

A person is swimming in the ocean, with only their head and shoulders visible above the water. The water is a deep blue, and the sky in the background is a soft, hazy mix of light blue and orange, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is calm and serene.

# CULTIVATING CALM

ART, WRITING, AND EMBODIMENT PRACTICES  
FOR PROCESSING FEELINGS DURING UNCERTAIN TIMES

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This is dedicated to the people who have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

To the medical workers who are tirelessly caring for the sick.

To the food service workers who have been putting themselves at risk to provide for their families.

To the small business owners who aren't sure how things will turn out.

To the moms, dads, daughters, sons, sisters, brothers, lovers who are worried for those most dear to them.

Here are some tools for you to process what you have been going through and hold space for yourself to heal.

Now, more than ever, we need to be kind and compassionate to one another and to ourselves.

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# MINDFUL LINE DRAWING

**MATERIALS:** paper and a pencil, marker, or pen

**TRY THIS:** Take a moment and feel the weight of your body in your chair. Hold your pencil in your hand.

Take some deep, long breaths, bringing your awareness to the way that the air feels as it moves in and out of your body,

Place your pencil anywhere on your paper and as you inhale, move the pencil with that movement and as you exhale, move your pencil in the opposite direction. You can use up and down lines, like the rising and the falling of your breath if you wish. Try to move your pencil in sync with your breath. Try to even out the inhale and exhale so they are the same length.

The most important thing is to be present in your body and to notice any feelings that come up. You can intentionally make a pattern or design, or simply see what comes up. You can even close your eyes as you work.

Perhaps you will create a pattern similar to sound waves, or ocean waves, or a heart monitor.

If you wish, you can also add a mantra that you recite to yourself, such as "I am safe right now" which you can use to self-soothe through this process.

# STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS POETRY

**MATERIALS:** paper and a pencil, or pen, and/or your voice memo app on your phone

**TRY THIS:** For this exercise, it will be helpful to be somewhere alone. This is a moment to check in with yourself about what you have been going through. What images or stories have been sticking with you that you have heard lately? What feelings have been moving under the surface? What are you needing right now?

Take 5-10 minutes and record yourself speaking (or write) your thoughts. No need to plan it out, just share whatever comes to your mind, or whatever you are feeling in your body. Share about your fears, your feelings, what this has been like for you.

Then, you can turn some of what you said or wrote into a poem if you wish by selecting the parts that feel powerful to you and stringing them together.

A practice in self-compassion would be to listen to your recording back and allow yourself to feel empathy and compassion for that person (you) who is going through what you described. Consider sharing this with a safe person.

Example stream of consciousness poem:

Time stopped. Dread filled  
the empty supermarket.  
With Fearful eyes she grabbed  
5 loaves of bread.  
We stayed inside for days.  
Mother Mystery  
took a deep breath.  
Cogs and wheels paused.  
Emissions stopped pouring off the skin of our earth.

Colonizers fled to paradise to  
“get away from” (bring) the virus. Irreverent.  
They left. No diapers for native babies.

All the noise of everyday life. Silent.  
In that void. Stillness.  
I see the faces of my daughters.

Being alive, taking breaths with lungs  
not tense full of water.  
Aware of my frailty.  
Interconnectedness. Ripples of care/carelessness.

The pain and beauty is thick and heavy



# MINDFUL MOVEMENT TO RELEASE FEELINGS

**MATERIALS:** your body, a space you feel comfortable in

**TRY THIS:** Find a comfortable seated position. Take a moment and check in with your body. Notice any places that feel tension or discomfort, or pleasant sensations.

Look around the space you are in, find a comfortable place to rest your gaze. Continue looking at that space for the next 5-10 minutes. Just notice how your body feels. If you feel the urge to move your body in any way, do it. If you need to shake, contract, expand, writhe, make fists, jump, run, anything at all, DO IT! This is your body's way of releasing your feelings that are stored in your body. By listening to your body and moving intuitively, you are activating your body's innate ability to heal and process trauma.

If you notice uncomfortable sensations arising, imagine sending your breath to those places and see what happens. You can also place your hand on that place with love and tenderness.

If you become overwhelmed at all, find a place that feels okay in your body, maybe your feet or hands, or your pinky finger. Direct your attention to this place in your body.

# PARTS OF SELF COLLAGE

**MATERIALS:** images, magazines, tape/glue, scissors  
(optional), piece of paper

**TRY THIS:** Take a moment to check in with yourself. What different parts of yourself do you notice? We all have different parts of ourselves and we often feel more than one thing at the same time.

Maybe there is a part of you that is scared, or feels small.

Maybe there is a part of you that feels brave and protective.

Maybe there is a part of you that feels like a toddler throwing a tantrum.

Find images that "feel" like each of these parts to you. You can also just look through the images and see if any call out to you. You might feel a pull towards them or have an emotional reaction when you see them.

Create a collage using these images to represent 3-5 parts of yourself. Then, you can dialogue internally or through writing with these parts. Some questions you can ask them are:

- What is it like to be you?
- What are you going through?
- What do you need?





Example of parts of self collage

# PAINTING YOUR FEELINGS

**MATERIALS:** any kind of paint will work, a paintbrush, and some sort of surface to paint on (could be paper, recycled cardboard, etc)

**TRY THIS:** Notice the different feelings you have been experiencing this last week.

Now, select a color for each feeling.

Fill the portion of the page that feels about the size of that feeling. How much of your week felt that way?

What kind of marks represent that feeling?

Maybe some of the feelings overlap.

Just notice all of the feelings and know that all of them are acceptable. Resist the urge to judge your feelings or tell yourself you should feel something different. Just be with your feelings and witness them.

Below are some examples of feelings to give you some ideas

.  
scared    sad    anxious    irritable    worried  
content    calm    peaceful    serene.    joyful.    irate  
rageful.    angry.    happy.    overwhelmed    silly.    playful  
hopeful    terrified.    numb    vigilant.    energetic.    tired

Maybe choose a color that feels calming and allow yourself to fill up as many pages as you need with that color.

Consider sharing this practice or your art with a safe person.



Examples of painting your feelings



# A NOTE

During this challenging time,  
we need to be kind and gentle with ourselves.

We need to give ourselves moments of  
quiet reflection to feel our feelings and process them.

This is the path to healing, sitting with  
ourselves with lovingkindness.

Treating ourselves like we would treat a beloved child.

Listening to the various parts of ourselves  
and taking care of them.

We need to take care of ourselves,  
tend to our healing, take care of each other.  
Hold space for ourselves and our loved ones  
to share our pain and what brings us hope.

We are in this together.

With love, humility, and gratitude,  
Rachel

