



# **DARK NIGHT: NAVIGATING TURBULENT CHANGE**

**Reflective Workbook and Experience Guide**

**2020**

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# INTRODUCTION

We are in a dark night! We believe this is a time of unprecedented turmoil and chaos, and there are many dangers ahead of us. However, we also have some core beliefs that underpin this offering: that we can invite our creativity to sustain us, that we will do better if we support each other, in our fears and uncertainties as well as in our actions and optimism, and that we need to consider not only me and us but all of us.

We think of this workshop as a place where we can engage in deep conversations about the dynamic interplay between an unstable and rapidly changing global situation, the 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic, and those values and practices which we have found helpful and sustaining in these turbulent times. We consider this guidebook as a permanent “draft”, needing updating as new resources are tested and found helpful. We invite you to co-create it with us, sharing resources you’ve found useful and practices you’ve found grounding.

The pandemic has caught the world off guard, seeming to go from being a new kind of flu discovered in late December 2019 in Wuhan, China, to a global pandemic infecting and killing hundreds of thousands by May 2020. The question is: What can we do together to support each other through the darkness? How can we take what we learn into the wider world?

*What hurts you blesses you. Darkness is your candle.*

Rumi

## THE DARK NIGHT JOURNEY

The world is indeed in a dark night. One way of making sense of the path through the darkness is to follow the process outlined below. As you encounter this graphic, you might bear in mind that this image is simultaneously describing an individual, a collective, and a global experience... and that it might take a moment, months, or years to travel. What's more, depending on what the topic is (your own health, the global pandemic, a community concern), you might be at a different place on the model for each of these topics.

We hope that it describes rather than prescribes a developmental possibility. Please contribute your own resources and ideas! Let's dive in!



There are three major elements in the process we will be exploring.

**Descent:** What is your quest or intention for being here? What do you hope to achieve? How would you characterize your personal experience of the descent into darkness?

**The Death of Old Ways:** What losses might you experience? What fears might those losses generate? What shape might your grief take? Who might your guides and companions be?

**Ascent:** How might you imagine the returning light? How might you share your learning for a wider purpose? What illumination might you shine on the world?

We have the opportunity to change the world through modeling our wisdom and grace in navigating through turbulent times.

## **DESIRED OUTCOMES**

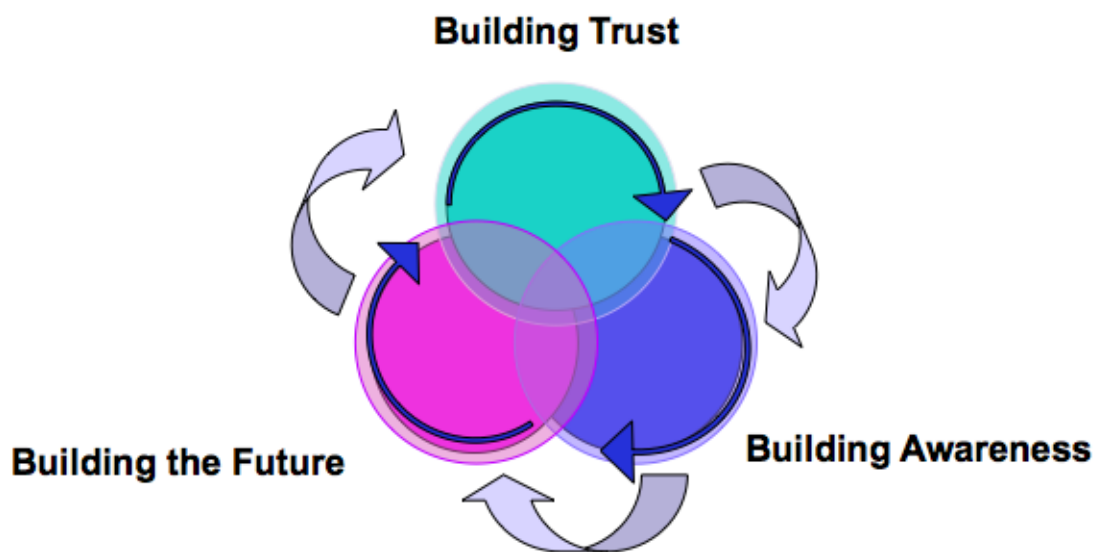
The desired outcomes for this Dark Night workshop are:

- To explore our personal and collective realities in the face of turbulent change
- To deepen our repertoire of practices – dialogue, deep listening and reflection, creative self-expression, and others
- To enhance our resilience
- To strengthen our collective support systems
- To co-create a participant-generated evolving library of resources
- To outline ways we can be in service to others.

## WORKSHOP DESIGN

There are six stages of the Dark Night model, each progressing toward greater depth and understanding. Each time we gather we will explore one of the stages and express our thoughts and feelings through a variety of processes such as journaling, guided meditation, movement and reflection.

The workshop design is based on three interrelated components: Building Trust, Building Awareness and Building the Future. We will move through these components in sequence over the weeks of the program and we will also use them as our process in each of the sessions.



**Building Trust:** Trust is the starting point for any meaningful conversation so we will begin each session with a centering practice and a check-in question to bring ourselves into the circle. Often poetry or a reading will set the tone. As we get to know and trust each other, the conversation will deepen and enrich. A check-in is important for having each person's voice and viewpoint heard in the room.

**Building Awareness:** This is the meat of each session's exploration. We will review our material and share our stories. We will become more aware of our values and beliefs and see them within the broader context of the group and our background resources. We will use different processes to express ourselves and gain new perspectives. We will share our learning in small groups and draw themes for further reflection. As we move through the six sessions of the workshop, our awareness will deepen.

**Building the Future:** As we end each session, we will share resources for further information – a video, article or other follow-up. There may be a question to ponder and suggestions for further reflection. There will also be a check-out designed to summarize and integrate the learning from the session's topic and to close the circle. By the end of the six sessions, we will have together shared this learning journey and our plans for sharing our gifts more broadly.

## **CAVEATS & EXPECTATIONS**

There are a few important values we hold so that we can build a safe container for our conversations:

- Honour the sacred space we are entering
- Others' information is confidential
- Listen for multiple perspectives and belief systems
- Keep time commitments
- Let us know about any special needs
- Others you would like to add?

## GUIDELINES FOR DIALOGUE

Here are some guidelines for making the most of our time together. If anything is missing for you, you may want to suggest others to add.

- Speak from the heart
- Share only what is comfortable for you and your partner – ask permission if unsure
- Monitor your speaking time so everyone has a chance to share
- Listen openly and without judgement
- Ask questions for clarity and understanding
- Do not give advice!
- Others you'd like to add?

*To go in the dark with a light is to know the light.*

*To know the dark, go dark.*

*Go without sight, and find that the dark, too, blooms and sings,  
and is traveled by dark feet and dark wings.*

Wendell Berry



# **SESSION ONE:**

## **THE CALL FROM MOTHER EARTH**

Let's begin by bringing our attention into the room, into this circle, here now. You might close your eyes, put your feet flat on the floor, settle into your chair, put your hands on your thighs... and take three deep breaths. As you breathe, please bring your awareness down into your belly as it expands and contracts with each breath. You will notice that just bringing your attention down into your body tends to help you relax, to release any tensions you have brought with you. You might soften your eyes, relax your jaw, drop your shoulders. Do whatever you need to in order to feel present and centered here now. Let's have two minutes of silence.

As you open your eyes and come into our shared space, know that we are embarking on a difficult journey, a hero's journey, that will have challenges as well as gifts. Let's be gentle with ourselves and each other.

### **CHECK-IN INTRODUCTIONS**

Please check in by stating your name, and an image that describes what lies on your heart today.

## OUR TIME TOGETHER



We will be working through the stages of the dark night journey over the next six weeks. The purpose of this workshop is to use our deep conversations to enhance our ability to navigate these times of turbulent change. We will get to know each other and our stories through conversation and may learn things about ourselves as well. We will use a combination of thinking, feeling and doing, bringing our minds, hearts and hands to the tasks. We will have an opportunity to express ourselves authentically in each session in some form that goes beyond conversation to elicit our deeper thoughts and emotions. There will be reflective homework for follow up if you wish more, and a plan for moving forward after our final session.

## RESOURCES

We will co-curate a collection of resources that we generate from our own experience and libraries. Please contribute to this list as we learn together.

## PANDEMIC

Are we ready to begin? Let's start with Lynn Ungar's invitation. You may want to soften your eyes and settle into your chair. I will read the first stanza of *Pandemic* and then let's go around the circle to read the ones following.

What if you thought of it  
as the Jews consider the Sabbath—  
the most sacred of times?

Cease from travel.  
Cease from buying and selling.

Give up, just for now,  
on trying to make the world  
different than it is.

Sing. Pray. Touch only those  
to whom you commit your life.

Center down.

And when your body has become still,  
reach out with your heart.  
Know that we are connected  
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.

(You could hardly deny it now.)

Know that our lives

are in one another's hands.

(Surely, that has come clear.)

Do not reach out your hands.

Reach out your heart.

Reach out your words.

Reach out all the tendrils  
of compassion that move, invisibly,  
where we cannot touch.

Promise this world your love—  
for better or for worse,  
in sickness and in health,  
so long as we all shall live.

## **REFLECTION**

If, as the poem suggests, these are the most sacred of times, how might that influence our individual and collective awareness? Please take three minutes now to jot down some reflections that arise in you.

## **PARTNER SHARING**

Please take five minutes each in pairs to share your reflections. How does it feel to state these reflections out loud? Any surprises? Any questions? Please manage your time so you both have a chance to share. We will be in pre-assigned breakout rooms.

## A CONVERSATION FROM EGO TO ECO

You were sent a link (<https://medium.com/presencing-institute-blog/eight-emerging-lessons-from-coronavirus-to-climate-action-683c39c10e8b>) to Otto Scharmer's blog post of March 16<sup>th</sup> entitled "Eight Emerging Lessons: From Coronavirus to Climate Action". Take a moment to recall how you felt when you read the article. Otto talks about the current disruption as both a danger and an opportunity. Here are some questions to begin the conversation.

- In what ways do you believe we can change the system using the current pandemic as a catalyst?
- How have you experienced "freezing" and turning away, and "opening" and turning toward, as two responses to the virus?
- What additional perspectives would you add to what Otto Scharmer has provided, based on new information in the intervening days?
- How would you characterize the possibilities arising from the two sides of this disruption: the things we need to let go of and the things that are about to emerge?
- What other questions or comments emerged from your reading?

## A JOURNALING EXERCISE

What insights arise for you from this discussion? Make some notes of your thoughts and feelings as you consider the points that have been raised.

## **IF WE WANT A DIFFERENT WORLD...**

In this excerpt, Ilia Delio, a Franciscan Sister in Washington, reflects on the mysterious depths of the heart. Let's read it around the circle, a sentence each, as our way of closing today.

"Yes, death is real; there is suffering, and we will continue to suffer. But in the inner room of the heart, there is an unyielding of power, a mysterious depth to our lives, who is known by various names: God, Presence, Compassion, Love or simply Being. The name is the way we relate to the mysterious depth of our lives and hence the life of the whole; for the depth of each of our lives is the depth of the whole of which we are a part. Our challenge in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is learning anew how to live in the whole.

As we consider who and what we are in the mirror of the coronavirus pandemic, we can ask, who are we and what do we hope for? If we think as small, puny individuals, we create a small, puny, individualist world that cannot survive. If we think as holons, smaller wholes who are part of larger wholes, we think in terms of participation, evolution and future. We have a chance to rewire ourselves for a new existence but we must begin to live in a new way... We are in a global breakthrough in evolution and if we want a different world, we must become a different people."

## **CLOSING**

Who are we and what do we hope for? As follow up, please reflect on these questions and your journal writing. Share your thoughts with one other person if possible. Make some time for further journaling about whatever arises

for you. And please be gentle with yourself and others as we move into this deep territory!

## FOR FOLLOW UP

Below are additional resources for follow up.

**Article: Pandemics — Lessons Looking Back From 2050**, by Fritjof Capra and Hazel Henderson, a long but uplifting piece. At:  
[https://www.ethicalmarkets.com/pandemics-lessons-looking-back-from-2050/?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+ethicalmarkets+%28EthicalMarkets.com%29](https://www.ethicalmarkets.com/pandemics-lessons-looking-back-from-2050/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+ethicalmarkets+%28EthicalMarkets.com%29) .

**Movie: Contagion** with a stellar cast but beware – it's almost too real!

**Video:** In 2015, Bill Gates predicted the current pandemic at  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/bill\\_gates\\_the\\_next\\_outbreak\\_we\\_re\\_not\\_ready?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/bill_gates_the_next_outbreak_we_re_not_ready?language=en).

Make any notes after reading and viewing so you have them for next time. And please add others you have found helpful. We'd be grateful if you could share any feedback to enhance future sessions. THANK YOU!

# **SESSION TWO:**

## **INTO THE DARKNESS**

### **MEDITATION**

We are going to begin today's gathering with a guided meditation taking us into the darkness. It is adapted from a process by Shari Woodbury, a Unitarian Universalist minister.

I invite you to enter a period of quiet. You may wish to adjust your spine so that you are sitting straight, your body relaxed, your hands resting gently in your lap. I invite you to close your eyes, and turn away from any windows, if possible, to shut out all the distractions of the light. Let us take four deep, slow breaths, starting with an exhale, and begin our exploration into the darkness.

With vision muted, notice what your other senses are telling you.... you may feel a sense of pressure on your back or your sitting bones, where your body comes in contact with your chair. You may have feelings of tightness in your shoulders... along the jawline... Release any areas of tension you notice, soften the neck and the swallowing muscles, release any tension you feel in your abdomen, imagining the inner organs in your belly letting go of tension. Soften your eyes, let them feel warm and relaxed as if floating in a pool.... exhale... You may notice strange sensations such as tingling in a muscle, or a tic in your skin. Whatever comes to your awareness is okay, just acknowledge it in the silence.



Let us turn our attentions to the sounds around us...what do you notice... can you hear your own breathing? Your growling stomach? Do you hear birds outside, or the wind, or a siren? Having acknowledged these outward sounds, let us turn our focus inward. Thoughts may float through your consciousness ... you can just let them float on by. Feelings may bubble from some deeper place within you. You don't have to name the feeling or put any words to it, just notice if there is anything there for you, with gentle acceptance.

Now imagine your body and mind are filled with darkness and silence. Like a deep, dark wilderness... like the very darkest night sky, like black water in a pond or ocean, like the soft quiet of the night, like the intimacy of shadows and shades, like the cold dark of a winter's night. Take comfort in the stillness, the restfulness of this dark space within you... you don't need to make anything happen, just rest into this inner darkness, knowing that you are safe in this moment, you can simply be, breathe in and out.

In the quiet corners within, let us sense the healing powers of the body, the amazing soft animal body and its ability to restore damaged cells, to create new healthy cells, to bring balance to that which has gotten out of whack, to fight viruses and infections and disease.

Let us acknowledge too the creative powers of our minds and hearts, from the mysterious inner and sometimes dark regions come all poetry, all music... From the inner emerges all sculpture and dance, all the art and cultures that are the heritage of humanity, even consciousness itself. The great unsolved mysteries reside in the deep darkness within ourselves... and out in the world, and in the darkness of deep space.

Continue to be with your breath and in a still, quiet mood, as you rest a while longer in the quiet, with humility and awe and gratitude for all the powers of the darkness within yourself. When you are ready, open your eyes, wiggle your toes, and slowly return to our circle.

## CHECK IN

Any reactions to the meditation? How does darkness feel to you? What emotions arise for you?

## FOCUS FOR TODAY

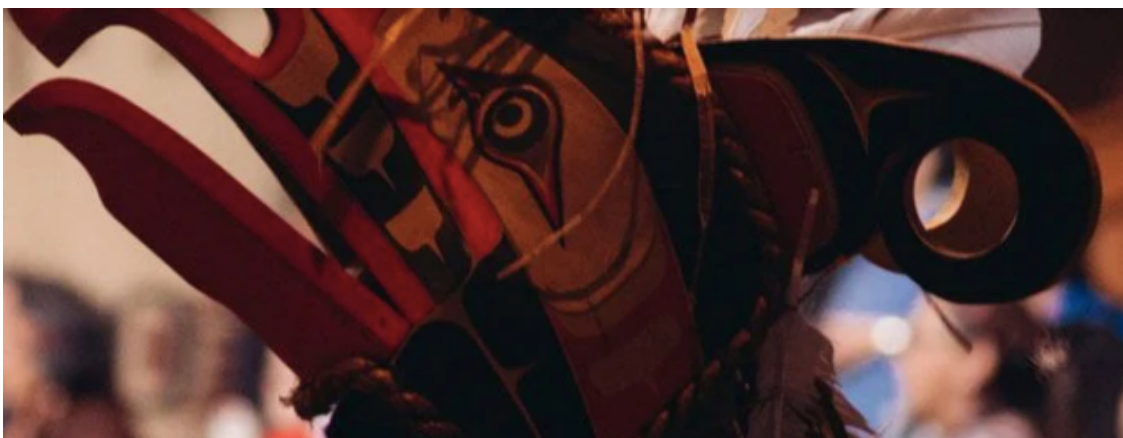


## THE PANDEMIC ACROSS TIME

A pandemic for most scientists describes the widespread occurrence of disease in excess of what might normally be expected in a geographical region. There are said to have been about a dozen previous pandemics, depending on how you count, largely due to cholera, bubonic plague, smallpox, and influenza. While early pandemics were confined to a limited number of countries where fewer people traveled, the more recent HIV/AIDS epidemics killed some 35 million people worldwide. And smallpox alone has killed between 300 – 500 million people over time.

Here in British Columbia, indigenous communities have suffered two horrific bouts of smallpox. The first devastated their population as they had no immunity to the virus. The second, less than one hundred years later, reduced their much lower numbers by half, spreading to every First Nation community in the province and again severely interrupting their ancient cultures.

What can the two previous smallpox epidemics in indigenous communities in BC tell us about how we are handling our current crisis?



## THE PANDEMIC ACROSS CULTURES

We are witnessing distinctions in approach to COVID-19 across different countries and cultures. Particularly eastern countries, including China, Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong and South Korea, who have taken centralized measures to control the virus and redirected their populations to testing and tracing, have fared better than the west, including Iran , Italy and the US, where the pandemic has run rampant. The countries that implemented emergency measures *before* it became an emergency are already in a more stable position than those that did not.

What does this tell us about public health and how we need to prepare and respond?

## THE PANDEMIC TODAY

Are there hopeful signs of a flattening curve on the horizon? Will we be able to sustain the social restrictions for as long as is necessary? What might we learn so far, and what are the possibilities for the future?

## GROUP DISCUSSION

In your small groups, talk about these questions and others that emerge from your conversation. Take twenty-five minutes to share your views.

## WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

What is one word or phrase that you might take away from the discussion.

## RESISTANCE

This stage in the dark night is characterized by dissatisfaction, anxiety, questioning, foreboding, resistance, unraveling and breakdown. One of the challenges is not letting the restrictions overwhelm you. It is helpful to engage with the darkness rather than turning away from it.

Ask yourself how you are avoiding the changes you are being asked to make. What aspects of your self-identity might you need to let go of? What values are most important to you during this time? How are you taking advantage of the quiet time you've been given? What are your challenges?

Write in your journal for ten minutes. No thinking; just pen on paper.

## SWEET DARKNESS

Let's read *The House of Belonging* by David Whyte around the circle.

When your eyes are tired  
the world is tired also.

When your vision has gone  
no part of the world can find you.

Time to go into the dark  
where the night has eyes  
to recognize its own.

There you can be sure  
you are not beyond love.

The dark will be your womb tonight.

The night will give you a horizon  
further than you can see.

You must learn one thing:  
the world was made to be free in.

Give up all the other worlds  
except the one to which you belong.

Sometimes it takes darkness and the sweet  
confinement of your aloneness  
to learn

Anything or anyone  
that does not bring you alive  
is too small for you.

## FOR FOLLOW UP

To take this session a bit further, consider deepening your journaling to engage with the darkness, and, if you choose to, sharing it with one other group member by email or zoom.

Here are some additional resources to support you.

**Podcast:** <https://www.soundstrue.com/store/weeklywisdom?page=single&category=IATE&episode=14181>. A one-hour podcast from Sounds True with Michael Singer talking about surrender.

**Movie:** Why not watch an old movie to take your mind off of COVID – search Classics in Netflix.

**Video:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fqw-9yMV0sl>. A 16 minute video by global health systems expert Alanna Shaikh.

## CLOSING

To close the session for this week, please share one insight from your journaling.



# SESSION THREE:

## THE BLACK BLACKER THAN BLACK

### CHECK IN

Please check in by answering this question: What is one idea, insight, reflection, emotion you've had since our last session? You will have about a minute each.

### FOCUS FOR TODAY



We are entering the second phase of the dark night journey, the underworld where we are faced with the death of old ways. The black we are in



here can be all-encompassing. Here, we may experience disorientation, fatigue, sadness, mourning, melancholy, depression, grief, and the absence of meaning.

## **MEDITATION: Darkness In; Light Out**

This is a ten-minute Tibetan Buddhist Tonglen practice adapted for non-Buddhist practitioners by Diane Marshall.

Sit in your chair with your feet flat on the floor and feel the heaviness of your sitting bones. Imagine yourself as a mountain, your back firm and straight. Allow your breath to flow as you breathe slowly... In and Out, In and Out. Pay particular attention to your out-breath; allow it to fully expel.

Imagine that you have a sun in your heart. As you breathe in, sense it becoming brighter. Feel its energy and how it fills and enlarges your body. As you breathe out, allow the sun in your heart to maintain its brightness. Breathing in, breathe in the sun; breathing out, brightness remains.

Now imagine a black cloud before you. This dark cloud contains aspects of your dark night... emotions such as fear, anger, grief, sadness... responses such as guilt, blame, remorse... suffering of others, the world's wounds... existential dread... other aspects you would like to release.

Now begin a slow breath in and as you do draw that black cloud towards you. Notice as it approaches you that the heat and light of the sun in your heart begins to burn it away and that as it nears you, it dissipates. Now breathe out slowly and as you do send light, compassion and energy out into the world.

Repeat. Imagine your heart as the sun and breath the dark cloud towards you. Notice if the cloud changes. Is it less dark and dense than before? Sense it

dissipating as it approaches your heart's light. Slowly breathe out kindness and compassion to the world.

Repeat one more time. Experience the bright glow of your heart as you breathe the cloud toward you. Notice its appearance as it nears you. Breathe out slowly, sending healing and compassion.

Take a few moments to digest this experience. Know that in the future you can choose to return to this practice as a way of working with your dark night.

## **MUSIC AND MOVEMENT**

As a way of processing this meditation, listen to the music about five minutes and move in whatever way is comfortable for you. You may want to dance, to stretch, or just sway in your chair. Feel into your body and move as the music of *Minor Blue* from David Darling's *8-String Religion* flows through you.

## **JOURNALING**

In silence, write anything you want to remember or want to share with another. You will have about ten minutes. You may want to consider these questions in your writing and in the triads to follow:

- What is the particular darkness you've experienced as a result of COVID-19?
- What underlying grief or loss might you be living with that preceded or coincided with the virus?
- How do you experience what is happening in your community? In the world?

## **TRIAD DISCUSSION**

We will spend about twenty minutes in triads where you can talk about your experience with the meditation, the music and movement, and your journaling.

As we return to the large group, what comments might you share? Surprises? Make any additional notes to return to later.

## **A READING FROM JOHN O'DONOHUE**

“Suffering is the sister of your future possibility. Suffering can open a window in the closed wall of your life and allow you to glimpse the new pastures of creativity on which you are called to walk and wander. But this window often opens only when the suffering begins to recede. While you are going through the dark valley, it is almost impossible to understand what is happening to you. The light that suffering brings is always a gift that it leaves as it departs. While you are in pain, you can see and understanding nothing.”

*Eternal Echoes, P. 162*

## **CHECK OUT**

Can you see the darkness you are currently experiencing as a sister of your future possibility? Let's check out, about a minute each, with how we are feeling now, and then Diane will lead us in a final meditation.

## **MEDITATION: Light In; Darkness Out**

Sit in your chair with your back straight and your feet on the floor. As you slowly breathe in and out, imagine yourself as a mountain. Sense its qualities in your body. Pay attention to your out-breath. Allow it to be longer than your in-breath... in and out... in and out...

Imagine yourself breathing in white light. Allow it to permeate your body. Now gather any darkness or concerns you may have and allow them to flow out on your out-breath.

Breathe in light; breathe out darkness. Breathe in light; breathe out darkness.

Pause. Take a moment to scan your body. Are you aware of feeling differently? Breathe gently. Know that you can return to this practice in the future when you want to energize yourself and release darkness.

You may want to consider wrapping yourself in a blanket and staying with the darkness and the light for some moments.

## **FOR FOLLOW UP**

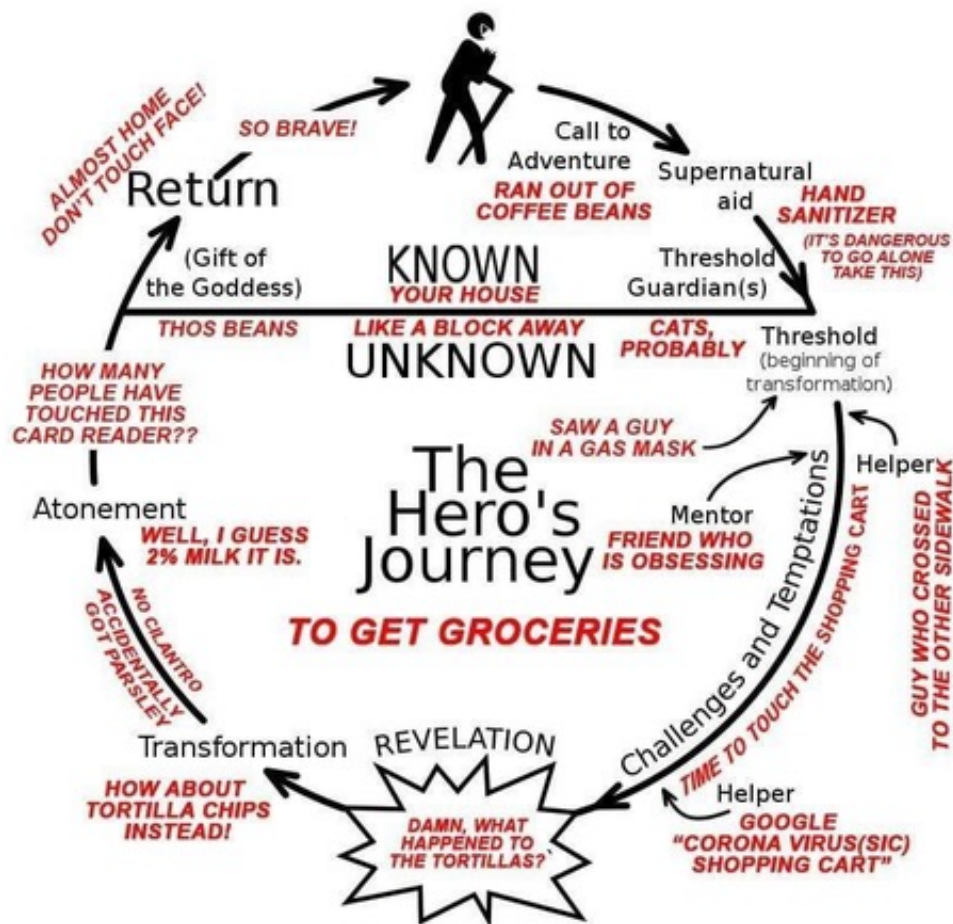
**Blog:** <https://emergencemagazine.org/story/keeping-the-smoke-hole-open/>.  
Storyteller Martin Shaw draws on an ancient tale to discuss the mythic meanings of our time. An interview follows.

**Video:** Mark Nepo speaks about grief.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o327jhIYhVk>

**Music:** Andrea Bocelli's Easter Concert in Milan 2020.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=huTUOek4LgU>

**Care Package:** A group of offerings from Sounds True to foster Resilience with the likes of Pema Chodron, Tami Simon, Mark Nepo, etc.

[https://product.soundstrue.com/resilience-in-challenging-times/?utm\\_campaign=S200403-RiCT-J%26T-Apology%20%28KFU5ju%29&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=Email%20Team&ke=eyJrbF9lbWFpbCI6ICJjYXJvbGFtYWNRaW5ub25AZ21haWwuY29tliwglmtsX2NvbXBhbnlfaWQiOiAiSk1EZ2FxIn0%3D](https://product.soundstrue.com/resilience-in-challenging-times/?utm_campaign=S200403-RiCT-J%26T-Apology%20%28KFU5ju%29&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Email%20Team&ke=eyJrbF9lbWFpbCI6ICJjYXJvbGFtYWNRaW5ub25AZ21haWwuY29tliwglmtsX2NvbXBhbnlfaWQiOiAiSk1EZ2FxIn0%3D).



# SESSION FOUR:

## A GLIMMER IN THE DARK

### CHECK IN

Let's check in by answering this question around the circle: What is one reflection you have from being in this workshop so far? Take as long as you need to tell us how you are doing.

### FOCUS FOR TODAY



We are moving through the second phase of the dark night journey, the death of old ways, the deep darkness. We may be feeling dead, withdrawn,

empty, or still. We may experience lethargy, nothingness, torpor at this stage. We may be feeling the weight of our responsibility, our own role in bringing about the darkness. And perhaps just a beginning of revelation, insight or germination of something new, a feeling of hope, a kindling of courage.

## THE SHADOW OF DEATH

The work of this stage, and the critical turning point, is the recognition that the pandemic is within us as much as it is outside us. We are in fact the virus. Our own greed, sense of entitlement, use of resources, disregard for others, etc. is what has brought us to this moment. We can no longer believe the sickness is just out in the world. We must own the shadow, the opposite of who we have thought ourselves to be, the reality that the sickness is ours to heal.

## JOURNALING

Let's just sit with this reality for a couple of minutes. Then write in your journal using the following prompts:

- What shadow in you may need to be met for you to heal your divided psyche?
- What steps might you need to take to do your part in healing the disparities in our world?

This poem by Robert Augustus Masters entitled *Bringing Your Shadow Out of the Dark* will move us into our Social Presencing Theatre.

Seeds grow in the dark — so do we.  
Let's stop making such a virtue out of the light  
and turn toward what's in the shadows  
and breathe it in, breathe it here  
meeting it face to face

until we realize  
with more than mind  
that what we are seeing  
is none other than us  
in endarkened disguise.

Seeds grow in the dark — so do we.  
Let's not be blinded by light.  
Let's unwrap the night  
building a faith too deep to be spoken  
a recognition too central to be broken  
until even the darkest of days  
lights our way.

## **SOCIAL PRESENCING THEATRE**

When the old ways no longer work for us, it is often in the social arts that we can find solace, in singing, reading aloud, listening to music, and deep conversation. It is also where we can innovate, practice new behaviours, see ourselves in different ways. Social Presencing Theatre is such a practice, introduced through the work of Otto Scharmer and Arawana Hayashi of The Presencing Institute, and offering an opportunity to bring the quaternity of body/mind/heart/spirit together. Let's try a simple practice of Social Presencing Theater.

Find a comfortable position, back straight, feet on the floor. Feel your feet on the earth, on our common home, the ground of our shared place, where we all belong. Sit with that connection for a moment. Then take your attention to your straight back, the tall upright position you are in, and feel that pressure on the back of your chair for a moment. Attend to your heart, your centre, and feel it



emanate from you to encircle our gathering. Now feel your head in connection with the sky, the space around you, the larger world, and out into that vast common space for a moment.

Now, coming back to your seat in your chair, change your position, it doesn't need to be much, maybe your posture or your limbs, or swaying back and forth until you find a new place to be. Sit in that new place for a moment and feel the difference. How does it feel in your arms? Legs? Torso? Let's change our position again, slowly, maybe a little or maybe more this time, maybe standing or shifting direction, and be aware of how it feels in this position. What distinctions do you feel here? And one more shift, it can be quite small but enough to notice different pressures, different feelings in the body.

This is a practice you can do any time, just feeling into the body in its different positions in space, noticing how you hold yourself, what your patterns are, how you move.

Now, let's do another Social Presencing Theater practice together. You may want to stand for this one and adjust your screen so we can see each other. I'm going to ask you to think of an area in your life right now where you feel some dis-ease, something holding you back, out of harmony. It may be something to do with COVID-19 virus or not, as long as you feel some lack of wellbeing with regard to the issue or question.

Take a position with your body that allows you to feel this unhealthy aspect. Arrange your body to pattern yourself after your dis-ease. Hold that position for a moment, feeling into it. What is one word that describes this feeling? Now slowly change your position to let go of the ill-ness, to release it and

surrender into your body's feeling without the dis-ease. What is the one word that best describes this feeling? In this new position, spend a moment paying attention to the difference between your first position and this one. Notice any changes.

Now, take a left and right blank page in your journal. On the left page, draw your first position when you felt unwell. It doesn't need to be fancy or detailed, just an impression. Write your word and one or two sentences beneath your drawing. You can use, "I am..." or "I feel...". On the right-hand page, draw your second position when you released the ill-ness. Again, write your word and a couple of sentences to describe your feeling.

Finally, as you look at your drawings and your words, what seeds have you unwrapped in the dark? What recognitions are you holding now? Write a sentence at the bottom of the right-hand page.

## **PAIRS**

In pairs, share your embodiments and your drawings, and talk about your images, your words, and your feelings as you created them. Take about five minutes each. You might use some of your time to ask your partner to interpret what they see in your positions and your images.

As you return to the large group, make any notes of insights you want to remember.

## GROUP DISCUSSION

What are your take-aways from the practice? What struck you? What surprised you? What would you like to share about your experience of Social Presencing Theatre?

## CHECK OUT

What is the glimmer in the darkness you can identify? Take a couple of minutes to think about the question and make some notes. Then let's take about a minute each to share our reflections.

## FOR FOLLOW UP

**Blog:** A letter written by Clarissa Pinkola Estes entitled, "Do Not Lose Hope: We were made for these times."

[http://newstoryhub.com/2020/02/do-not-lose-heart-we-were-made-for-these-times-clarissa-pinkola-estes-ph-d-2/?fbclid=IwAR1xLAeJ-tcjs\\_XSskUvqZ7kICj4LHNiu7QTcUOTk9N06aWSQFHh0HpVWc0](http://newstoryhub.com/2020/02/do-not-lose-heart-we-were-made-for-these-times-clarissa-pinkola-estes-ph-d-2/?fbclid=IwAR1xLAeJ-tcjs_XSskUvqZ7kICj4LHNiu7QTcUOTk9N06aWSQFHh0HpVWc0).

**Interview:** Otto Scharmer interviews Arawana Hayashi:

[youtube.com/watch?v=qMPeiODrjfk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qMPeiODrjfk)

**Presentation:** 2017 conference in Oslo talking about Social Presencing Theatre: [youtube.com/watch?v=NAIBvdYFRYo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NAIBvdYFRYo)

**Music:** A group of female physicians singing *We Rise Again...*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=huTUOek4LgU>.

# SESSION FIVE:

## TOWARD A NEW DAWN

### CHECK IN

As we gather, let us share the one word on our hearts, as we let in the phrase, “I am heading toward a new dawn.”

### FOCUS FOR TODAY



We are now moving into the Ascent from the dark night journey, reconnecting with our new selves, sensing into this new world. We may be feeling vulnerable, emotional, tentative, and humble. We may experience a beginning

awakening, an excitement mixed with sadness, or some renewed energy at this stage. We may also notice the sacrifices that have been necessary and feel remorse, guilt or regret. There can be a tendency to move too quickly through this phase – it has been dark for so long! Take it slowly. Let's protect our fragile new wings as we begin to fly.

## **JOURNALING, MEDITATING AND VISIONING**

This process draws on Otto Scharmer's work in The Presencing Institute. There are four steps to how we will spend our time today:

- You will be invited to individually note your answers to eight questions
- We will have a Guided Visioning practice
- You will have the opportunity to answer five more questions
- And finally, we will explore our answers with another, as much as you feel comfortable sharing. Remember, you are responsible for managing your boundaries.

### **Journaling**

Take a moment, take a deep breath and relax. Reconnect with the intention that you bring into this journey. Take a pen and journal. You will have a minute or two for each question. Journaling is about putting the pen on the paper and starting to write. You will likely feel rushed and may want to come back and add more to your answers. We encourage you to do that over the next week, but stay with us for now, and write for the entire time in answer to each question.

1. **Your emerging self:** Over the past days and weeks what have you noticed about your emerging self, not only who you are today but who you could be tomorrow?
2. **Cracking open the future:** Where do you feel the future in your life right now? The future first shows up in your heart, in your feelings. Where do you sense it? When you scan your life right now, where do you feel the presence of a future possibility that wants to connect to you, right now?
3. **Sources of frustration:** Scharmer recalls asking a teacher, “How will I find a calling in my life?” He was told, “Pay attention to your frustration. We are only frustrated by things that really matter to us.” What in your current life are your most important sources of frustration?
4. **Sources of happiness:** What are the most important sources of energy and happiness in your life right now?
5. **Your life’s purpose:** Look at yourself from a helicopter point of view. As you look at the current stage of your life’s journey, what is it you’re really trying to do? Look at yourself from above and ask yourself: At this current stage of my life journey, what am I really trying to do?
6. **Your view of the world:** Stay in the helicopter perspective, and now ask yourself, looking at the collective journey you feel part of, your community, your networks: What is it we need to let go of and what is it that we need to learn?
7. **Listening to your younger self:** Imagine who you were earlier on in your journey. It could be as a five year old, or a twelve year old, or right after high school. Pick a moment in time. Imagine the person you were back then, sitting right next to you. Put yourself in the shoes of that person, and remember a

specific situation where you were looking forward to the journey ahead of you. If your younger self could see you now, what would that younger self say to you?

8. **Your final footprint:** Imagine you could fast forward your life to your last moments when you are facing the threshold of death. Imagine that final moment comes, and right before it happens, you will have the possibility to look back at the whole arc of your life. You're at the threshold and you look back. What is it that you want to see? In other words, what is the footprint you want to leave behind on this planet when it's time for you to move on?

### **Guided Visioning**

Sit upright and get comfortable on your chair, your feet on the floor, your hands on your knees, and your eyes closed, if you are comfortable doing that. Take a deep breath and relax. Move your attention downward to your feet, feel the connection downwards to earth... and as you feel the connection downwards, all the way to the middle of the earth... broaden your attention to focus not only those of us here, who are touching planet earth with our feet right now, but all of us, in this moment, touching the same earth. Feel your own body, your own feet, and also feel that collective body, all touching the same earth...

Now slowly move your attention upwards, towards your heart, the region of your heart, and notice that it is the view of the heart which allows us to connect horizontally with all the beings around us. And in that field of connection, imagine that circle of all of us, spanning the globe... all of us coming together here, in the same moment, and we are very related, in terms of intention...

And now move your attention upwards, to your head, the upper part of your head, and notice how the shape of our head, the globe of our head, is a perfect microcosm of the globe of the sky that is extending upwards... feel the connection upwards and attend to the upper part of your head... And now attend to yourself from above, and to our whole community... And now gently let go of that, come back to the here and now, take a deep breath, and relax.

And now with your eyes still closed, imagine you are standing in front of a door, the door is closed and you cannot see what is on the other side... On this side of the door is current reality, and on the other side of the door, beyond our vision, is the field of the emerging future. This emerging future contains the field of possibilities for you personally, for your community, even the whole community of the planet. We cannot see what's on the other side... And now, open the door and see what's on the other side, and just stay with it... Allow it to emerge... don't judge it. If you want, add some brightness, colour and contrast... And now, cross the threshold of the door.

Notice everything around you... and notice how you feel... For many of us, this first field of the future already reveals some significant aspects and experiences. But, for some of us, this might be a more transitional state, and beyond this first field of the future we're now standing in, there's a second field of the future... that's sometimes called the inner temple, the more interior dimension. If you want to, move into that second field of the future, that's beyond this first one... again notice everything around you.... If the second field of the future is the more significant for you, stay where you are. If you prefer, go back to the first field of the future.



Notice everything around you... as you look around with your inner eye, as you scan the field, ask yourself: Where, in this field of the future I'm now standing in, is my real place, the place I feel drawn to most?

And again, notice everything around you... your connection downwards to earth, upwards and horizontally to all the things surrounding you. Notice how you may feel differently... Who are you, having stepped into your real place? Who is your real self? Feel the connection...

And now, imagine the person who was sitting in your chair, just a few moments ago. Remember that person as someone different from your future self... you know that person well, that other part of yourself who's still on the other side of the threshold. Empathize with that person. You know the person in the chair has very good intentions and you also know this person is struggling a little in terms of the next steps, in terms of how to move forward. Empathize with that person. If you could give that person one or two pieces of advice, from the place you are standing now in the field of the future, what would that be? Empathize, feel the advice arising from your heart, and speak it with your inner voice now...

When you have spoken your advice, attend to your heart again to see whether there is a second element of advice that is arising, and if it does, also speak that with your inner voice... And then when you are complete and there is no more advice arising, open your eyes, take a deep breath, take your journal and write down what advice you have just given to yourself.

## **Additional Journaling**

9. **Advice from self to Self:** What advice did I give myself?
10. **The here and now:** Look forward just for the next few months. What outlines might you be able to discern from your field of the future? It may not be concrete at this stage but perhaps you have a few ideas, some grounding values that will guide your life going forward.
11. **Others:** Sometimes, although the field of the future may still be hazy, we can see the people we want to be there with us. Who is standing with you in your field of the future?
12. **Letting go:** There will almost always be some letting go of the old in order to create the field of the future. What might you have to let go of? What is the old stuff that must die, the old skin, the old behaviours, the assumptions that you may need to shed?

## **Pairs Sharing**

We will break into pairs to share and hear our dreams for the future. You will have fifteen minutes each. You might describe a little of how this experience was for you, what you discovered that surprised you, and particularly what emerged from your imagination? Please manage your time so that each of you has a full fifteen minutes to share, or to sit in silence with your vision of your desired future.

We also encourage you to arrange a time to share your answers more deeply with another, during the upcoming week, so we can dig into them more fully in Session Six.

## CHECK OUT

For the benefit of the whole circle as we check-out, we invite you to share briefly one thing you sense might be wanting to emerge, as you ascend into the light?

## FOR FOLLOW UP

Please continue to journal on these questions through the week. In our last session, you will be creating a collage as a representation of the gifts and commitments you want to make as you emerge back into the world. You may want to scan some magazines or photos for pictures that speak to you and note down any specific ideas that come to you that you can bring to our final workshop gathering.

**Website:** More on The Presencing Institute, Otto Scharmer's organization, at [www.presencing.org](http://www.presencing.org) and an invitation to the Gaia journey where thousands of people around the world are coming together to reinvent the future.

**TED:** A TED talk by Anne Lammott, the pre-eminent author on Hope, talks about the 12 most important things in life at:

[https://www.ted.com/talks/anne\\_lamott\\_12\\_truths\\_i\\_learned\\_from\\_life\\_and\\_writing?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/anne_lamott_12_truths_i_learned_from_life_and_writing?language=en).

**Article:** Charles Eisenstein The Coronation on the alternative meanings of the virus, available at [www.charleseisenstein.org](http://www.charleseisenstein.org).

# SESSION SIX:

## SHARING OUR LIGHT

### CHECK IN

How are you feeling as we come to the end of our exploration of the dark night of the virus?

### FOCUS FOR TODAY



We are now moving into the final stage, emerging from the dark night journey, continuing to see and sense into our new selves and this new world. You may be feeling relief, gratitude, wholeness, grace, openness, connection,

expansiveness. There may be a sense of play and celebration, energy and enthusiasm. You may still feel tentative, as though you're going to fall back into the darkness again. Or you may find that your expectations are too high, that everything is not clear or perfect and full of light as you had hoped. Yet it is time to share your learning, the gift you've been given, with the world, awkwardly perhaps as you take the first tentative steps.

## **WIDE OPEN**

Let's read Dawna Markova's beautiful invocation as we move into our session.

I will not die an unlived life.

I will not live in fear  
Of falling or catching fire.

I choose to inhabit my days,  
To allow my living to open me,  
To make me less afraid,  
More accessible,

To loosen my heart  
Until it becomes a wing,  
A torch, a promise.

I choose to risk my significance;

To live so that which came to me as seed  
Goes to the next as blossom  
And that which came to me as blossom,  
Goes on as fruit.

## LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD

This process, called a **Three Space**, comes from our friend Richard Strozzi Heckler who is known for embodied coaching and leadership. It involves something of a review, a stepping back, then moving into the current moment, and then stepping once again into the field of the future we sensed into last week.

Before we begin, let's get comfortable. Sit upright with your spine straight and your feet flat on the floor. You may want to close your eyes. Attend to your breathing and let yourself relax into your seat. Feel into your body and just be with whatever you find going on. Take a few deep breaths. See our circle here and feel the presence of each one of us sharing the same sacred space. Sit with that for a couple of minutes and then we will begin.

**One Space:** Please stand in a relaxed and comfortable posture with enough room behind you for one step back. We're going to take a step back into the dark, put on the cloak of darkness, and remember what it felt like to be there. Feel the darkness in your body. How does it feel? Remember the feelings... Now hold a position that expresses the darkness you remember. Hold that for a moment, just be with it, remembering... Now look at the others around our circle and take in their body postures. Breathe into the circle and the feelings that are being expressed.

**Two Space:** Take a step forward into the now. Be present to this moment. Maybe a bit of darkness remains but you are mostly in the light. What does it feel like now? Find those feelings in your body and take a couple of deep breaths... Attend to anything that is in the present moment. Spend a couple of minutes with

that. ..what is here in the now? Let's take another body position that expresses what you are sensing and seeing now. Hold that for a moment... Now look at others around the circle and take in their postures. Notice any differences from the One Space postures.

**Three Space:** Now take another step forward into the field of the future, three years from today. Drawing on the work we did last week, see and sense into your future in as much detail as you can... What future will you have created personally? Professionally? What will your life be like? Who will be in your community? What will you be engaged in? Be as concrete and specific as you can. Spend a couple of minutes just being in your future, taking a good look around... Attend to how you feel in this future. How does it feel in your body? Now take another posture, one that best expresses how you are here in the future. Hold that for a moment and then look at others around the circle, taking in their postures. Notice any differences from the One and Two Spaces.

In your journal, make a note of the key elements of your three-year future. What do you want to take away from the last six weeks? What are the gifts you want to take forward with you and share as you re-enter the world? What is one commitment you want to make out loud to our group?

## **VISION BOARDS**

On a board or heavy paper stock, place the pictures and words that best express your vision of your future. You can use pictures from magazines, draw or paint, do whatever your creativity suggests. You will have about twenty minutes and that may feel too short, but you can add additional details or specific images

you want later. This graphic representation will be your beacon as you move into your future.

## **Pairs**

We will break into pairs to share our vision boards and our commitment to action. You will have ten minutes each. You may want to use some of that time to get feedback from your partner about your vision and your next steps.

## **CHECK OUT**

Let's come to a close by sharing our vision boards with each other and voicing one commitment you want to make to the whole circle. You may want to use the phrase, "I am a commitment to..." in order to embody your pledge. You will have two minutes each.

## **FOR FOLLOW UP**

**Website:** [www.strozziinstitute](http://www.strozziinstitute) for more on the work of Richard Strozzi-Heckler.

**Music:** A wonderful world-wide uniting of musicians at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6vT\\_7AX06UQ&list=RD6vT\\_7AX06UQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6vT_7AX06UQ&list=RD6vT_7AX06UQ).

**And More Music:** Empty Hands Music for the pandemic and for a better world, at: [www.emptyhandsmusic.org](http://www.emptyhandsmusic.org).



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# BIOGRAPHIES



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