

Practices for Field Guide to What Really Matters:

FORGIVENESS

Your Life Map:

On your “Life Journey Map” overlay your history of unforgiveness:

- Where have there been experiences when you have not forgiven another?
- Where and when have you not been forgiven by someone else?
- Mark these on the map with a label and symbol so you can identify it in the future.

Journaling Prompts:

Choose one thing for which you blame yourself. Write it down and then answer these questions:

1. What did I know at the time?
2. What was I carrying then?
3. What was beyond my control?
4. What would I say to someone I love who had lived this same story?

Self-Forgiveness Practice: Untying the Knot

Choose a piece of string, ribbon, yarn, or twine. As you hold it, bring to mind one regret, mistake, or memory for which you have been blaming yourself.

You do not need to choose the biggest wound. Begin with something that feels present but manageable.

Tie a loose knot in the string and say quietly:

This is the place where I have held myself tightly.

Notice what arises. Perhaps there is guilt, sadness, anger, fear, or the belief that you should have known more, done more, stayed longer, spoken differently, or somehow prevented what happened.

Then ask yourself:

- What did I know at the time?
- What was I carrying then?
- What was beyond my control?
- What would I say to someone I love who had lived this same story?

As you slowly loosen the knot, say:

- I can acknowledge what I wish had been different.
- I can make amends where amends are possible.
- And I can release the punishment that no longer serves love.

When the knot comes undone, let the string rest in your open hands for a few breaths.

You might close with:

I do not need to keep hurting myself in order to prove that I care.

Place the untied string somewhere you will see it for a few days, or carry it with you as a reminder: forgiveness is not forgetting, excusing, or denying what happened. It is loosening the grip of blame so that compassion, repair, and life can move again.

Ho'oponopono

In the Hawaiian language this word literally means to “put things in order” or “make things right” and originated with the cultural belief that forgiveness of past wrongs is necessary to heal sickness.

The beauty of this practice is that it offers something to do, a way to help, when tragedy occurs. But an additional asset of ho'oponopono is the fact that it can be carried out very simply, by repeating

four brief phrases. So this technique can be used anytime and in any place to help bring more positive energy and compassion to any situation. Here are the 4 phrases and the deeper meaning behind them:

- **“I’m sorry.”** The process begins by taking responsibility for what has gone wrong. Saying I’m sorry means that you are willing to bear your share of the suffering that is taking place and you are not seeking to blame anyone else. You are opening your heart to the pain that is present in the situation.
- **“Please forgive me.”** Asking for forgiveness means that you want to restore harmony and put things back in order again. It also means that you are willing to forgive yourself and everyone else involved in the difficulty.
- **“I love you.”** Offering your love helps heal the brokenness that exists and strengthens the bonds between everyone involved. It is a sign that reconciliation has occurred.
- **“Thank you.”** By expressing gratitude you acknowledge that this opportunity to heal is a gift for which you are grateful. But you are also giving thanks in a larger sense for life itself, which includes every triumph and every tragedy.

These 4 simple phrases can be used as a mantra or prayer whenever negative emotions or events occur. Ho’oponopono is one practice with a great potential to bring about healing and reconciliation where it is desperately needed.

Breathwork:

Settle in: Close your eyes and notice your natural rhythm for a few moments.

The inhale: Take a deep, intentional breath in through your nose, filling up your chest and belly.

The sigh: Open your mouth and release the breath with a long, heavy, audible sigh.

Repeat this for 5–10 breaths, letting go of the need to hold onto the past with each exhale.

Observation:

From your observation spot gather a few items from nature that you find nearby - leaves, sticks, flower petals, rocks. Assign a specific hurt or resentment to each item. Find a place to leave them behind in nature. As you walk away say "I leave this pain behind to be turned into something new. You are released from my resentment; and I am released to be free."