

Prisoner Express

Inner Work/Outer Expression Fall/Winter 2025

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Dear Fellow Creators,

I am excited thinking about the reaction and feedback you will all have to this packet. There is so much in this mailing, and I hope most everything included you find either useful, educational or inspiring. I am Gary and I have been coordinating the Prisoner Express program since it began with a single letter 20+ years ago. The experience of creating this sprawling network of educational programs and shared writings came about from a single letter sent to me from a fellow prisoner. It underlines a most important point. Your words matter, and while your body may be imprisoned, your mind and spirit are always free. A rich internal life can help when the exterior world reflects an environment stressing deprivation. Reading, writing and self reflection is a tried and true way to cultivate a rich interior life. This packet is designed with the aim of encouraging those habits and the enrichment these activities promote. It is a collection of opportunities to explore mind and spirit.

As such, it contains three books: Pema Chodron's *The Places That Scare You*; Wayne Dyer's *The Power of Intention*; and a back issue of *Rattle* poetry magazine. We were most fortunate as we had planned to only send 2 books with this mailing but we approached the Wayne Dyer Foundation and they donated copies of his bestseller *The Power of Intention* to share with you. I am so thankful for the donation of these books from the Wayne Dyer, Pema Chodron and Rattle Foundations.

This accompanying packet contains study guides for the Pema Chodron and Wayne Dyer books. If you complete and return the study guides, we will be happy to send you a certificate of completion. I know some of you value these certificates as it helps with review boards when you display motivation to educate and improve yourself. From my perspective, these study guides are to help you internalize the lessons from the book. If you think keeping the completed guide rather than mailing it to us is better for you, that is fine.

Rather than a study guide, *Rattle* is paired with a letter written by its editor, Tim Green. Tim talks about his love of poetry and uses the included issue of *Rattle* to make his points.

Also included in this packet are two poetry lessons created by PE volunteers who themselves are passionate about poetry. You'll hear from returning poetry mentor Kaitlyn as well as Vanessa who also contacted me with interest in creating content for you. Kaitlyn and Vanessa are on opposite sides of America - east coast and west - and have never communicated and I am impressed at how dialed in they are to poetry: Writing, analyzing, and interpreting. There are separate lessons from each of them, and yet

reading their individual efforts lets me see they are cut from the same cloth when it comes to their appreciation of the power of poetry. If you have responses you'd like to send I will share all responses with both of them so they can begin collaborating on a future poetry packet. If you send poems that are responses to a prompt/lesson either of them present, let us know what you are responding to. I hope we can include some of the submitted examples in a future mailing.

You'll also find Tara's piece on meditation and refuge. **Tara, the longtime contributor to our PE meditation program, has included her thoughts on spirituality through meditation** as well as an invitation to take refuge with a Rimpoché. Please note Tara includes a mailing address where you can respond to her directly.

Some of you may be wondering why we sent this packet to you. Many of you signed up for the packet in our Summer '25 newsletter; others have written to us since the newsletter was mailed and wanted to know more about the PE program. The next newsletter won't be mailed out until March, and rather than have you wait to hear from us, I have included you in this mailing. I figured this would be a nice way to introduce new people to the kinds of programming we do. When you receive the next newsletter, you will then have your choice of programs that you can join.

Others of you have written to us and asked for our customized book package program, but were unable to enclose funds to help offset the cost of mailing books. (We ask you to help pay the postage costs for our book mailings.) I figured you might enjoy this packet, which I have the funds to mail, rather than not getting anything from us. If you want a customized book package the only way we can guarantee it is if you send some funds to help with mailing. Sometimes we have extra funds and will send packages without your contribution to postage, but mostly not. This seems like a win-win as you are getting some valuable reading material, though it may not be what you hoped for. If you don't want the books,

please donate them to your unit library. My guess is that these books have the potential to be life-altering for a number of readers, and I hope you find value in them.

You all make this happen by your participation in the programs. For example, after Tim Green at *Rattle* read some of the poetry you all had submitted to PE, *Rattle* started giving us 500 copies of their magazine every 6 months to distribute to you. He was moved and wanted to support you in your passion for poetry, and began donating not only *Rattle* but also the funds to mail it to you. Your words inspired him as they continue to inspire me.

If you find any or all of the books included in this mailing helpful, please send me a letter letting me know of your experience and the value you found. I will share it with the different foundations that have donated books. I want them to understand the transformative and life-affirming nature of their gifts. As always, I also ask for your feedback on our programs and suggestions on how we can improve.

Happy Holidays,

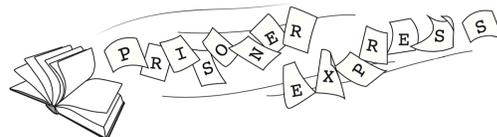
Gary

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Letter from Rattle Magazine Editor Tim Green

Hi Everyone-

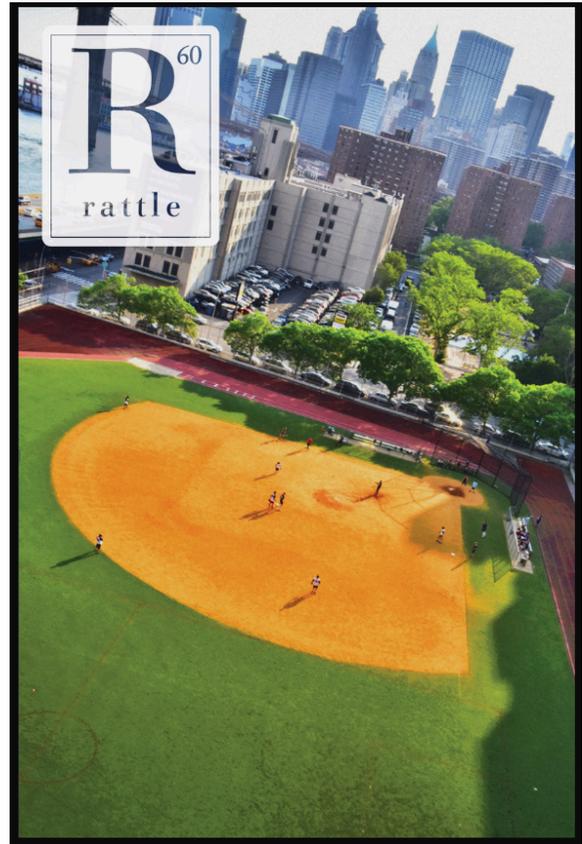
Tim Green here with another issue of *Rattle* to share. Our summer 2018 issue featured a tribute to athlete-poets, including a former NBA star, a current NFL tight end, and one of my personal favorite poets, former semi-pro basketball player (and Pulitzer Prize-winner) Stephen Dunn.

It was a memorable pilgrimage visiting Stephen Dunn earlier that winter. He lived in Frostburg, Maryland, a small town in the middle of nowhere in the western part of the state. I flew in to Pittsburgh, planning to rent a small car and drive south through the rolling hills - but with snow in the forecast, I upgraded to an SUV, and it was a good thing, because several inches had come down before I pulled into his long farmhouse driveway. At 78 years old, Stephen had already long-suffered from Parkinson's disease and trembled as he moved - but that didn't stop him from challenging me to a ping-pong match before our interview. His wife jumped in and said that he was joking, but I wasn't so sure. When we finally sat down to the interview, it quickly became one of the most informative conversations I've had about poetry. Stephen was still sharp as a tac - and as a poet who put as much practice into his poetry as he did his free-throw shooting, he was full of insight. Anyway, I hope you enjoy.

As we take a look at this issue, I'd like you to think about the concept of poetic concision - that is, packing as much detail into as few words possible. It doesn't seem like much to ask someone to read a poem, but time is a kind of currency, and attention spans are shorter than ever before. The ability to pack huge stories and big ideas into a tiny space of language is what makes poetry special, and it becomes all the more special when we really lean into that.

First, let's look at "Allurement" by Athena Kirkagaard. The poet tells a short story here -

her son calls to tell her about the rabbits he had to kill. Athena could elaborate on why her son was raising rabbits, why they had to be killed, other animals he'd raised in the past, where he was living and why they were only communicating by phone ... the larger story swirling around this very small story spiraling out in any number of ways and distances. Yet the poet remains focused only on the details that matter - how her son held the rabbits close, and the conclusion she drew from what she heard over the phone. It's a poem that asks very little of the reader - we're never lost, we always know we're inside a phone call between a mother and son. We're never given any unnecessary dialogue. It's a poem that goes right to the heart of things - and that's why we feel it as having so much heart.



Another example of a concise poem is "Midnight Lazaruses" by Chaun Ballard. While Athena Kildagaard used simple, basic language to share her brief story, Chaun takes it one step further, using figurative language to make the poem even more tight in its punch. First, in the title itself, Chaun refers to him and his friends as

“Midnight Lazaruses” – referencing their being “raised from the dead” by comparing them to Lazarus, so he doesn’t have to elaborate. He then moves through a few quick, sharp images, being “married to blacktop” and “a ball drops” – making a container for his experience, and the profound impact basketball had on his life.

Lastly, let’s look at one of my favorite poems in the issue, “Winter’s Blues” by Bro. Yao. In just 9 lines, he tells three stories that each embody the mood of the title – that cold despair we sometimes feel in the heart of winter. Speaking symbolically, the poet continues to use specificity even when he’s exploring the abstract, bringing to life brief images like “the warm windows of the rich man’s house.”

My assignment to you, if you choose to accept it: Find an old poem of yours and see how much you can strip it down to its essence. What parts of the story don’t have to be told, while everything remains clear? Cut everything extraneous, leaving only the most symbolically significant and necessary images. We always talk about poems having a “punch” and that metaphor extends well – the tighter the fist, the harder it hits. How tight can you make your poem?

If you send any new submissions to Rattle, please note our new address: **Rattle, PO Box 131447, Spring, TX 77393.**

As always, there is no need to include a self-addressed return envelope. While we read and appreciate all submissions, we can’t reply to them all through the mail. If we choose to accept a poem for publication, we’ll write to you with our own paper and postage, so please save yours. But do feel free to send poems any time.

Best wishes,

Tim

Roots & Wings: Writing Your World

By *Vanessa 1134*

Welcome to *Roots & Wings: Writing Your World*, a workshop designed to explore where you come from, who you are, and who you want to become. In this course, we will use poetry as a tool to reflect, imagine, and transform, grounding ourselves in memory and identity while discovering ways to let our voices soar.

Each section of this course will focus on a different aspect of poetry: capturing vivid images, reclaiming your personal history, and experimenting with sound and rhythm. Through analysis of selected poems and guided exercises, you will have opportunities to refine your own voice, experiment with language, and explore your world in new ways.

Whether this is your first time writing poetry or you’ve been writing for years, this workshop is meant to be a space for honest expression, creative risk-taking, and reflection. As you move through each section, remember that poetry doesn’t require perfection! Just a willingness to see the extraordinary in everyday life. Keep an open mind, be patient with yourself, and allow the words to guide you.

Before we dive in, a little bit about me: I’m **Vanessa**, and I’ve loved poetry for as long as I can remember. I’m fascinated by the way a few words can capture a memory, a feeling, or a world, and I love exploring how poets craft their work. More than anything, I believe that everyone has a voice worth hearing, and that poetry is a safe place to find it, shape it, and let it grow—even amidst uncertainty.

Lesson 1: Imagery

Writing What We See, Writing What We Feel

What is Imagery in Poetry, and Why Does it Matter? At its most basic level, imagery means language that appeals to the five senses: sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell. But in poetry, imagery does more than just describe. It shapes how we experience the poem. A single image can open a doorway into memory, emotion, or imagination. Strong imagery makes abstract emotions tangible. Instead of saying “I was sad,” a poet might write, “I carried rainwater in my chest.” The image doesn’t just tell us about sadness—it lets us *feel* it.

Imagery also works on multiple levels:

- Concrete: sensory description we can picture clearly.
- Symbolic: images that carry deeper meaning, often cultural or personal.
- Transformative: images that shift or evolve, creating tension or surprise.

To add complexity:

- Build atmosphere: Use language that sets a tone of mystery, warmth, hope.
- Layer emotion: A single image can hold contradictions—a wilting flower may suggest both beauty and decay.
- Invite participation: Because images are open to interpretation, they encourage readers to bring their own associations and memories.

The same image can carry countless meanings depending on how a poet frames it. Take the image of a **wound**. What does it make you think of? Well, Rumi once referred to the wound as “*the place where the Light enters you.*” Federico García Lorca saw it differently, writing that “*...in trying to heal that wound that never heals, lies the strangeness, the inventiveness of a man’s work.*” And in “The Beauty of The Husband,” Anne Carson had yet another angle, writing “*A wound gives off its own light / surgeons say. / If all the lamps in the house were turned out / you could dress this wound / by what shines from it.*” Here, the wound is almost luminous, a source of its own strange brightness.

What these examples show is that a single image can unfold into wildly different moods, tones, and meanings—spiritual, tragic, inventive, or even

strangely beautiful. Imagery is constantly alive with possibility, shaped by the poet’s vision and the reader’s interpretation.

When poets use imagery with precision, they give us not just a picture, but an entire emotional world. Imagery is the foundation of how poetry communicates. By embodying emotions in sensory detail, imagery creates intimacy between poet and reader. A well-chosen image both describes and transports.

Example Poem:

Lines Written in Early Spring

By William Wordsworth

I heard a thousand blended notes,
While in a grove I sate¹ reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

To her fair works did Nature link
The human soul that through me ran;
And much it grieved my heart to think
What man has made of man.

Through primrose tufts, in that green bower,
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;
And ’tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopped and played,
Their thoughts I cannot measure:—
But the least motion which they made
It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fan,
To catch the breezy air;
And I must think, do all I can,
That there was pleasure there.

If this belief from heaven be sent,
If such be Nature’s holy plan,
Have I not reason to lament
What man has made of man?

¹ the old-fashioned past tense of “sit.”

Analysis:

“A thousand blended notes”

→ Begins with music, showing how sound imagery can immerse readers in a mood of harmony, which then sets up a contrast for the later sadness.

“The periwinkle trailed its wreaths”

→ A simple visual image of a flower creeping along the ground. But by using “wreaths,” Wordsworth suggests not just growth but also ceremonial or funerary associations, adding complexity to the image.

“The budding twigs spread out their fan, / To catch the breezy air;”

→ Wordsworth personifies the twigs as if they were conscious beings opening a fan, actively reaching to “catch” the breeze. Instead of just saying “the branches moved in the wind,” he gives us a vivid visual that turns a simple observation of spring growth into something alive and animated.

“What man has made of man”

→ Not imagery itself, but notice how the vivid natural details build up to this cry. Without the beautiful flowers and birds, the statement would feel abstract. The imagery makes the grief hit harder.

Writing Exercise: An Image Poem

1. Make a quick list of five images from your memory. Try to choose vivid, specific ones. *Examples:* the hum of fluorescent lights, a crooked plastic comb, etc.
2. Choose some of these images and expand them into a poem. Write at least 8 lines that build around this image. What is the image's backstory? What is going on? What does this image look like? Feel like? Smell like? Taste like? Use your senses!
3. Try one (or as many as you'd like!) of these approaches:
 - a. Write a poem where the image *transforms* (the lights turn off, or the comb transforms into a crown).
 - b. Write a poem where two images are *juxtaposed*, or *contrasted* (the hum of the light with the sound of a heartbeat).
 - c. Write a poem where the same image reappears in different ways throughout the poem.

Lesson 2:

“Someday I’ll Love” Poems

Direct Address, Memory, and Transformation

The “Someday I’ll Love” poem is a specific form in contemporary American poetry in which the poet addresses themselves, often using their full name, in a letter-like, intimate meditation. It often combines memory, desire, and hope, imagining a future in which self-compassion or acceptance is possible. The self-addressed form’s lineage begins with Frank O’Hara, who was later used as inspiration for Roger Reeves’ Poem “Someday I’ll Love Roger Reeves.” Building on Reeves, Ocean Vuong popularized the form with his piece “Someday I’ll Love Ocean Vuong.” Here is Vuong’s poem below:

Example poem:

Someday I’ll Love Ocean Vuong Ocean Vuong²

After Frank O’Hara / After Roger Reeves

Ocean, don’t be afraid.
The end of the road is so far ahead
it is already behind us.
Don’t worry. Your father is only your father
until one of you forgets. Like how the spine
won’t remember its wings
no matter how many times our knees
kiss the pavement. Ocean,
are you listening? The most beautiful part
of your body is wherever
your mother’s shadow falls.
Here’s the house with childhood
whittled down to a single red tripwire.
Don’t worry. Just call it horizon
& you’ll never reach it.
Here’s today. Jump. I promise it’s not
a lifeboat. Here’s the man
whose arms are wide enough to gather
your leaving. & here the moment,
just after the lights go out, when you can still see
the faint torch between his legs.
How you use it again & again
to find your own hands.
You asked for a second chance

² Fun fact: Ocean Vuong was the first poet whose writing I fell in love with and the reason I began writing poetry!

& are given a mouth to empty into.
Don't be afraid, the gunfire
is only the sound of people
trying to live a little longer. Ocean. Ocean,
get up. The most beautiful part of your body
is where it's headed. & remember,
loneliness is still time spent
with the world. Here's
the room with everyone in it.
Your dead friends passing
through you like wind
through a wind chime. Here's a desk
with the gimp leg & a brick
to make it last. Yes, here's a room
so warm & blood-close,
I swear, you will wake—
& mistake these walls
for skin.

Analysis:

“Like how the spine / won't remember its wings / no matter how many times our knees / kiss the pavement.”

→ A layered metaphor, comparing the human body to a bird's, mixing anatomy (spine) with prayer (knees on pavement). It expresses both longing and limitation: the body once had freedom but forgets, capturing both devotion and loss in one image.

“Loneliness is still time spent / with the world.”

→ Offers a radical reimagining of isolation, shifting it from absence to presence and connection with the world.

“Your dead friends passing / through you like wind / through a wind chime.”

→ A beautiful, vivid image of grief, suggesting both haunt and beauty in loss. In this form, you are simultaneously the speaker, subject, and audience. By addressing yourself—naming your full name, your body, or your experiences—you claim your story, confront your pain, and imagine a transformed self. It is both confessional and aspirational, allowing poets to explore who they were, who they are, and who they hope to become.

How Does a “Someday I’ll Love” Poem Work?

- Direct Address: Speak directly to yourself, often using your full name.
- Acknowledging Struggle: Identify aspects of yourself you have struggled with—your body, mind, or past experiences.
- Imagining Possibility: The “Someday” sets the poem in a future of self-compassion, healing, or love.
- Using Concrete Images: Pair emotions with tangible sensory details to make them real.
- Layering Memory and Aspiration: Connect who you were with who you hope to become.

Writing Exercise: “Someday I’ll Love [Your Full Name]”

Write a love poem to yourself that takes the form of “Some Day I’ll Love [insert your full name].” Use this framework as an opportunity to explore questions such as:

- What do I blame myself for?
- What parts of myself have I neglected, ignored, or silenced?
- What do I feel separated from—my body, my memories, my community?
- What attaches me to the world, even when I feel isolated?
- How would I speak to my past self? To my future self?
- What does hope feel like in my body or memory?

Optional challenge: Extend the poem into a dialogue with your past self or a future self, imagining compassion, forgiveness, or transformation.

Lesson 3: Sound and Rhythm in Poetry The Music of the Mouth

Before poems lived on the page, they lived in the body. Poetry began as chant, song, and speech—passed from mouth to ear. Slam poetry, spoken word, and performance all remind us of this: a poem is meant both to be read and to be heard.

Sound carries emotion before meaning even arrives. Rhythm can persuade, soothe, provoke, or move. It's what makes a poem memorable long after its words are gone.

How Do Poets Create Music?

1.) Repetition

Repetition builds emotional momentum. Each return of a phrase adds weight and new meaning.

Example: *The walls are too close, too close, too close.*

→ Each “too close” creates a confining and almost suffocating atmosphere.

2.) Alliteration and Assonance

Alliteration (repetition of consonants) and assonance (repetition of vowels) make poems sound alive. They create texture, mood, and flow.

Example: *Soft sand slipped through my silent fingers*, or *The long, low road hums home*.

→ The repeating s or o sounds create musical texture—whispery in the first, heavy and humming in the second.

3.) Rhythm and Line Breaks

Rhythm is the poem's heartbeat—a pattern of beats, breaths, and pauses.

Example: *Don't stop now—
the road
keeps singing your name.*

→ The line breaks move like a voice, with tension, pause, and release.

4.) Internal Rhyme

Rhyme doesn't just belong at the end of lines. When it appears inside, it keeps the sound flowing and unites images.

Example: “*The night was tight with light and laughter.*”

→ The echoes of night/tight/light make the lines bounce and twist with rhythm.

5.) Antimetabole (Reversal)

This structure flips a phrase to create symmetry and emphasis. It's powerful in slam and spoken poems because it lands like a revelation or change of thought. Perhaps the most common example of this is “All that glitters is not gold; not all gold glitters.”

Another example:

*You cage me to protect me,
I break free to protect you.*

→ The repetition-with-reversal creates tension and surprise: sound and meaning working together

Example Poem: I encourage you to read it first on the page. Then, speak it aloud.

Still I Rise

By Maya Angelou

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own backyard.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

Analysis:

"You may write me down in history / With your bitter, twisted lies,"

→ The "b" and "t" sounds create a biting rhythm — harsh consonants mirroring the bitterness of false history. The phrase "write me down" has a heavy beat, like the stamping of authority, while the next line twists that rhythm, subverting it with indignation.

"You may trod me in the very dirt / But still, like dust, I'll rise."

→ Notice the pulsing rhythm of "trod me in the very dirt." The stressed syllables (TROD, DIRT) echo footsteps — a sound of oppression. Then "But still, like dust, I'll rise" lifts rhythmically, the "i" sound in "still" and "rise" stretching upward — a sonic mirror of defiance.

"Just like moons and like suns, / With the certainty of tides,"

→ Here, the rhythm turns cyclical, mirroring natural patterns. The repetition of "like" and the gentle stress on "moons" and "suns" creates a steady, tidal cadence — like breathing, or waves. The line sounds inevitable, matching the imagery of nature's certainty.

"You may shoot me with your words, / You may cut me with your eyes,"

→ Parallelism creates rhythm. The repetition of "You may..." drives the momentum like a drumbeat. The verbs (shoot, cut, kill) sharpen the sound — each line lands with force.

"I rise / I rise / I rise"

→ The line repeats three times at the end, creating a mantra-like rhythm. Each "I rise" lands firmly. The repetition mirrors the persistence of resilience: rising once may not be enough, but rising again and again creates momentum and power.

Writing Exercise: Writing Your Own Rhythmic Rising Poem.

The goal of this exercise is to explore repetition, rhythm, and sound — just like Maya Angelou does in "Still I Rise."

Step 1: Choose Your Refrain

Pick a short line or phrase that expresses strength, hope, or defiance. This will be the backbone of your poem — your "I rise."

Examples:

- "I stand / I stand / I stand"
- "I keep moving"
- "My voice will not be silenced"

Step 2: Build Rhythm

- Repeat your refrain at least three times throughout your poem.
- Play with line breaks to create pauses or tension.

- Read it aloud! Let the rise and fall of your voice shape the rhythm and format.

Step 3: Add Sound Devices

- Include alliteration (repeating consonants): “**S**trong, **s**teady, **s**hining”
- Include assonance (repeating vowels): “I **br**eathe **d**eep, **f**ree, and **m**e”

Optional: try a reversal/antimetabole to make a line land powerfully:

Step 4: Extend the Poem

- Add 2–4 lines before or after your refrain that show why you rise. These could describe challenges, memories, or hopes.

Keep reading aloud — the poem should sound alive in your voice, not just look right on the page!

Step 5: Reflection

After writing, ask yourself:

- How did repetition change the meaning of my refrain?
- How did line breaks or rhythm affect the emotion of the poem?
- What happens when I hear my own voice saying these words out loud?

Lesson 4: Tension & Contrast

The Art of Juxtaposition in Poetry

Poetry doesn’t have to choose between beauty and pain, light and dark, or hope and despair. Often, the most powerful poems hold both at once. They add complexity by allowing all to coexist at once: how love exists right beside fear, how joy rises even in ruin.

When opposites meet, we pay attention.

Key Techniques

1.) Juxtaposition (Direct Contrast): Placing two unlike ideas or images side by side to highlight their difference or to suggest a hidden connection. Example: “*The laughter of children / against the siren’s wail.*”

2.) Paradox: A statement that seems contradictory but reveals a deeper truth. Example: “*Parting is such sweet sorrow.*”

3.) Antithesis: A balanced structure that sets two opposing ideas in symmetry. Example: “*We live to die, and die to live.*”

4.) Tone Shifts: A change in mood or voice that mirrors internal conflict. Example: A poem begins with celebration and ends in grief, or vice versa.

5.) Symbolic Contrast: Using imagery or recurring symbols to represent opposing forces — e.g. water vs. fire, dawn vs. dusk, silence vs. noise. Example: “*Her voice was a candle / in the storm of my doubt.*”

Example Poem:

Mirror
Sylvia Plath

I am silver and exact. I have no preconceptions.
Whatever I see I swallow immediately
Just as it is, unmisted by love or dislike.
I am not cruel, only truthful—
The eye of a little god, four-cornered.

Most of the time I meditate on the opposite wall.

It is pink, with speckles. I have looked at it so long

I think it is a part of my heart. But it flickers.
Faces and darkness separate us over and over.

Now I am a lake. A woman bends over me,
Searching my reaches for what she really is.
Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon.

I see her back, and reflect it faithfully.
She rewards me with tears and an agitation of hands.

I am important to her. She comes and goes.
Each morning it is her face that replaces the darkness.

In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me
an old woman
Rises toward her day after day, like a terrible fish.

Analysis:

“I am silver and exact. I have no preconceptions.”

→ The mirror speaks with authority, claiming objectivity. Contrast: precision vs. emotion — a non-human voice expressing human truth.

“A woman bends over me, / Searching my reaches for what she really is.”

→ External reflection becomes internal exploration, exploring the mirror/lake as a metaphor for memory and identity.

“Now I am a lake.”

→ Here, it shifts from the fixed mirror to fluid water, a subtle transformation that explores the instability, emotion, and depth of reflection.

“In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old woman / Rises toward her... like a terrible fish.”

→ Central contrast: youth vs. age, beauty vs. decay, surface vs. depth. The “terrible fish” is an image of truth that horrifies — a paradoxical self-recognition.

Why This Works

Plath’s poem uses contrast not only as a theme but as a structure:

- Stillness vs. movement (mirror → lake)
- Truth vs. illusion (mirror vs. moon/candles)
- Youth vs. aging (girl vs. old woman)

Through these contrasts, she explores how identity changes — how what we see and what we feel may never fully align. The mirror becomes both an external surface and an inner voice all at once.

Writing Exercise: “Two Worlds in One Poem”

1. Think of two feelings that seem opposite:
 - Anger vs love
 - Despair vs hope
 - Loneliness vs connection.
2. Write two stanzas:
 - In the first, describe the darker or harder truth.
 - In the second, write about what keeps you going anyway — what is still beautiful, worth saving, or worth loving.

Let both parts belong in the same poem. Don’t try to fix one with the other.

3. End with a line that holds both — something like:
“It’s still broken, but I call it home.”
“The window’s cracked, but the light gets in.”

Conclusion:

That wraps up this poetry lesson! I hope at least something in here resonated with you. I firmly believe—even if naively—that writing is one of the few ways we can rebuild the world from the inside out. It’s proof that our minds can create, that we can still make beauty from what’s been broken. I encourage you to keep writing, and if you’d like, send letters to me, **Vanessa 1134** (please include my number!). I would also love to hear your feedback on this packet.

The world needs what only you can say.

A Winter Walk in Poetry

By Kaitlin 987

Poetry, at its heart, is a way of paying exact attention—especially in winter, when the world pares itself down to line, light, and breath.

Here, you'll read short seasonal poems (or brief excerpts), study how they work, and practice the same moves in your own writing. We'll focus on four craft lenses: imagery, tone, lineation, and sound, with each paired with a winter poem, close reading, and guided exercises. Thank you for reading! I hope you enjoy and happy writing!

Lesson 1: Image as Revelation

Why it matters. In winter, detail does the heavy lifting: a hedge rimed with hoarfrost, a single bird against a pewter sky. Precise images don't just decorate; they discover meaning.

The Darkling Thrush

By Thomas Hardy

I leant upon a coppice gate
When Frost was spectre-grey,
And Winter's dregs made desolate
The weakening eye of day.
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky
Like strings of broken lyres,
And all mankind that haunted nigh
Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to be
The Century's corpse outleant,
His crypt the cloudy canopy,
The wind his death-lament.
The ancient pulse of germ and birth
Was shrunken hard and dry,
And every spirit upon earth
Seemed fervourless as I.

At once a voice arose among
The bleak twigs overhead
In a full-hearted evensong
Of joy illimited;
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,
In blast-beruffled plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carolings
Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things
Afar or nigh around,
That I could think there trembled through
His happy good-night air
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
And I was unaware.

Hardy's "The Darkling Thrush" opens on a barren winter scene that the speaker reads as a sign of cultural exhaustion at century's end. Midway, an old thrush sings with unexpected joy, introducing the possibility of renewal. The bird's "full-hearted evensong" and the speaker's mention of "blessed Hope" suggest a religious dimension, though the poem also allows a simpler reading: the song lifts a bleak mood. Whether this hope is real or merely wished for remains unresolved—and that tension is the poem's point.

So, how does Hardy do this? He uses a progression of images that work together to set the mood and meaning of this winter piece.

- Use of imagery: Hardy opens with plain, cold visuals: frost, gray light, bare vines, a "cloudy canopy" of sky. These concrete details let you feel weariness before anyone says "I'm weary." The landscape carries the mood for the speaker. Specific objects (ice, dead vines, weak sun) make the poem's sadness believable without explaining it.
- Framing the lens: Again and again, the poem's "camera" points up—stems "score" the sky; the day is a "weakening eye"; clouds form a canopy. That upward framing makes emptiness feel big and public (not just in the speaker's head) and quietly sets a spiritual tone (evening light, high dome of sky).
- Changing images: Hardy ends with "some blessed Hope ... whereof he knew / And I was unaware." The poem doesn't prove anything; it shows a bird singing in a cold world and lets that image suggest renewal—maybe spiritual, maybe just emotional.

Takeaway: The poem advances from despair to openness, not certainty, and it does so through what we see and hear.

Overall: Hardy doesn't argue; he swaps images. A stripped winter sky teaches us fatigue; a single bird's song re-teaches the same scene as possible renewal. Imagery is the engine: it sets the mood, primes the turn, and carries the meaning change.

Now you try it on for size:

1. Inventory: List five winter specifics
2. Bridge: For each, add on a conceptual echo using like/as if (e.g., "salt whitening black boots like a tired chalk line that won't hold").
3. Compose: Build an 8–12 line poem that stays in the eye-first mode (writing about what the speaker of the poem may be seeing) for two stanzas, then admit one surprising thing in stanza three. Let the image change carry the emotional turn—no abstract summary. Let the images do the work for you!

Lesson 2: Compression and White Space

When we read Kay Ryan's "Winter Fear" we encounter a poem that feels both packed tight and full of air. Ryan is known for her compressed style—short lines, minimal punctuation, and poems that seem to hold more than their size should allow. This compression creates intensity, but the white space around the words gives us room to breathe and think. Together, these elements teach us that poetry isn't just about what we say—it's about how much we leave unsaid.

Why Compression Matters

- It forces every word to earn its place, making language precise and powerful.
- It creates density of meaning—each line can be read multiple ways.
- It respects the reader's intelligence, trusting them to fill in gaps.
- The white space becomes part of the poem's rhythm and meaning.

Winter Fear

by Kay Ryan

Is it just winter
or is this worse.
Is this the year
when outer damp
obscures a deeper
curse that spring
can't fix, when
gears that turn
the earth won't
shift the view,
when clouds won't
lift though all
the skies go blue.

Analysis: The Architecture of Compression

Ryan's poem is structured as a single spiraling question that never quite resolves. Notice that it ends with a period, not a question mark—the speaker has moved from asking to stating, from

uncertainty to dread. This is winter fear: the terror that this time, the darkness won't lift.

The apostrophe here is subtle but powerful. The speaker addresses herself (or us, or anyone caught in this moment of doubt), asking "Is it just winter / or is this worse." By framing the poem as a series of questions, Ryan creates the intimacy of someone talking themselves through anxiety, checking and rechecking reality. We're overhearing an internal conversation with fear itself.

For context: apostrophe is the poetic technique of directly addressing someone or something that cannot respond—such as a dead person, an abstract idea, an animal, or an inanimate object—creating a sense of intimacy and emotional urgency.

Look at how the line breaks create multiple meanings:

- "outer damp / obscures a deeper / curse" breaks after "damp" and "deeper," making us pause on the surface condition before descending to what lies beneath
- "curse that spring / can't fix" splits "spring" from its inability to heal, creating a moment of hope (spring!) before crushing it
- "gears that turn / the earth won't / shift the view" can be read as "gears that turn the earth" (the planet's mechanics) or "gears that turn / the earth won't shift" (the gears won't turn at all)

This last example shows Ryan's compression at its most powerful: the line break creates grammatical ambiguity. Are the gears still turning but failing to help? Or have they stopped entirely? Both readings exist simultaneously.

The poem's form mirrors its content. Ryan compresses winter depression into 13 short lines—there's no room to breathe, no space for relief. Each line break is a gasp, a pause in the spiral of anxious questioning. Yet the white space around the poem gives visual relief that the content denies: we can see the poem is small, contained, even as the fear inside it feels infinite.

Exercise: Compression and Expansion

Take "Winter Fear" and rewrite it in three different ways:

1. Expand it: Rewrite the poem with longer lines and more explicit connections. Add conjunctions, articles, explanatory phrases. What's gained? What's lost?
2. Compress further: Can you say the same thing in even fewer words? Try cutting it to 8-10 lines.
3. Rearrange the breaks: Keep Ryan's words but break the lines in completely different places. How does this change the reading experience?

Then write your own compressed poem (10-16 lines) about a fear or anxiety that feels private and isolating—something "no one else / notices but you." Use short lines and strategic breaks. Let the white space be part of the poem's breathing.

Reflection Questions:

- How does compression create a sense of the speaker's isolation in "Winter Fear"?
- Where do you feel the poem most powerfully using line breaks to control your reading pace?
- What does it mean that this very private fear is addressed directly as "you"—is Ryan speaking to the fear, to herself, or to us?

Lesson 3: Sound and Repetition

Now let's move onto another poem. When we read Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," we might first notice its famous last lines, repeated like an incantation. But the entire poem is built on patterns of sound—rhyme, rhythm, and repetition working together to create a hypnotic effect. This musicality isn't decoration; it's essential to the poem's meaning. The sounds lull us into the same trance the speaker experiences, standing alone in the winter dark. For readers and writers alike, listening to how a poem sounds—reading it aloud, feeling its rhythms—reveals layers of meaning that silent reading might miss.

Why Sound and Repetition Matter

- They create mood and atmosphere through music.
- They can reinforce or work against the poem's literal meaning.
- They make poems memorable, giving them an incantatory or spell-like quality.
- Repetition can suggest obsession, ritual, or the struggle to move forward.

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

by Robert Frost

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

Analysis: The Music of Obligation

Frost builds this poem on an intricate rhyme scheme: AABA BBCB CCDC DDDD. Notice how each stanza's third line introduces a new rhyme that will anchor the next stanza, except the final stanza, which closes in on itself with four lines rhyming together. This formal tightening mirrors the speaker's psychological transition from temptation to resolution.

The repetition of the final line—"And miles to go before I sleep"—is the poem's most powerful moment. But we must ask: why repeat it?

The first instance feels like a simple statement of fact: I have obligations, I must continue. But the second transforms "sleep" into something larger, more final. Is this just physical sleep, or the deeper sleep of death? The repetition creates ambiguity through emphasis—by saying it twice, Frost makes us question what we thought we understood. The line becomes both a reminder of duty and an acknowledgment of weariness, perhaps even a death wish barely held at bay.

This is apostrophe in a subtle form: the speaker talks to himself, reasoning his way out of the woods' seductive darkness. "But I have promises to keep" is an argument against staying, against disappearing into that lovely, dark, deep place. The woods themselves become an entity being refused—a siren call that must be answered with obligation.

Look at how the sound patterns work:

- The soft consonants and long vowels of "lovely, dark and deep" are hypnotic, inviting—the music enacts the temptation
- "Promises to keep" has harder sounds, more percussive—the music stiffens into resolve
- The horse's "harness bells" provide the only sharp sound in the poem, a wake-up call against the muffling snow

Exercise: Sound as Meaning

1. Read aloud: Read the poem three times aloud. On the third reading, notice where you naturally pause or slow down. Where does the sound make you want to linger? Where does it push you forward?

2. Break the pattern: Rewrite the final stanza without repetition. End it after "And miles to go before I sleep" with a new fourth line of your choosing. How does removing the repetition change the poem's meaning and emotional impact?

3. Change the rhyme: Keep Frost's words but break the lines differently to disrupt the rhyme scheme. What happens when you destroy the music?

Then write your own poem (12-16 lines) about a moment of temptation or hesitation—a time you wanted to stop, stay, or give up but couldn't. Use a consistent rhyme scheme (it doesn't have to be as complex as Frost's) and repeat one line or phrase. Let the repetition do emotional work: does it suggest obsession, reluctance, determination, or something else?

Reflection Questions:

- Why does Frost choose to personify the horse? What does it mean that the animal shows more common sense than the human?

- How does the rhyme scheme's tightening in the final stanza (DDDD) create a sense of closure or inevitability?

- What is the relationship between sound/music and danger in this poem? How does beauty become threatening?

- If "sleep" can mean death, what are the "promises" that keep us in life? Does Frost ever tell us explicitly, or does the ambiguity matter?

Lesson 4: Enjambment and Syntax

When we read Kathleen Jamie's "The Dipper," we encounter a poem that moves like the bird it describes—darting, precise, sometimes surprising us mid-flight. Jamie uses enjambment (the continuation of a sentence across line breaks without punctuation) to create a flowing, almost breathless quality. But she also knows when to stop us short. The way a poem's syntax (sentence structure) interacts with its line breaks can create tension, surprise, or grace. Learning to notice where sentences end and where lines break—and when those moments align or conflict—helps us understand how a poem moves through time and space.

Why Enjambment and Syntax Matter

- They control how we move through a poem, whether we pause or rush forward.

- They can create surprising turns of thought mid-line.

- They reveal what the poet wants to emphasize by isolating words at line endings.

- They can mirror physical movement or the subject's behavior.

The Dipper

by Kathleen Jamie

It was winter, near freezing,
I'd walked through a forest of firs
when I saw issue out of the waterfall
a solitary bird.

It lit on a damp rock,
and, as water swept stupidly on,
wrung from its own throat
supple, undammable song.

It isn't mine to give.
I can't coax this bird to my hand
that knows the depth of the river
yet sings of it on land.

Analysis: The Grammar of Wonder

Jamie's poem turns on a crucial enjambment in the first stanza: "when I saw issue out of the waterfall / a solitary bird." The verb "issue" hangs at the line's end, making us wait to discover what emerged. This delay enacts the speaker's own surprise—something is coming forth from the waterfall, but what? The bird arrives only after we've crossed into the next line, appearing as unexpectedly for us as for the speaker.

The poem is structured in three stanzas that mirror three distinct moments: observation, interpretation, and recognition of limits. But notice how the syntax works across these divisions.

The second stanza contains one of the poem's most important enjambments: "wrung from its own throat / supple, undammable song." By breaking after "throat," Jamie emphasizes the physical source of the song before revealing its qualities. The word "undammable" is stunning—this is a bird that lives by water, and its song cannot be stopped or controlled any more than a river can. The enjambment lets "undammable" land with full force at the start of the line.

The final stanza shifts into apostrophe, though subtly. The speaker addresses us (or herself) directly: "It isn't mine to give." She's speaking about the bird, yes, but also speaking to the bird, acknowledging its autonomy. This is a refusal to possess or claim what she's witnessed. Look at the final enjambment: "I can't coax this bird to my hand / that knows the depth of the river." At first, we might think "my hand / that knows"—as if the speaker's hand knows the river's depth. But no: it's the bird that knows. The enjambment creates a moment of ambiguity before clarifying. The bird has intimate knowledge ("knows the depth") that allows it to sing from a place of authority. It has been under, in, through—and now stands outside, singing of what it knows.

The poem's syntax mirrors its argument: just as we can't control where the sentences will break, we can't control the bird. Just as the water is "undammable," so is the song, and so is the poem's movement through its lines.

Exercise: Playing with Enjambment

1. Remove the enjambments: Rewrite "The Dipper" so that every sentence ends where a line ends. Add periods, semicolons, or other punctuation to stop the flow. How does this change the reading experience? What's lost?
2. Extreme enjambment: Rewrite the poem breaking lines in the middle of phrases, even mid-word if you like. Make every line break feel unexpected or uncomfortable. What happens to meaning when you break syntax more violently?
3. Find the emphasis: Identify every word that ends a line in Jamie's poem. Make a list: freezing, firs, waterfall, bird, rock, on, throat, song, give, hand, river, land. What pattern do you notice? What kinds of words does Jamie choose to emphasize?

Then write your own poem (12-16 lines) about encountering something in nature that refuses to be possessed or fully understood—an animal, a landscape, a weather event. Use enjambment to create at least two moments where meaning shifts or surprises as we move from one line to the next. Consider: what do you want the reader to think before the line breaks, and how do you want to redirect them after?

Reflection Questions:

- Why does Jamie describe the water as moving "stupidly on"? What does this word choice suggest about the difference between water and the bird?
- How does the poem's movement from past tense ("It was winter") to present tense ("It isn't mine to give") change our relationship to the experience?
- What does it mean that the bird "knows the depth of the river / yet sings of it on land"? Is there something about distance—being outside the experience—that enables song?
- The poem refuses possession ("It isn't mine to give"). How does the form itself enact this refusal through enjambment and the bird's autonomous movement through the lines?

I hope that you've enjoyed these lessons! I really enjoy hearing your responses to the exercises, so if you're comfortable sharing your work, please send them to me. Make sure to address the letters to **Kaitlyn 987**. Including the number helps to ensure that the letters come my way.

I also appreciate your feedback. Please feel free to let me know if there is anything you would like to see done differently or be included. Let me know and keep writing!

Meditation & Refuge

My dear friends,

Happy holidays to you all! If you are new with us, a heartfelt welcome. If you've been with us for a while, a heartfelt welcome to you too! :-)

May your practices, may your beautiful aspirations to better yourself and to help others, bring you into deeper mindfulness awareness, deeper peace and kindness. Every moment is an opportunity for more goodness in the world. For Buddhists, the mind is where the heart is. May your mind turn towards that goodness, again and again and again.

Mindful Meditation Practices

Here are a few meditations you can try. They are simple, and they can be very profound. If you do them patiently, mindfully, letting yourself relax into them, you may be really grateful for the results.

These meditations can reduce tension and stress, reduce anxiety, help us get untangled from difficult emotions, and bring us into states of deep peace and quiet. The mind can become more spacious, so we can respond to a difficult situation wisely, instead of reacting impulsively and sometimes causing more problems.

Mindfulness practices and breath meditations are being used more and more for PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), with great results in hospitals and with veterans. The key is to be patient with yourself and the practice, relax into it, and be grateful for the moments at first that will happen in our practice, and then for the deeper longer experiences we have.

Don't go into the practice 'waiting' for something to happen. Rather, go into the practice for the sake of letting yourself be with yourself mindfully. Stay with the meditation - or meditations - that feel natural and comfortable. And stay with the one (ones) that you sense or see are having results. And then with time and effort, our mind becomes our friend. And we become our own sanctuary.

Deep, Restful Breathing Meditations

Breathing meditations are a beautiful way to cultivate and practice mindfulness. As you're watching your breath - you're being mindful!

These practices can be used until you become so quiet in your mind, you no longer need or want to think, or exert any control with the breath. You may find you simply rest in the stillness. That's beautiful.

These techniques are tools to use until you don't need them anymore. They may come and go in their usefulness. You may use them for shorter times, and then they fall away.

Try not to be rigid. If you find yourself tightening, you can try to imagine the stress evaporating as you exhale. Don't cling to the technique. Use it when you need to. And let it go when it falls away. A few moments later it might come back. Meditation is a prayer in the sanctuary of your own mind. Your practice is the asking. And then in the silence, your prayer is answered. Christians call this Contemplative Prayer.

These are simple, profound practices. They calm down anxiety. They lead us into relaxation and peace. Mindfulness. Gratitude for the precious air we breathe. They help us to awaken. Even a simple breath of exhaling longer than you inhale will cultivate more relaxation.

If you can, inhale and exhale through your nose. Breathing through your mouth stimulates the nervous system. Breathing through your nose calms you down. You can exhale through your nose or your mouth. See which feels better.

You can imagine all the blessings of all the Buddhas flowing in as you inhale.

And as you exhale, stress, tension, negativity releases.

You can do this for all or some or none of the breathing exercises. Naturally, go at your own pace, and you can change the speed/timing whenever you feel to.

Body Position to Encourage Deeper Breathing

Rest your thumbs on the lower ribs, hands resting on your belly or lower back. Breathe slowly, deeply into your hands. Notice your belly/back and ribs expanding. Feel how it feels to deeply breathe into the lower part of your lungs. It's so relaxing and healing. A great way to fall asleep.

Rest your hands on your lower ribs and breathe. This brings more air into the lower part of the lungs.

Rest your hands on the ribs of the upper chest. This brings more air into the upper part of the lungs.

The Chinese Healing Breath

Inhale 2 times, then exhale. Each inhale should be slow and gentle. Even the 2nd inhale. You can even make the space between the 1st and 2nd inhale more and more subtle, so it just becomes a flow.

Let your breathing be slow and relaxed, with a slow, long exhale. Feel or imagine stress, negativity releasing on the exhale. Do this several times. If you do 10 or more, be careful you don't hyperventilate. I have had many students say this breath really works for them.

The Shoulders, Breath and Tension Release

Inhale as you lift the shoulders.
Exhale as you gently, slowly, drop the shoulders.
Relax and rest for a few breaths.
Repeat this cycle several times.

Then:

Inhale and hold your breath as you hold your shoulders up, gathering in tension.
Exhale as you drop your shoulders.
Relax and breathe a few breaths.
Repeat this cycle several times.
Relax and rest.

Counting with the Breath: Inhale for 5 seconds...exhale for 5 seconds...

Gentle, slow breaths. The duration of thinking "1-1000" is about 1 second. See how long your natural breath length is when you start this practice. With deep, gentle inhales, try to lengthen it to 4 or 5 seconds, but settle in with whatever rhythm is good for you, without judging how it 'should' be. Sometimes my breath is 3 seconds. With practice the breath naturally deepens.

Box Breathing: (has been used in the military)
Think the following: or counting 1 - 2 - 3 - 4

In - 2 - 3 - 4
Hold - 2 - 3 - 4
Out - 2 - 3 - 4
Hold - 2 - 3 - 4

Inhale through the nose...hold...exhale through the mouth or nose. Notice how it feels if you inhale through the mouth, or through the nose

To energize: inhale and exhale through the mouth. As you become more quiet, you can stop counting and simply be with your quiet mind...

Pause in the Space Between the Breaths: The Bottom of the Breath

Breathe in, then mindfully be aware of your exhale, and notice the space at the bottom of the breath - after you exhale, and before you inhale.

Be with the quiet, the stillness in that space. Don't cling to it or stay too long. Just be with it peacefully for a moment. Relax. Then inhale.

Continue with this cycle for as long as you comfortably feel to.

Between the stimulus and the response there is a space. And in that space is your power and your freedom. - Victor Frankel

"The best meditation is to be in a state of mindfulness." - Garchen Rinpoche

Mindfully Witnessing the Mind

Sogyal Rinpoche:

'Whatever thoughts and emotions arise in meditation, allow them to rise and settle, like waves in the ocean. Whatever you find yourself thinking, let that thought rise and settle. Don't grasp at it, feed it, indulge it or cling to it, and don't try to solidify it. Neither follow thoughts nor invite them. Be like the ocean looking at its own waves or the sky gazing down on the clouds passing thru it.'

Being mindful of the mind is hard at first, but with effort and diligence, we begin to witness our thoughts. This 'seeing' or 'hearing' our thoughts is a precious portal into the Silence of our inner being. It then becomes more natural and effortless to do, once we make the decision to witness. Then we find ourselves remembering more often. The wisdom in us is then awakening. We start to witness the impermanence of

thoughts - and this is key to our true wisdom. The realization of the impermanence of thoughts - which comes directly from our seeing that within us - leads us into the realization of the emptiness of the mind. This is called Mahamudra. It is in reality, so simple. So direct. And the key is just doing it.

Notice if you hear or see your thoughts. Can you see the impermanence of thoughts, how they arise and dissolve? Can you sense where they arise from? Can you witness the stories of the thoughts without getting entangled in the story? Sit and meditate on this for short focused sessions. That's much better than longer spaced out sessions. 5, 10, 15 minutes...whatever works. Then try to sit longer sessions when you can see that you are becoming even a little mindful.

Mindfulness is not following the stories that will arise in your mind. If you notice that you've been thinking about something for a while, and following the thoughts about it - that is not mindfulness, sorry! Lol.

But as soon as you notice that, then notice if and how you are judging yourself.

The key is to be aware of everything - and not caught up or entangled in the story. Whatever the story is, however important it seems. You can tell yourself - 'I'll deal with this later', and go back to witnessing.

Witnessing...noticing...being aware...are all expressions that describe what mindfulness is.

It builds, grows, and we see results if we are patient and put in the effort.

Mindful Meditations in Action

Maintaining mindfulness is being clearly aware of what your body is doing as it's doing it. Walking, eating, drinking, holding something, reaching...every activity is done with a consciousness of what your body is doing. This very simple practice is very powerful. It cultivates true awareness that is grounded into your life. Wisdom, patience, centeredness, a quiet mind, and a sense of emotional balance and strength awaken, because the mindful awareness is born in your true self, and with this practice it blossoms. If you practice mindful activities, then you do sitting meditation, your meditations will be stronger and clearer.

Eat and Walk Mindfully

Try eating and walking a little more slowly, being aware of as many of the movements as possible. If you have to eat quickly - be aware of that!

Bringing your awareness fully into your body's actions is a powerful tool to bring us more fully into this moment, helping us to let go of future and past. Sometimes it helps us to quiet the mind more easily than in sitting meditation. Try it for small amounts of time, and then do it longer and longer. Also noticing your breath while doing these actions can help you focus on right now. After a while, you will probably find yourself effortlessly become more mindful.

Meditation in Action - or Sitting Meditation -Which to do???

Do both!! Meditation is about turning the attention within, and the awakening of your true inner presence.

There are so many ways to meditate! And because of our unique nature, we do best to find whether we progress more with sitting meditation, or meditation in action. They flow into each other - the more focused we are with sitting meditation, the more mindful we will be in activity. And the more mindful we are in activity, the more focused our sitting meditation will be. Always listen to yourself- if you're sitting, and the mind is busy, you can mindfully get up, stretch, move...and if you stay mindful in this, when you return to sitting your mind will probably be more focused. Ultimately, we want our awareness to be mindful and meditative within the activities of our day, so we are always meditating.

My dear friends, I hope these practices are helpful. Would love to hear your feedback!

Advice from Garchen Rinpoche for Inmates

He recorded this for us in June 2020

Staying in this building due to having broken the law is a form of suffering. Being in prison is a form of suffering for worldly people. However, with the holy dharma we are able to transform suffering into happiness. It is a method to transform suffering into happiness. Now you are in prison and you don't have a job but they still give you food. So follow the rules well, focus your mind and engage in practice. Cultivate love and compassion. Read books about karma. This is an excellent opportunity to study. If we wouldn't have prisons, then unintelligent people in this world would do many bad things, so prisons are good for a country. They serve the well-being of the common public. So think that the prison is good. During this time, study as well as you can. It is an excellent opportunity to learn.

So focus on studying and meditation. When I myself was in prison, I was very happy, it helped me a lot. So hold the thought that "being in prison is a good thing." It is important to take the refuge vows and to study the 37 Bodhisattva Practices which is a perfect practice for prisoners.

The transformation of suffering into happiness depends on one's way of thinking. If you think: "I am in so much trouble they put me in prison," then this misery will tie your mind down and you will lose courage. But if you think about doing good things and not doing bad things, then you will find a prison is good for you. Then quickly you will gain courage and you will become happy. If you think about it in this way, then actually the prison is helping you. It also purifies the negative karma for future lives. You also have an opportunity to study, so you will become learned. If you think: "I'm doing well," your mind will not suffer and then it makes no difference with you or in prison or outside. In this way, you can truly transform suffering into happiness. I love you! Om Mani Padme Hum

From the Garchen Institute:

Garchen Rinpoche has said that it is extremely beneficial to take vows online, as it really shows you have a strong aspiration to receive them! Rinpoche explains that the reason we are truly able to receive vows online, is due to the ultimate nature of the Three Jewels — the Buddha, the Dharma (teachings), and the Sangha (spiritual community). Their ultimate nature is actually love, which is all-pervasive like space. So if we have the heart and intention or even just a glimpse of the intention of kindness for ourselves and others, we receive the vows whether or not we are physically present for the ceremony.

About Garchen Rinpoche:

Born out of wedlock in a remote area in eastern Tibet in 1937, Garchen Rinpoche was recognized by the 34th Drukung Kagyu throne holder as the incarnation of an accomplished 19th century Tantric yogi, of unbounded eccentric behaviors, who was also King of Nangchen's previous spiritual guru. In an age-old monastic setting under his father's strict training and discipline, the young reincarnated tulku (a reincarnated Tibetan master) grew up living a sheltered life, only for his life to be turned upside down at the age of 21.

For the next 20 years the warrior-like Garchen Rinpoche found himself imprisoned by the Chinese, in a hard labor prison. Though he and his fellow Buddhists were tortured and starved, it

was in prison that he met his Lama, Khenpo Mansell Rinpoche who led him through the painful transformation process from darkness to light.

There were devastating wounds on his consciousness when we had to witness the killing of innocent people, friends, family, and fellow monks. Garchen used to think that no one in the world had as much hatred and anger as he had. It would have been hard enough for an ordinary being to witness what he saw. With the profound sensitivity of a reincarnated master, this experience was even more unbearable.

Nevertheless the lessons that he learned, and the challenges that he overcame, led to the illustrious victories of the awakened heart and mind. They led to the defeat of the inner - rather than the outer - enemies: attachment, anger, hatred, and confusion. This is what he teaches us - to transform suffering into happiness. Rinpoche has been teaching around the world for decades on the power of love, compassion, and mindfulness. He is revered throughout the world's international communities as a deeply loving and compassionate Tibetan Buddhist master.

You Can Take Refuge from Afar with Garchen Rinpoche

“Use your time well! Use your time to awaken! Prison is the greatest gift in your life if it leads you to the Dharma, if it leads you to the Buddha.”

Garchen Rinpoche has a special place in his heart for prisoners. He was imprisoned in Tibet for 20 year of hard labor, when the Chinese were arresting monks because of their religion. Mindfulness was his major practice for those years. If he was caught meditating, he'd be killed. Some monks committed suicide, but Rinpoche has said that he found joy in prison because he knew he was burning negative karma. And as he told me when we met, “Prison wasn't a bad place for me. I had so many opportunities to practice compassion.” He knows the profound power and importance of practicing dharma in prison.

To take refuge does not mean you give up your religion. The Dalai Lama said, “if you do Buddhist practices you become a better Christian, Muslim...whatever your religion, because practicing Buddhism helps us to become better human beings.”

How to take refuge

Rinpoche will give refuge to everyone who wants it. It's a blessing to be connected to his mind stream. Once you have taken refuge with him, as I have, he will guide and protect you until you are enlightened. And, only do this if you feel to. Trust your calling! You don't have to, but **you can send me the following and I will send it off to Rinpoche:**

- a clipping or 2 or 3 locks of hair from the top of your head (the crown), cut with sincerity;
- a picture of you;
- and if you can, something as an offering (picture, poem, feather, stamps).

If you can't send any of these, you absolutely can still take refuge with him.

Send all correspondence concerning these teachings and refuge to:

Tara's Voice
PO Box 524
Valley Cottage NY 10989

Please put your contact info on the letter and envelope! I'll let you know that I received your request for refuge. A few months later, you will receive a packet including a refuge card with Buddhist prayers, your new Tibetan name, and teachings. You'll also receive the teachings for, and the Bodhisattva Vow.

If you don't receive the packet with your name, please write to me. You still have refuge from Rinpoche. Once he performs the ceremony, you have taken refuge.

As long as Rinpoche is able to, he will offer Refuge From Afar. I highly recommend acting on it as soon as you feel to. Rinpoche is 90 and has been withdrawing more and more...

I receive many beautiful, heartwarming letters and they are a great gift for me. In this challenging time with mom, your letters uplift me, as I feel the light of your progress, your awakenings, compassion and joy pouring through your words. I wish I had the time to be that organized that I would quote many of you, but taking care of mom is becoming more and more consuming as she is in her 103rd year, and needs more and more attention. I thank you so much for your kind words and prayers. This following quote is from 2 letters I received from Tyler. While

reading them, I was inspired to share his words with you...what Rinpoche says is true, transformation is possible...our true nature is completely awake...

“When I was out on bail, I cried every day, scared of what was to come, looking at 15 years - life in prison. I wish the man I was then, could talk to the man I am today.

I would tell myself that what you are about to experience will be the best thing that you will go through and that you won't change it for anything. Priceless, the things that I have learned about myself in this journey/adventure.

The old me died when I got arrested and the new me has been born through this experience, like a caterpillar in a cocoon turning into a butterfly. I get out of prison December 2022.

I've looked at prison similar to Rinpoche. I've truly found prison to be the best thing to have ever happened to me. I have found so much endless inward peace for myself, and love. This journey that I've been on has really helped me with letting go, as well as for my unconditional love for others. Even when others lash out negativities towards me, I breathe in their pain and breathe out peace and love in their direction. I know their actions are not truly because of me but from the karma and pain they are living through. That helps me with showing and exhibiting happiness, peace, love towards them and others like them who might be going through the same or similar karma and pain/suffering.” - Tyler B.

Excerpt from Garchen Rinpoche's Teachings on Refuge

Refuge Prayer:

I take refuge in transcending awareness, the heart essence of Buddha.

I take refuge in compassion, the heart essence of Dharma.

I take refuge in spiritual friends, the heart essence of Sangha.

Garchen Rinpoche has said that it is extremely beneficial to take vows online, as it really shows you have a strong aspiration to receive them! Rinpoche explains that the reason we are truly able to receive vows online, is due to the ultimate nature of the Three Jewels — the Buddha, the Dharma (teachings), and the Sangha (spiritual community). Their ultimate nature is actually love, which is all-pervasive like space. So if we have the heart and intention of love, we receive the vows whether or not we are physically present for the ceremony.

When we take refuge, we take refuge in the Three Jewels, and a jewel or a source of

refuge also exists in other religions and spiritual paths. Here, in the Buddhist path, we take refuge in 3 sources of refuge - the Three Jewels - but in general the sources of refuge are very similar in other religions. According to the Buddhist tradition, the first jewel or source of refuge is the Buddha. That is the quality of our spiritual teacher. It is the nature of great wisdom, awareness. That is the essence of the Buddha. Secondly, we also take refuge in the dharma, and that is the path that the Buddha had shown to all sentient beings. That path basically means the understanding of karma, cause and effect, and the existence of future lives. There are countless dharma teachings but they are included in a few statements. And that is in the refuge card that you are receiving. It has 4 lines. The essence of karma is that action that is virtuous leads to the result of happiness, and action that is non-virtuous leads to the result of suffering.

What is the purpose of taking refuge? Why do we want to take refuge? Do you experience suffering, difficulties? Do you want to be free of suffering, of difficulty? Yes, *I do experience difficulty and I do not want to suffer.* So if you don't want to suffer, then you should consider seeking refuge in the Buddha. The Buddha shows the path to freedom from suffering.

~ ~ ~ ~

Dedication

May all beings be peaceful and happy.

May all beings have compassion for the suffering of others.

May all beings want all beings to be peaceful and happy.

May these thoughts of kindness

Be like seeds that bless the hearts of others.

And may goodness always prevail.

May all beings know the grace of living in loving kindness.

May all the pure intentions and good wishes

In these teachings, and in these words,

Shine like a thousand suns

On the minds and hearts of all beings.

Blessings to you all, my friends.

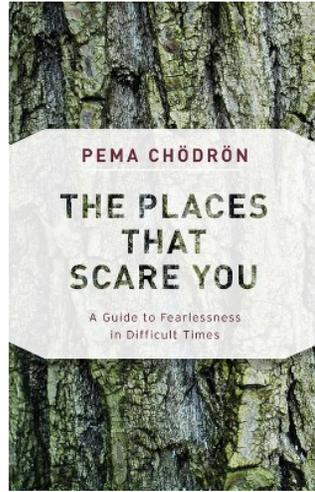
with peaceful loving prayers,

Tara

Study Guide for Pema Chodron's *The Places That Scare You*

Hi Pema Readers!

My name is Isabella from Prisoner Express and I am so excited for you to read *The Places That Scare You* by Pema Chödrön, since I loved it so much. I always love a new book to dive into, whether it is Fantasy or Thrillers, so my first taste of the Wellness genre was nothing short of amazing.



This book gave me an exciting new way to engage with my everyday life and how I connect with others. Truthfully, I have never had a book stick with me as much as this book has, and I hope you also experience how much the author's outlook on life can change your own.

While reading the book, I crafted a guide for readers to follow along with, which I hope is helpful or insightful during your journey with Pema. Each of the responses to the questions should be in the book but feel free to answer the questions with your own interpretations or opinions if you find that more fitting. **After completing the book and this study guide, PE would love to hear back from you, so please send in your responses! Let us know if you would like to receive a PE certificate for the completion of your work.** Feel free to include any questions you had after reading the book as well.

In addition to questions for each chapter in *The Places That Scare You*, here is a list of quotes from the book that particularly resonated with me that I would like to share with you. If you would like to participate, an additional task could be sending a list of quotes that similarly resonated with you and commenting on why the quotes stuck with you.

You can send your responses back to us at Prisoner Express, P. O. Box 6556, Ithaca NY 14851.

Quotes:

"Although we have the potential to experience the freedom of a butterfly, we mysteriously prefer the small and fearful cocoon of ego." (pg 10)

"Openness doesn't come from resisting our fears but from getting to know them well." (pg 11)

"Buddha was pointing out that the fixed idea that we have about ourselves as solid and separate from each other is painfully limiting." (pg 19)

"Every moment is unique, unknown, completely fresh." (pg 21)

"Our personal attempts to live humanely in this world are never wasted." (pg 41)

"Compassion, however, is more emotionally challenging than loving-kindness because it involves the willingness to feel pain." (pg 49)

"Compassion practice is fearless." (pg 49)

"We learn as much about doing this from our failures as we do from our successes." (pg 50)

"Compassion is not a relationship between the healer and the wounded. It's a relationship between equals." (pg 50)

"The key is to be here, fully connected with the moment, paying attention to the details of ordinary life." (pg 62)

"When life is pleasant, think of others. When life is a burden, think of others." (pg 67)

"Whatever arises, no matter how bad it feels, can be used to extend our kinship to others who suffer the same kind of aggression or craving—who, just like us, get hooked by hope and fear." (pg 69)

"When we find the place where our heart can stay engaged, then compassion begins to spread by itself." (pg 79)

"Forgiveness is an essential ingredient of bodhichitta practice. It allowed us to let go of the past and make a fresh start." (pg 81)

"My willingness to stay with the discomfort was what allowed something to shift. Then the reservoir of compassion began to emerge." (pg 85)

“When we start to interrupt our ordinary ways of calling ourselves names and patting ourselves on the back, we are doing something extremely brave.” (pg 106)

“We can sit with the intensity of the anger and let its energy humble us and make us more compassionate.” (pg 111)

“When we find ourselves captured by aggression, we can remember this: there is no basis for striking out or for repressing. There is no basis for hatred or shame.” (pg 112)

“In warrior tradition it is said that both the teacher and the student are fully awake, that between the teacher and the student there can be a meeting of minds.” (pg 114)

“There’s a sense of freedom when we accept that we’re not in control.” (pg 119)

“Resting here completely—steadfastly experiencing the clarity of the present moment—is called enlightenment.” (pg 122)

Questions

Chapter 1:

1. What is bodichitta?
2. What do you call someone who trains in awakening unconditional and relative bodichitta?
3. How can you practice bodichitta?
4. Why practice bodichitta?

Chapter 2:

5. How do you find courage to go to the places that scare you?
6. What are the three lords of materialism? Describe them.
7. What does a narrow mindset mean?
8. What is the role of altered special states?

Chapter 3:

9. What are the three principal characteristics of human existence?
10. What do Buddhist teachings do?
11. “Nothing and no one is ____.”
12. What is egolessness called sometimes?
13. What are the three tragic misunderstandings?

Chapter 4:

14. Why should we meditate?
15. What are the four qualities of maitri? Explain each one.
16. What is one aspect of steadfastness?
17. What does training with kindness result in?
18. What should you do when emotional distress arises uninvited?

Chapter 5:

19. What are Lojong teachings?
20. What is the challenge with mind-training slogans?
21. How do we “drop the story lines”?
22. When are you well-trained?

Chapter 6:

23. What is the path of the warrior?
24. What are the practices of the four limitless qualities?
25. How is aspiration practice different from other practices?
26. What happens when you awaken the four qualities?

Chapter 7:

27. What is one reason we train as warrior-bodhisattvas?
28. What is the first step in cultivating loving-kindness?
29. What is the beggar's role in the fifth step?
30. What is the main point of this practice?

Chapter 8:

31. How can you arouse compassion?
32. What does the fourth step do?
33. What is the result of compassion practice?
34. "The aspiration practices of the four qualities are training in ____"

Chapter 9:

35. What is tonglen?
36. What do you breathe in and what do you breathe out?
37. Fundamentally, what is experiencing openness?
38. Why practice tonglen on the spot?
39. As warrior-bodhisattvas, why train in cultivating the tonglen attitude?

Chapter 10:

40. How do we cultivate the conditions for joy to expand?
41. "As we cultivate our garden ____"
42. What is the greatest advantage for awakening warrior?
43. What is the second stage in learning to rejoice?
44. Why are difficult people the greatest teachers?

Chapter 11:

45. What is the essence of the practice of sharing the heart?
46. "So the first step is ____"
47. What is the basis of this practice?

Chapter 12

48. What is equanimity?
49. What has Buddhist teachings identified as eight variations on the tendency to hope and fear?
50. How do you cultivate equanimity?
51. How can a bigger perspective emerge?
52. What does training in equanimity require?

Chapter 13

53. How can we trust our basic nature is utterly simple?
54. What is 'lhenchak'?
55. How is loving-kindness different from 'lhenchak'?
56. What are the near and far enemies of compassion?
57. What is the second way of training with overwhelm?
58. What is the near and far enemy of equanimity?

Chapter 14

59. What did the Tibetan teacher instruct the author's dying friend to do?
60. "Forgiveness, it seems, ____"
61. What is the simple practice to cultivate forgiveness?

Chapter 15

62. What is strong determination?
63. What is the third source of inspiration?
64. How do you water the seed?
65. What is the point of reproach?
66. What is the fifth strength in our practice of awakening bodichitta?

Chapter 16

67. What is the first, second and third kind of laziness?
68. What are the three habitual methods/futile strategies?
69. What is the alternative of an enlightened strategy?
70. What happens when we begin to look into our laziness?

Chapter 17

71. What are the six traditional activities in which the bodhisattva trains?
72. Additionally, what are paramitas and what are the six mentioned in regards to training?
73. What is the key to bodhisattva training?
74. What do we practice in the unfixated mind of prajna?
75. Why are the guidelines of nonvirtuous action or compassionate conduct not written in stone?
76. Why is being ambitious setting you up for failure in paramita practice?

Chapter 18

77. What is the story of Krishnamurti?
78. What is prajna and prajnaparamita?

79. Why is “emptiness also is form” challenging?

80. What is the instruction of prajnaparamita?

Chapter 19

81. Can you explain what “heightened neurosis” is?
82. What is the poverty mentality? And what are the harms?
83. What is another neurosis that can get heightened?
84. As we tentatively, step out of our cocoon:

85. What is the first step to developing enthusiasm for being open?
86. What is fundamental to the process of awakening?
87. From the instant we begin this bodhisattva: _____

Chapter 20

88. What are the four methods for “holding our seat”?
89. We can strengthen old habits by _____
90. What is the instruction on cultivating the root of happiness?
91. When should you use the second method?
92. Why should you not worry if there are no teachers to direct you?
93. What should you remember when you are going to “blow your top”?
94. What is a helpful way to practice the fourth instruction?
95. How should you contemplate these outer circumstances?
96. Where do the four methods come from?

Chapter 21

97. What is rare of students in warrior training?
98. Describe the relationship between the author and Trungpa Rinpoche.
99. In warrior training: _____
100. What does being in an unconditional relationship teach us?
101. What does Bodhisattva training encourage?
102. Describe “the teacher.”
103. It’s important to understand: _____
104. How would you know if a teacher has taught you well?
105. What is limitless love?

Chapter 22

106. What are we caught in-between?
107. Why does a warrior spend a lot of time growing up in the in-between state?
108. What marks the in-between state?
109. What is the open-ended tender place called?
110. What does dwelling in the in-between state require?
111. Where should we stand our ground?
112. What is the in-between state training us for?
113. That’s why compassion and maitri, along, with courage, are vital: _____
114. Why is it important to hear about the in-between state?

Remember, if you would like to receive a PE Certificate of Completion, **send your answers to the study guide questions to us** at Prisoner Express, P. O. Box 6556, Ithaca NY 14851. Attn: Pema Chodron Program.

Study Guide: Wayne Dyer’s *The Power of Intention*

Dear Reader,

I want to begin by saying thank you. Thank you for taking the time to open this book and this study guide, and for allowing me to share a part of my heart and my family with you.

My name is Saje Dyer, and my father was Dr. Wayne Dyer. He passed away ten years ago, but the spirit of his work continues to shape my life in the most meaningful ways. One of his greatest dreams was that his teachings would reach people who might not otherwise have access to them, especially those experiencing some of life’s most difficult circumstances. He believed deeply in the power of inner transformation, in the strength and dignity within every person, and in the possibility of new beginnings, no matter where someone is right now.

When I donated copies of his book, *The Power of Intention*, to be shared with incarcerated individuals, it felt like I was truly helping to see his dream into reality. I also spent time reading the book again myself and creating the study guide you now hold. I want you to know that this process was not just an act of giving—it was also a gift back to me. Revisiting my dad’s words, reflecting on their meaning, and shaping them into something that might support you on your own path had a profound impact on me. In many ways, I feel that we are learning and growing together, even without meeting face to face.

My hope is that these pages offer you moments of clarity, encouragement, and peace. I hope they help you connect with the strength, intention, and wisdom that already exist within you. And most of all, I hope they remind you that you are seen, that you matter, and that change, growth, and purpose are always possible.

Thank you for giving my father’s work new life through your reading. And thank you for giving me the opportunity to honor his legacy in a way that feels truly meaningful.

With deep respect and gratitude,

Saje Dyer

Chapter 1

1.) In the preface, the author suggested to read the final chapter first before starting chapter 1. Did you choose to do this? Why or why not? If you did, did it make you more curious to find out what you will read about in the rest of the book?

2.) On page 5, the author refers to a quote by Pantanjali that states “Dormant forces, faculties, and talents come alive, and you discover yourself to be a greater person by far than you ever dreamed yourself to be.” He is referring to the powerful energy that someone feels when they are inspired. Can you think of a time that you felt inspired? What dormant forces came alive for you?

3.) How does reading about a scientific explanation of source/intention shape this idea for you?

4.) How does it feel to think of yourself as a sorcerer? Or to “bow to yourself” as the author suggests on page 9? Can you recall experiences in your life where you perhaps felt like a sorcerer? Or perhaps felt that something greater than yourself was present in your life, moving the pieces around?

5.) What is an idea that you have constructed about yourself that originated from your ego? How does your ego get in the way of your connection to intention?

6.) What are the 4 steps to intention?

7.) What does it mean to surrender? How is it different from giving up? Can you recall a time that surrendering to what was happening in your life served you? How does surrendering play a role in your current life circumstances?

8.) How do you see your free will fitting in with this idea of intention? Do you agree or disagree with the author's explanation?

9.) The author gives an example with his daughter who loves to ride horses. He advises her to think about what makes her feel the most powerful

and happy. Can you identify what makes you feel most powerful and happy? Do you feel more connected to something greater than yourself when you are doing this?

10.) The author gives the following quote from Aldous Huxley: “The spiritual journey does not consist in arriving at a new destination where a person gains what he did not have, or becomes what he is not. It consists in the dissipation of one’s own ignorance concerning one’s self and life, and the gradual growth of that understanding which begins the spiritual awakening. The finding of God is a coming to one’s self.” Can you give your thoughts on this way of thinking regarding spiritual growth? Can you think of anything about yourself that needs undoing in order for you to grow?

Chapter 2

11.) How would you attempt to define spirit?

12.) What doubt(s) do you need to banish in order to allow intention to flow through you more clearly?

13.) What are the seven faces of intention?

14.) Do you feel more connected to source or intention when you are kind? How so?

15.) Can you think of a recurring thought that comes from a place of hatred that you could transform into a thought of love and beauty? What is it?

16.) The author writes, “if we focus on what’s ugly, we attract more ugliness into our thoughts, and then into our emotions, and ultimately into our lives. By choosing to hang on to one’s corner of freedom even in the worst situations, we can process our world with the energy of appreciation and beauty, and create an opportunity to transcend our circumstances.” Can you give an example of something that has happened in your life that initially was nothing but “ugly” on the surface, but that in retrospect ended up having a layer of beauty in it for you?

17.) In reference to the limitless abundance that the author writes about, how would you answer the question “where does your mind begin and end”?

18.) Do you feel receptive to this notion of intention? Are you becoming more receptive as you read the book?

Chapter 3

19.) How would you summarize the author’s emphasis on the importance of what you are contemplating?

20.) Reflect on your own inner-voice. As in, what are you typically contemplating? And in what tone? Is it typically more optimistic or pessimistic? More rooted in abundance or lack? Is this in line with who you want to be?

21.) How do you see intention as different from this “pit-bull” kind of determination that the author writes about?

22.) How does imagination play a role in achieving great things?

23.) Explain the difference between the following two statements: “How do I go about getting what I want?” And “How do I go about getting what I intend to create?”

24.) Write out some intentions that you have. Keep in mind these can evolve and change as you evolve!

25.) After reading about holding space for kindness towards yourself, can you think of ways that you can treat yourself with more kindness?

26.) Was the story of Shaya moving for you? How so?

27.) After reading the story of the author’s daughter Sommer, have you ever wondered how one small act of kindness can have far-reaching ripple effects across the globe? How do you feel

more connected to intention after doing something kind for someone else?

28.) How is cooperation tied to love?

29.) Do you believe that extending kindness to those who have harmed you can lift you up and bring you closer to intention? Why or why not? Can you identify someone who has harmed you in some way that you are ready to extend kindness to, even if it’s just a kind thought toward them?

30.) What conditioning from your childhood and adult life do you think you’ve been exposed to that takes you out of an abundance mindset?

31.) How can you think in more unlimited ways? What are some practices that you can make habitual?

32.) Give your thoughts on the quote from Rumi’s poem: “sell your cleverness, and purchase bewilderment.”

33.) Why is it so important to detach yourself from a timeframe when you are setting your intentions?

34.) Summarize the five suggestions for implementing the ideas in chapter 3.

35.) Can you think of any ways that certain things about you may be creating your own obstacles?

36.) Are you guilty of focusing on what’s missing in your life? How so?

37.) Think of a “no-match” statement that you frequently dwell on. Then come up with a statement that is a “match” to intention. Do this for each category described in the book (what’s missing, circumstances, what’s always been etc.).

38.) What in your life have you historically blamed on others that you can start to take responsibility for now?

39.) What is the overall difference between “match” and “no-match” statements?

40.) What part of your “story” would you benefit from doing away with?

41.) In what ways do you give thought to what others think about how you live your life? Who in particular comes to mind for you here?

42.) Do you feel emotionally moved by music? How so?

43.) What are the five levels of energy that we work with?

44.) How do thoughts strengthen or weaken you?

45.) List three ways that you can raise your own vibration/frequency.

46.) Have you ever witnessed a person nullify someone else’s negativity by responding with love? What happened?

47.) How can you hold more kindness for yourself in areas of your life where you have previously been critical?

48.) What is the message behind the valentines story?

49.) Why does self-importance hold us back?

50.) What are the seven steps for overcoming ego’s hold on you?

51.) What do you think of the quote from St. Francis, “it is in giving that we receive”?

52.) How do you explain the difference between the “you” that achieves something and the “you” that observes it?

Chapter 5

53.) The chapter opens with the quote, “it is one of the most beautiful compensations of life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself.. serve and thou shall be served.” Can you share a time where serving or helping another person also served you?

54.) Reflect on your desires for others. Write out some desires you have for others in your life that are rooted in love.

55.) Think of a relationship in your life that would benefit from you shifting into a space of only wanting the highest and best for that person. Describe a way that you can transform this relationship into a “holy relationship” in your life.

56.) The author states, “all you have to do is recognize how you view others. If there’s a pattern of seeing others as failures, you only need to notice the pattern as evidence of what you’re attracting into your life.” Do you recognize any patterns in your relationships that would benefit from you shifting how you perceive them?

57.) How does the way that you treat others impact you?

58.) How does saying yes more frequently help you to transcend the ordinary?

59.) What are some ways that you can say yes more often?

60.) Summarize the ways that your energy impacts others

61.) Describe a time when the energy that a person was exuding had a positive impact on you?

62.) Explain how low energy levels such as fear, grief, apathy, anger, guilt, hatred, judgement, and shame, weaken us.

63.) How do individuals vibrating at higher energy

levels impact people who are vibrating at lower levels?

64.) Based on everything you read in this chapter, how do you now see this quote from Gandhi: “We must be the change we wish to see in the world”?

Chapter 6

65.) Ponder the statement, “if life is infinite, then this is not life.” What do you think the author means by this?

66.) How does it feel for you when you contemplate your own death?

67.) The author describes two sides of infinity, the active side and the inactive side. After reading this section in the book, which side do you intend to live on and why?

68.) What elements in our lives cause us to perceive ourselves as separate?

69.) What are the attributes of being on the active side of infinity?

70.) What do you think the author means by “you are first and foremost an infinite spiritual being having a temporary human experience”?

71.) Does becoming aware of and contemplating your own death lead you to want to live your life differently? How so?

72.) What is your sense of your own destiny?

73.) How is being in a state of gratitude a door-opener to all of your desires?

74.) Why is it important to see ourselves as connected to something greater than ourselves?

75.) Why does giving to others connect us more to intention?

76.) What gives you the greatest sense of passion

in your life?

77.) The author quotes Sivananda in a poem where he states, “man makes himself miserable by separating himself from others.” Do you see this as true or false and how so?

Chapter 7

78.) How does it feel to “see God inside of yourself” as the author insists that you must?

79.) Can you identify some ways that you are currently living as a hostage to your ego?

80.) Do you feel worthy of fulfilling your intention? Why or why not?

81.) How does your self-worth play a role in your ability to stay connected to intention?

82.) How do you see the world that you live in? What do you think people in general are really like? Do you believe that evil is triumphing over good or vice versa?

83.) How is your world view a reflection of how you view yourself?

84.) Why is it so important to make your opinion of yourself far more important than that of others?

85.) Which steps in the “Making Your Intention Your Reality” section of the book do you think will be the most impactful for you and why?

86.) If you had to make amends with someone right here and now, who would it be? Why that person?

Chapter 8

87.) What makes you feel the most “on purpose” in life? It can be more than one thing.

88.) The author emphasizes throughout the book

that “you become what you think about all day long.” What thoughts do you have that inhibit you from feeling as if you are on purpose in your life?

89.) Why does focusing on the demands of the ego leave you feeling unfulfilled?

90.) How do purpose and inspiration go hand in hand?

91.) What do you have an inner knowing about when it comes to your purpose?

92.) List 5 things that make you feel on purpose.

93.) What is a way that you can add an element of serving others when it comes to something that you love to do?

94.) The author states that Albert Einstein is credited with saying that “the most important decision we ever make is whether we believe we live in a friendly universe or a hostile universe.” Which one resonates with you more and why?

95.) How can you reframe your current circumstances so that they become an opportunity to move closer to your purpose rather than an obstacle to keep you from your purpose?

96.) Write about what you have gratitude for right now, big or small.

Chapter 9

97.) The author states that, “how others treat you has a lot to do with how you treat yourself and thereby teach others to treat you.” Can you reflect on any ways that this statement seems true for you in your life?

100.) What are the prominent thoughts that you have about your family members?

101.) What does what you are feeling about a particular relationship indicate about you?

102.) Describe a relationship that you would like to evolve into a nonjudgmental and peaceful relationship.

103.) What happens when you put your attention on what you intend to manifest as opposed to putting it on a low energy that you may be encountering?

104.) Do you have a yearning for a more peaceful family? Can you set an intention around this?

105.) What are your thoughts on the following quote: “see the light in others, and treat them as if that is all you see”? Do you think you are capable of seeing others this way?

106.) What does forgiveness offer to the forgiver?

Chapter 10

107.) Examine the expectations that you have from life, then describe them here.

108.) Identify where you currently see inequities and inconsistencies in abundance. How can you change the way you look at these scenarios?

109.) How do you feel about this paradox of giving and serving in order to receive and be served?

110.) What is the role of allowing when it comes to manifesting your desires?

111.) In what ways may you be creating resistance?

112.) How can you eliminate your resistance to allowing?

113.) Why must we detach from our abundance and success?

114.) What can your feelings tell you about how you’re doing in the manifestation process?

115.) Identify any resistance that you have to your desires (i.e., your worthiness, whether or not it's possible, etc.)

116.) Which of the steps outlined in the "making your intention your reality" section do you feel you would benefit from the most by implementing? Why?

117.) What are actions you can take now that will support your feelings of abundance?

Chapter 11

118.) How is being in a state of joy related to the field of intention?

119.) What does the author state actually creates stress and anxiety?

120.) Write about a recent time that perhaps you were taking yourself too seriously.

121.) What should you do when you are having a reaction of feeling down in response to a certain event or condition?

122.) What does it mean to take the path of least resistance? And how do you achieve this?

123.) How do you make a conscious choice to select a thought that will activate good feelings?

124.) Can you explain rule #6?

125.) Write about what you are grateful for right now.

Chapter 12

126.) Can you think of a time when you set an intention and then the right people started to show up? Describe it here.

127.) How can you be more like what it is that you are seeking in relationships?

128.) Why is it that you can't hurt another without hurting yourself?

129.) How does thinking from the end change you?

130.) Reflect on the following statement and how it plays a role in manifesting your desires: "infinite patience produces immediate results."

131.) What happens when you surrender your ego-mind to the universal mind of intention?

132.) Describe here the image you have created of the person or persons that you would like to have show up in your life.

Chapter 13

133.) The author opens the chapter with the following quote from A Course in Miracles: "No one can ask another to be healed. But he can let himself be healed, and thus offer the other what he has received. Who can bestow upon another what he does not have? And who can share what he denies himself?" Have you ever tried to get someone to heal who wasn't ready? Did it work? Reflect on the truth in this quote.

134.) According to the author, what is the only way you can help others to heal?

135.) What are some of the ways that you can embark on healing yourself?

136.) Summarize the five conclusions about healing from the world of hard research.

137.) What are some thoughts that you have that support the idea that you expect sickness to happen? How can you reframe these thoughts?

138.) How does raising your energy to be a vibrational match with the field of intention have an impact on your immune system?

139.) How is asking to be healed different from asking to be restored to the perfection from

which you emanated?

140.) How does identifying totally with the wholeness that you are create more health for you?

Chapter 14

141.) The author provides this quote at the beginning of the chapter: "Everyone is born a genius, the process of living de-geniuses them." Can you think of life experiences that would de-genius someone?

142.) Describe a time where you felt the energy of genius flowing through you.

143.) How does the author suggest that you can access genius energy?

144.) What labels and old habits would you like to begin peeling away?

145.) What areas do you feel your inner genius shines most bright?

146.) When you are feeling connected to your inner genius, how does your ego sometimes come in to squash it?

147.) Describe someone you know who creates through their inner genius.

148.) How does it feel to declare yourself a genius?

149.) How can you take constructive action toward implementing your inner intuitive inclinations?

150.) What intrigues you?

151.) Why is it important to keep your thoughts regarding your own skills, interests, and inclinations private?

152.) What is one way that you can lift someone up today?

153.) Why is it so important to stay humble and grateful?

Chapter 15

154.) Can you describe someone you know who fits the description of a connector?

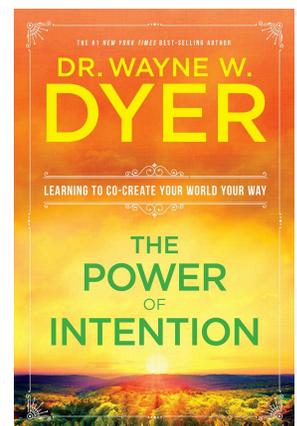
155.) Why is gratitude for everything in your life so important?

156.) Why do connectors lift other people up?

157.) What do you think about the notion of choosing to feel good regardless of what's going on in the world or around you?

158.) Write a description of yourself as a connector. Go into as much detail as possible. From what you're doing that causes you to live an inspired life, to the fears you've let go of, to the things you are grateful for, the ways you help others and lift the world up. Write it from the end, as if it's already happened in the present tense, even though it's a vision of the future. Include the ways you've changed in this future version of you and all that you have created. And don't forget to explain how it feels to be living in this new reality!

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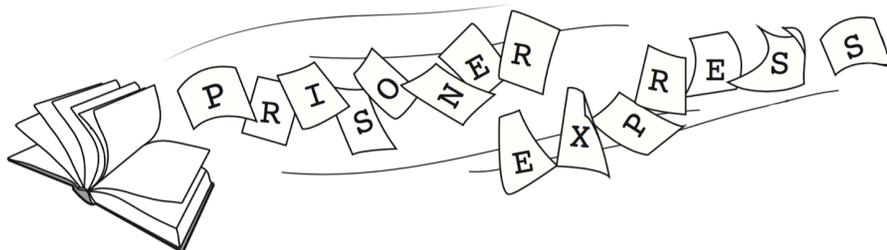
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