

Practices for Field Guide to What Really Matters:

IMPERMANENCE

Your Life Map:

On your “Life Journey Map” note the major losses that have occurred in your life so far. Is there a pattern? How have your losses shaped your path? What have you learned from your losses?

EXAMPLE: my father’s death, my mother’s death

Mandala Practice:

Building a mandala (a geometric design inside a circle) of colored sand is a tradition of Tibetan Buddhist monks. They may spend several days creating intricate designs within the mandala, only to sweep it all away once it has been completed. This exercise is to remind them of the transitory nature of all living things.

You can create your own mandala as a ritual to help you let go of attachments and celebrate living in the present moment:

1. Gather a number of objects from nature, such as leaves, sticks, rocks, flower petals. You can also use pieces of broken glass, yarn, cloth, or sand.
2. In a location outdoors make a circle of sticks and/or rocks as the outer border of the mandala.
3. Place the other items you have gathered within the circle, creating designs with them.
4. After the mandala is complete, spend some time in gratitude for the beauty of the design you have created.
5. Contemplate the fact that nothing lasts and everything ultimately dies.
6. Leave the mandala where it is to be exposed to the elements and eventually deconstructed.

Impermanence Blessing

Gather a handful of leaves or flowers and hold them while you recite this blessing:

"May you be blessed with the grace to bend when the wind blows.

May you remember that what crumbles is making room for the seed.

Nothing stays, nothing is lost,

And everything returns to the Source in perfect time."

Take a deep breath and scatter what you have gathered.

Breathwork:

Thich Nhat Hanh:

From Thich Nhat Hanh:

As you inhale repeat this phrase:

"Breathing in, I know that everything changes."

As you exhale repeat this phrase:

"Breathing out, I smile at the temporary beauty. This moment is fleeting. This moment is precious."

Repeat for several more breaths.

Observation: Fleeting Moment

From your observation spot watch a sunset, cloud movement, or tide for five minutes without multitasking.

At the end, say: This moment has passed. I was here for it. Reflect on the way each moment slips into the next, everything changes, and every moment is precious.

Journaling Prompts:

1. When you think about how vast the cosmos is, and how small and temporary our lives are, does it make you feel small, or does it make you realize how precious your limited time is?
2. How can you use your senses today to help the universe see and taste its own splendor?