practice accountability to make the contact more effective: Tell your person what you will do with this Water phase wisdom and when you will do it. Then set a date for an email or phone call to stay in relationship for at least three months. When you next contact them, answer this question: *“What did I learn about myself by doing, or not doing, what I agreed to do?”*

REMEMBER and repeat the lessons you have learned in the Fire phase: Expand your capacity for wanting something real and meaningful in your life. Gather your courage to honestly access where you are now and cultivate control to get you where you want to be. Engage your capacity for effort, work, and self-discipline to reach your goals. The inner knowing of the heart is profound wisdom; engage it as well as your rational, analytical mind to reach your goals. Use whatever resonates with you to express yourself, come into relationship with balanced control, feel joy, and manifest your authentic self.

REFLECT: Journal your responses to the following inquiries: What are the most important ideas, feelings, values, and words for you in the Fire phase? What are the challenges for you? The gifts? What are you resisting? How does this serve you? What is the risk to take, the next step? What are you willing to do, and when?

RETURN to yourself, to the body, and to what you know supports the natural joy of the Fire phase. Read the *Protocol for Insomnia* in Part Two of *Rhythms of Change*. If this information resonates with your situation, commit to following the protocol for a week or more. Observe and make note of your responses.

Return to the Earth phase after each season and during transitions to remember those lessons before moving on to the next phase.

Finally, what did you notice about yourself as you worked through your in-depth Fire phase self-study?

THE METAL PHASE

- Autumn
- Energy contracts, moves IN
- Movement is inward, supporting inner reflection
- Time to gather what is valuable from all life experiences and use this energy for spiritual growth
- We sense that loss can be accompanied by the grace of surrender to the wholeness of life

Mark your calendar: Autumn Equinox

Engage the energy

Sit comfortably, letting your body slow down and rest. Close your eyes and imagine your energy contracting IN, away from expansive activity toward more inward reflection. To engage this energy, you may want to think of a time you experienced a loss, an illness, or a longing for something or someone you loved very much. Let your shoulders contract slightly down and in, protecting the lungs and heart. Relax into this posture, continue to breathe fully into your belly, following your energy inward. Feel the boundaries of this contracted space you are in now. Take your time. What is this like for you? Record what you notice.

KNOWING YOUR VALUE

To fully engage with the energy of the Metal phase, keep the following in mind:

- Relationship to inner value and authority, to father or father figure
 - Fathering: Capacity for forging inner strength, sense of identity and self-worth, relationship to the world and to spirit
 - Expand capacity for discrimination: be enriched by true authority AND walk away from anyone who attempts to diminish you
 - Come to know your value and live your life based on your values
1. What is your experience of being fathered? And to authority? Start a list of these experiences, leaving room to add as they come to you.
 2. Give an example of a time you felt valued or valuable and one when you didn't. What were the circumstances that created these experiences?

CENTRAL ISSUE: ATTACHMENT

As we grow up, the father or father figure is the model for us on how to value ourselves in relationship to others and to the world. If we experience a “good enough” father, we forge a sense of inner strength to relate appropriately to the structures, organizations, and outer authority of the

world. As we mature into adults, our responsibility is to claim our own inner authority and live by our values, not needing the constant approval of others. We learn to become deeply attached to and enriched by what we deem valuable—a person, principle, career, or practice and cultivate the strength to grieve losses and let them go.

The following quotes demonstrate the deeper lessons of the Metal phase:

The seed of suffering in you may be strong, but don't wait until you have no more suffering be-fore allowing yourself to be happy...Suffering is not enough. Life is both dreadful and wonder-ful...How can I smile when I am filled with so much sorrow? It is natural—you need to smile to your sorrow because you are more than your sorrow.

—Thich Nhat Hanh

Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love.

—Mother Teresa

Exercise

1. Give an example of a time when you were able to effectively use the energy of attachment.
2. In what habitual ways do you avoid becoming attached, or committed, in your life? Who or what do you need to let go of to move forward in your life now?
3. What is your way to live knowing you are more than your sorrow and to do the small things in your life with great love?

BELIEFS ABOUT SADNESS AND ATTACHMENT

These core beliefs may be unconscious, based on perceptions and experiences from childhood. Awareness of them will loosen their control over your life. Some ways core beliefs about sadness and attachment may manifest in our lives include:

- Denying the fact that things change and end, that life doesn't always feel good
- Staying detached from life to avoid the pain that comes with loving someone or some-thing in this world
- Avoiding our own sadness and that of others, denying ourselves this connection to what is real
- Not cultivating our strength to hold on to what we value and to let go when needed

Exercise

1. Write in a stream-of-consciousness fashion for 10 to 20 minutes about your core beliefs and experiences around sadness and attachment. What sensations, images, memories, words, or teachings come up? Circle the key words that have most meaning to you.
2. How do these beliefs show up in your life? How do they serve you? At what cost?

Daily habits

- Begin your day by repeating one Metal affirmation of your choosing. Example: “I am strong enough to love deeply,” “I am valued, just the way I am,” “My life can be rich even when suffering is present,” “It is okay to be sad.”
- Be attentive to how your core beliefs around sadness and attachment show up in your life. Talk to your loved ones about this issue and ask for their support in helping you to make these beliefs more conscious so they do not control your life.

BEING WITH METAL ENERGY

Sadness allows us to recognize what we value and to feel our own sensitivity. It increases our capacity to accept all of life and to experience our inner strength.

- Turn toward your sadness, loss, and longing and listen to what it has to teach you.
- Feel where this energy is in your body and allow yourself to simply be with it.
- Trust you are strong enough now to feel and experience it fully.
- Allow yourself to also be aware of the beauty of the present moment, allowing both to be true.

Practice

When you know a situation is going to require you to engage balanced attachment or be with sadness, experiment with the following suggestions:

- Role-play with a friend to practice words and body postures that help you access balanced attachment or be with sadness. Now imagine the setting where the interaction will take place: the people, ambient sounds, colors, all the details. Take a deep breath and speak out loud the words you need to say. Imagine possible responses and your reaction to them. Accept that the outcome may not be what you want, but know you have done your part by showing up nevertheless. After the experience, write down what you learned about yourself.

METAL IMBALANCE

How many of the following apply to your current situation?

- Shortness of breath, respiratory allergies, or skin rashes
- Dry skin and mucous membranes
- Frequent and lingering illness, such as colds, coughs, sore throats
- Excessive grief and melancholy or emotionally dry and cold
- Disorganized or needs constant organization/tidiness to feel comfortable
- Difficulty creating structure and maintaining commitments to self and others
- Inability to reflect inwardly and value one’s own experience
- Repeatedly or indiscriminately giving one’s power over to an outer authority

- Difficulty allowing true authority and/or inspiration to further one's life purpose
- Repeated purging of body, objects in home, or relationships or excessive holding on

Exercise

1. Circle all of the above attributes that apply to you now. Pick one that you want to bring toward more balance. What will you do to take the first step?
2. What is your experience of the above symptoms of imbalance? Read *Susan's Story* in the Metal Phase section of *Rhythms of Change*. Contemplate and journal: In what ways is this your story too? How do these behaviors serve you? What are you gaining? What are you avoiding? At what cost?

METAL-BALANCING GUIDELINES

Record in your journal how many days each week you follow the guidelines listed below and note how you feel. Identify the habits that come easily for you and also those you find challenging. The next day, begin practicing the challenging ones to see what happens.

Daily habits

- Consume mainly cooked, warm, moisture-filled foods
- Include adequate healthy fats: coconut oil, avocados, ghee; add coconut oil to hot tea. (Read *Why Fat Matters* in the text, page 182-183.)
- In dry climates or seasons, run a humidifier to keep airways moist
- Avoid cold drinks, cold and raw foods, greasy foods, sugar, dairy, and wheat
- Journal to explore memories, feelings, and thoughts
- Practice meditation and mindful breathing

CHALLENGE: HARVEST AND DECLINE

To explore the challenge of this phase, notice what the meaning is for you in each of the following suggestions:

- Shift your attention to be open to inspiration
- Harvest, or gather, what is valuable in your life
- Let go of what no longer furthers your growth or that of the whole
- Develop the strength to grieve important losses
- Set your focus on wholeness, looking beyond superficial appearances

Exercise

1. Write in a stream of consciousness fashion for 10-20 minutes on this topic. What sensations, images, memories, words come up? Circle the key words that have most meaning to you.

2. List two ways you experience this challenge in your life. What is the first step to facing this challenge?

THE ONE THING: MINDFUL BREATHING

The essential practice to embody the lessons of the Metal phase:

- Follow the breath with your awareness. Breathe into the belly, allowing it to rise. Pause. Breathe out and let the belly deflate. Repeat. Slowly and gently.
- Practice anywhere, anytime. Bring mind and body back to the moment by focusing on your breath.
- “Breathing in, I calm my body. Breathing out, I smile.
- Dwelling in the present moment. I know this is a wonderful moment.”

Daily habits

- Begin incorporating mindful breathing/meditation into your life, building up to 30 minutes on most days. Record your response to practicing these new behaviors.
- Share your experiences with a friend or family member and ask for their support in developing your new habits.
- After one week, write down what works for you and what does not in your efforts to move toward more inward reflection, perspective, and mindfulness in your daily life.

JOURNALING

Allowing time for inward reflection to increase our self-awareness is essential if we want to reclaim our wholeness. Notice what happens as you include the following into your life on a daily or weekly basis:

- Write whatever is on your mind, whatever interests you in the moment
- Get your thoughts, feelings, questions, and insights out to be pondered
- Expand your capacity to witness yourself and others
- Observe your reactions to behaviors and comments, your own and those of others
- What disturbs, irritates, saddens, angers, disappoints, frightens, and inspires you?
- Get curious: What is this really about, what lies beneath your surface reaction?

Practice

1. Name one aspect of yourself, or a person or situation in your life, that would benefit from your journaling. Share this with a friend and/or in your journal.
2. How will you continue this practice over the next few weeks?

THE FOUR Rs OF METAL PHASE TRANSFORMATION

RECEIVE the relationships that will support you. Review your relational resources— friends, family, teachers, mentors. Ask one person who respects the qualities of the Metal phase to be your partner for this phase. Talk to this person about what interests you from this phase. Practice accountability to make the contact more effective: Tell your person what you will do with this Metal phase wisdom and when you will do it. Then set a date for an email or phone call to stay in relationship for at least three months. When you next contact them, answer this question: “What did I learn about myself by do-ing, or not doing, what I agreed to do?”

REMEMBER and repeat the lessons you have learned in the Metal phase: Expand your capacity for looking inward to connect with your inner authority. Cultivate strength to love deeply and to face the sadness, grief, and loss that life brings. Connect to your values and be inspired by the beauty and impermanence in life. Explore what it means to you that we are both spirit and matter, and must accept the limitations of being human to be whole. We have value even when the body is diminished by age, pain, or illness. Shift your awareness to what is being given rather than focusing only on what is unavailable. Use whatever resonates with you to know your value, come into relationship with balanced attachment and sadness, and look beyond superficial appearances to connect more deeply to life and spirit.

REFLECT: Journal your responses to the following inquiries: What are the most important ideas, feelings, values, and words for you in the Metal phase? What are the challenges for you? The gifts? What are you resisting? How does this serve you? What is the risk to take, the next step? What are you willing to do, and when?

RETURN to yourself, to the body, and to what you know supports the natural inspiration of the Metal phase. Read the *Protocol for Improved Immune System Function* in Part Two of *Rhythms of Change*. If this information resonates with your situation, commit to following the protocol for a week or more. Observe and make note of your responses.

Return to the Earth phase after each season and during transitions to remember those lessons before moving on to the next phase.

Finally, what did you notice about yourself as you worked through your in-depth Metal phase self-study?

THE WATER PHASE

- Winter
- Energy contracts, moves down
- The natural world slows, rests, and waits
- We engage in silence, stillness, listening deeply
- We sense the deepest essence of the body, the marrow in our bones, the root of our Being

Mark your calendar: Winter Solstice

Engage the energy

Sit comfortably or lie down. Close your eyes and imagine your energy moving very slowly, down into the deepest recesses of your being. Slowly take a few more breaths, becoming more still and quiet with each breath. Everything is slowing down as you contract down into the essence of who you are and reconnect to the root of your being. There is nothing to do, no effort to be made, nothing to accomplish. You can let go now of all your needs, plans, and ideas. Surrender to simply being. Feel the boundaries of this new space you have created. Take your time. What is this like for you? Record what you notice.

DIVING DEEPLY

To fully engage with the energy of the Water phase, keep the following in mind:

- Turn to the unknown and darkness within, trusting them to teach you
 - Engage in contemplation to face fears and turn them into wisdom
 - Realize it is neither possible nor necessary to resolve all of our deep-seated issues
 - Come into relationship with issues of sexuality, power, money, and death
1. What is your experience of diving deeply within? Start a list of these experiences, leaving room to add more as they come to you.
 2. What are your uncensored feelings and attitudes about sexuality? Power? Money? Death? How congruent are your actions with your feelings? What can you do to come into relationship with these issues?

CENTRAL ISSUE: WILLPOWER

Willpower is an inner force that motivates and gives us strength to stay on the path we set. Most of us use this energy in the pursuit of a goal or success in our outer lives. However, the Water phase teaches us to shift our focus from outward doing to inward being. Here we use willpower to cultivate inner resources—self-knowledge and spiritual wisdom—through contemplation, listening, and other practices. We can believe in our own internal resources if we have cultivated them.

The following quotes demonstrate the deeper lessons of the Water phase:

And there comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, not popular, but he must take it because conscience tells him that it is right.

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

All that is necessary to awaken to yourself as the radiant emptiness of spirit is to stop seeking something more or better or different, and to turn your attention inward to the awake silence that you are.

—Adyashanti

Exercise

1. Give an example of a time when you were able to effectively use the energy of willpower.
2. In what habitual ways do you avoid having power in your life? Who do you give your power away to?
3. What is your way to engage your will to live what your conscience tells you is right and to align yourself with “the radiant emptiness of spirit?”

BELIEFS ABOUT WILL AND POWER

These core beliefs may be unconscious, based on perceptions and experiences from childhood. Awareness of them will loosen their control over your life. Some ways core beliefs about will and power may manifest in our lives include:

- Resisting responsibility, being afraid to dominate or hurt others
- Fearing others, worrying our vulnerability will be used against us
- Letting fear, insecurity, lack of willpower result in inability to take action
- Having a strategy of avoiding conflict and our own power is ineffective to reach goals

Exercise

1. Write in a stream-of-consciousness fashion for 10 to 20 minutes about your core beliefs and experiences around fear and willpower. What sensations, images, memories, words, or teachings come up? Circle the key words that have most meaning to you.
2. How do these beliefs show up in your life? How do they serve you? At what cost?

Daily habits

- Begin your day by repeating one Water affirmation of your choosing. Example: “It is okay to slow down,” “I can allow myself to know,” “I can be afraid and still move forward,” and “Simply being is enough.”

- Be attentive to how your core beliefs around fear and willpower show up in your life. Talk to your loved ones about this issue and ask for their support in helping you to make these beliefs more conscious so they do not control your life.

BEING WITH WATER ENERGY

Fear awakens us, alerts us to danger and pushes us to mobilize our inner resources. The unknown and places of transition are uncomfortable places, so we tend to jump into action to avoid our feelings. Practice the following:

- Do not try to fill up the void; instead, befriend the emptiness and listen deeply to receive dreams, insight, and wisdom.
- Be alert to when circumstances change and doors open, taking you from the familiar into new possibilities.
- Tap into internal power of your self, of being.
- Be patient, as it often takes longer than what we want or expect

Practice

When you know a situation is going to require you to use willpower, experiment with the following suggestions:

- Role-play with a friend to practice words and body postures that help you access your will. Now imagine the setting where the interaction will take place: the people, ambient sounds, colors, all the details. Take a deep breath and speak out loud the words you need to say. Imagine possible responses and your reaction to them. Accept that the outcome may not be what you want, but know you have done your part by showing up nevertheless. After the experience, write down what you learned about yourself.

WATER IMBALANCE

How many of the following apply to your current situation?

- Essence depleted through excess (work, exercise, sex, food, alcohol)
- Makes constant efforts to achieve goals without pausing to enjoy accomplishments
- Suffers weakness in low back, knees, or hearing
- Feels excessive fear, insecurity, and caution or
- Tends to high risk behavior without regard to consequences
- Experiences infertility, poor childhood development, or premature aging
- Lacks stamina, endurance, or motivation
- Avoids facing the unconscious, both its challenges and its wisdom
- Works to develop outer security without cultivating inner resources

- Underestimates consequences of excessive habits until it is too late

Exercise

1. Circle all of the above attributes that apply to you now. Pick one that you want to bring toward more balance. What will you do to take the first step?
2. What is your experience of the above symptoms of imbalance? Read Cindy's Story in the Water Phase section of Rhythms of Change. Contemplate and journal: In what ways is this your story too? How do these behaviors serve you? What are you gaining? What are you avoiding? At what cost?

WATER-BALANCING GUIDELINES

Record in your journal how many days each week you follow the guidelines listed below and note how you feel. Identify the habits that come easily for you and also those you find challenging. The next day, begin practicing the challenging ones to see what happens.

Daily habits

- Do less; say no to nonessential demands
- Schedule pauses throughout the day
- Retreat from outer demands with moments of stillness and silence
- Eat well-cooked root vegetables, greens, and lean protein
- Have a cup of warm water, broth, soup, or tea with meal
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol, sugar, and highly stimulating environments
- Practice rest, restorative yoga, slow walks, qi gong, or other mild exercise

CHALLENGE: STORAGE AND DORMANCY

To explore the challenge of this phase, notice what the meaning is for you in each of the following suggestions:

- Sit in silence with no distractions
- Listen deeply to yourself and to your dreams to access the content stored in the unconscious
- Allow the ways you habitually struggle to arise. Come into relationship with the feelings and beliefs attached to this behavior. When ready, allow yourself to be emptied of all striving
- Die to your old ways of being
- Allow the deep well of being to replenish you

Exercise

1. Write in a stream of consciousness fashion for 10-20 minutes on this topic. What sensations, images, memories, words come up? Circle the key words that have most meaning to you.
2. List two ways you experience this challenge in your life. What is the first step to facing this challenge?

THE ONE THING: REST

The essential practice to embody the lessons of the Water phase:

- Do much less each day, saying no to nonessential activities.
- Schedule pauses in activity about every 90 minutes throughout the day. Take a few minutes to close your eyes and breathe deeply, walk around the office or yard, or get a nutritious snack and glass of water.
- Use restorative yoga, simple stretching, and leisurely walks outside to rest the mind and body.
- Carve out times with no agenda, distractions, devices, or media.

Daily habits

- Begin incorporating unstructured downtime into your life, building up to 30 minutes on most days. Record your response to practicing these new behaviors.
- Share your experiences with a friend or family member and ask for their support in developing your new habits.
- After one week, write down what works for you and what does not in your efforts to move toward more rest, less structure, and fewer demands in your life.

RETREAT

Making time to withdraw from the stress and overwhelming demands of our lives is essential if we want to reclaim our wholeness. Notice what happens as you include the following into your life on a daily or weekly basis:

- Allow solitude
- Listen deeply
- Choose simplicity in meals and activities
- Want nothing for yourself
- Contemplate your inner world
- Surrender effort and be receptive to grace

Practice

1. Name one aspect of yourself, or a person or situation in your life, that would benefit from your retreat. Share this with a friend and/or in your journal.
2. How will you continue this practice over the next few weeks?

THE FOUR Rs OF WATER PHASE TRANSFORMATION

RECEIVE the relationships that will support you. Review your relational resources— friends, family, teachers, mentors. Ask one person who respects the qualities of the Water phase to be your partner for this phase. Talk to this person about what interests you from this phase. Practice accountability to make the contact more effective: Tell your person what you will do with this Water phase wisdom and when you will do it. Then set a date for an email or phone call to stay in relationship for at least three months. When you next contact them, answer this question: “What did I learn about myself by doing, or not doing, what I agreed to do?”

REMEMBER and repeat the lessons you have learned in the Water phase: Expand your capacity for surrender and wanting nothing for yourself. Cultivate the inner strength to go against a culture of constant doing and always wanting to be more, better, or different. Gather your will to look inward and face your issues around power, money, sexuality, and death. Engage your capacity for silence, stillness, and listening deeply to what life wants from you. Use whatever resonates with you to dive deeply, come into relationship with balanced willpower and fear, and surrender to a time of being in your inner world.

REFLECT: Journal your responses to the following inquiries: What are the most important ideas, feelings, values, and words for you in the Water phase? What are the challenges for you? The gifts? What are you resisting? How does this serve you? What is the risk to take, the next step? What are you willing to do, and when?

RETURN to yourself, to the body, and to what you know supports the natural equanimity of the Water phase. Read the *Protocol for Adrenal Fatigue* in Part Two of *Rhythms of Change*. If this information resonates with your situation, commit to following the protocol for a week or more. Observe and make note of your responses.

Return to the Earth phase after each season and during transitions to remember those lessons before moving on to the next phase.

Finally, what did you notice about yourself as you worked through your in-depth Water phase self-study?

CONCLUSION

Many of us are in a hurry to change. We may believe we understand and thus quickly move on to the next thing, eager to take in more sensory or mental stimulation. But this perpetuates the old habit of striving to be more, better, or different in some way.

Instead, allow yourself to simply be with yourself and the wisdom you gleaned from your work with this study guide. Allow the feminine within you and within life to take your hand and sit patiently with you as the transformation occurs from the inside out.

Listen to the heart and cultivate your capacity to receive the relationships and love that life brings to you, in its myriad of forms. Then remember to keep coming back to the relationships and experiences that help guide you toward the wholeness you long to reclaim for yourself and the world. Consciously turn your attention inward, valuing what is happening in the inner world, and reflecting on your relationship to all of it.

I encourage you to return over and over again to your own experience and learning and repeat the practices that call to you. Each time you return, you will be a different person, changed by the experiences and insights you have had, and the ground will be laid for further growth. You can now use your increased capacity for self-awareness as the main tool for expanding your consciousness.

Receiving, remembering, and reflecting will eventually lead to transforming who you are and your capacity to love yourself and the world. And thus we are all returned to ourselves, to our senses, and to the world. May it be so.

If you want additional support, I offer the following services:

- individual coaching
- group mentoring online and in seminars
- online webinars

You may contact me at MarySaundersHealth@gmail.com or through my website:

MarySaundersHealth.com

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