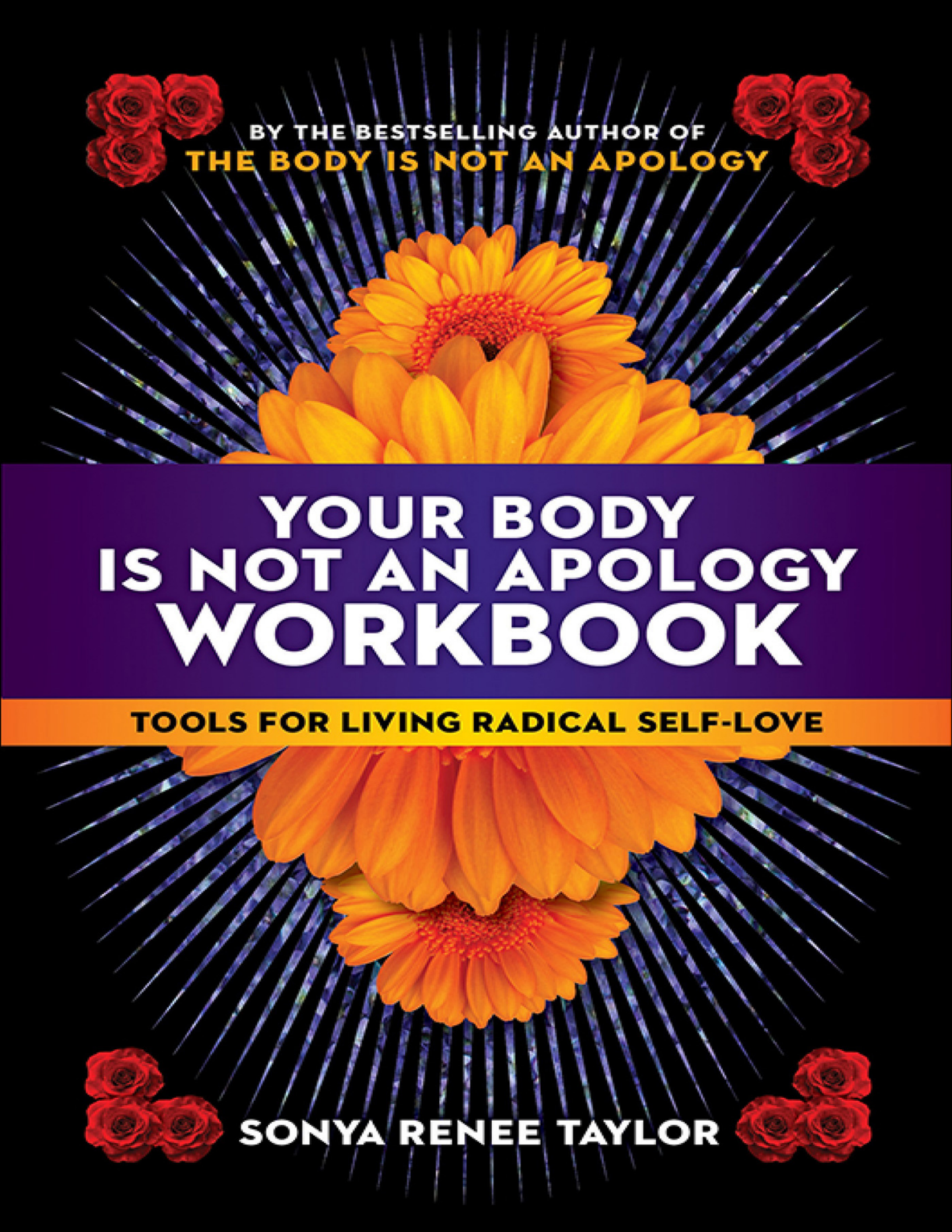

BY THE BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF
THE BODY IS NOT AN APOLOGY
YOUR BODY IS NOT AN APOLOGY WORKBOOK
TOOLS FOR LIVING RADICAL SELF-LOVE
SONYA RENEE TAYLOR



Your Body Is Not an Apology

WORKBOOK

TOOLS FOR LIVING RADICAL SELF-LOVE



Sonya Renee Taylor



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Your Body Is Not an Apology Workbook

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This workbook is dedicated to

Anastasia Duchess

10.07.07–04.04.20

One of my most

important teachers about the

unapologetic embodiment

of radical self-love

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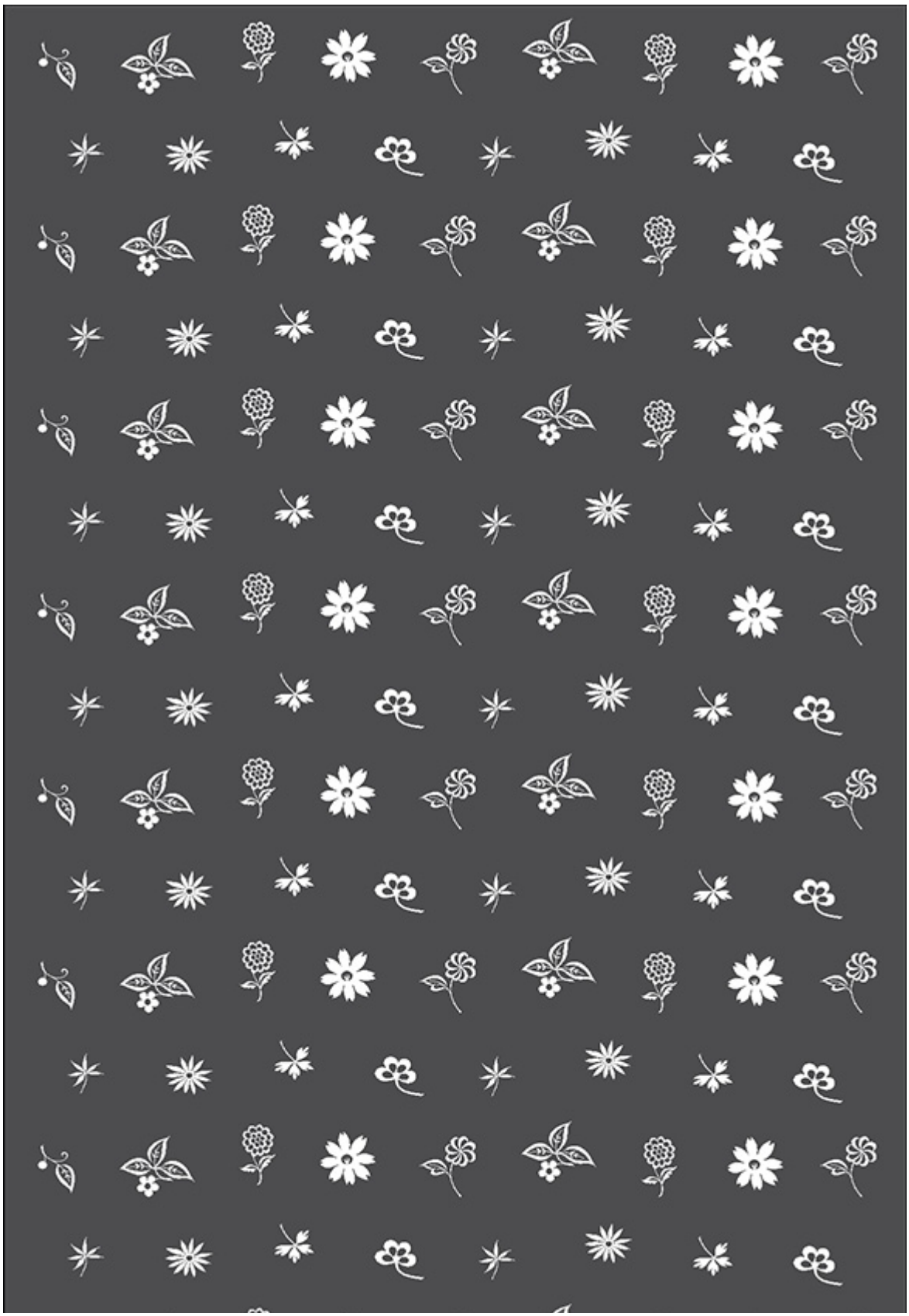
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INTRODUCTION

Getting Ready for the Road

Hi. I am so glad you are here. I am not sure how you got here; perhaps you read my book *The Body Is Not An Apology: The Power of Radical Self-Love*. Maybe you follow me on social media or saw a video of me blabbering on about this radical self-love thing. Either way, welcome. I am excited to be part of this particular journey with you. I believe with the entirety of my being that radical self-love is a pathway to a richer, more miraculous, fecund, joyful life. It is a power-wielding practice that can uproot oppression and grow equity, justice, and compassion on a global scale. Yup. I believe radical self-love does all that. It's the coconut oil of social change! Unfortunately, accessing the earth-shifting influence of radical self-love is about as easy as accessing the core of a coconut with a baby spoon. Quarrying the magic of this force will take both personal and collective effort. It will take some work.

I once read somewhere that faith without works is dead (or is it the other way around?). While I may not agree with the dead part, I think we can all concur that anything done without consistent practice will be hard to master. Living by a radical self-love ethos will require more of us than posting Instagram memes and personal platitudes. Radical self-love is an action practice. When you dedicate yourself to this work, you will have to invest in a radical self-love routine, examining how you currently operate and creating new patterns of behavior to replace old body-shame operations, which will ultimately give way to a radically new way of being. This

endeavor is what will be needed to take our will and power back from those who help cultivate and then profit off our discontentment and disconnection with our own divine beings. This is the work we must do if we wish to beat back the bounty hunters of the Body-Shame Profit Complex and the institutional structures of body terrorism.

Unlike the grueling labor under a system of capitalism, radical self-love invites you to keep the profit of your labor and to willingly watch its overflow rush over all the areas of your life, filling others with a comparable sense of possibility and love. Now *that* is the kind of work that pays off. Your radical self-love journey restores your relationship with the most influential person in your life: you.

Rediscovering intimacy and connection with a body you may have been on the outs with for decades may feel awkward at first. You may even find that the bullhorn of body shame gets louder initially. Do not fret, friend. Every living thing fights to stay alive, and the Body-Shame Profit Complex and systems of body terrorism are very much alive in each of us. Those systems of self-loathing and internalized oppression may get downright nasty as you move to compost their waste into the nutrient-rich soil of your new life. That response is natural and common.

What I would like you to let seep into the whole of your heart is that your inherent sense of radical self-love has fought to stay alive as well. It is why you are here, pulling up the weeds of body shame and reclaiming the right to live unapologetically in your body today. Go forth with great faith and courage, my dear. Your journey home to you is more than deserved. I also want to let you in on a little secret. I know how this story ends. Psst: radical self-love wins.

How to Use This Workbook

I hate rules! Consequently, I will not offer many, but I would like to propose some guidance as you journey through this workbook. Each tool and activity is meant to build on the tools that came before it, so there is value in starting at the beginning and working your way to the end. However, I also trust that if you are being led to start in the middle, there is a reason that is specific to you, and I encourage you

to trust your inner guidance. There is no prize for completing all the activities in the shortest amount of time. In fact, speeding through the activities will likely make them less impactful and limit the space needed to truly integrate the ideas into your being. Be patient and gentle with yourself. When you notice resistance to any of the ideas or exercises, practice lovingly sitting with the resistance. Ask it what it wants you to know. Allow it to become a child whispering a precious secret in your ear. Receive it as important information for your radical self-love journey. Be with the resistance until it releases into willingness.

You may be asked to do certain activities over a prolonged period like a week or a month. Focus on doing these activities one at a time to avoid feeling overwhelmed. Start with what feels easeful and work up to those things that feel more challenging. Remember, this work is not about "proving" anything to yourself or anyone else. This workbook is an invitation to unlearn body shame and invite the embodied experience of radical self-love; there is nothing you need to prove to do that.

In this book, you will be asked to draw, color, doodle, talk to friends, take risks, and perhaps step outside of what feels like your natural gifts and talents. I encourage you to release the need to be "good" at what you are doing and instead strive to be authentic. Perfection is the enemy of radical self-love because it is an impossible illusion. When the voice of perfectionism chimes in, take a deep breath, remember that the work is about the process, not about the product, and give yourself permission to be fabulously unapologetically imperfect.

You Are Not a Car

Some of us, before this whole conversation about radical self-love, didn't so much hate our bodies as we engaged them as if they were vehicles, like a car we drove around. We paid only as much attention as was necessary to get the car started and get on with our day. We put gas in the car so we did not end up stuck on the side of a deserted highway or on some backwoods road out of a horror film.

We occasionally took the car to the shop if it seemed like something extreme was up. Sometimes we trashed the car, littering the passenger seats with wrappers and water bottles. Some of us went for months without visiting a car wash. We would awaken, get in our cars, and go, navigating our lives while giving little thought to our vehicles until we needed them again.

This model was not sustainable. There are some key differences between a car and your body, the primary one being that should you wake up and find that your car won't start, you will either buy a new car or find a new mode of transportation. Should you find that your body won't start, we can safely assume you didn't wake up. To treat our bodies like cars is to essentially treat ourselves like something disposable.

> You, my love, are not disposable. Besides, your body wants nothing more than to be your buddy through this ride called life, and that means you (and your body) will need a solid set of tools for the road.

The Thinking, Doing, Being Process

If you have picked up this workbook, then it is likely that some part of you feels called to the work of radical self-love and believes that what is inside this book might help you get there. My hope is that, through the practices in this book, you move from radical self-love as an intellectual idea to radical self-love as a guiding principle and internal lighthouse as you navigate the daily seas of body shame. I invite you to read *The Body Is Not An Apology* as it provides the theories and concepts that serve as the foundation for the activities you will undertake in this workbook. In it I highlight how we've been exploited by a world that hoards power and profits off of our self-loathing. I offer the practice of radical self-love as a key to bankrupting the Body-Shame Profit Complex, and I present radical self-love as one of the foundational tools in dismantling global

systems of oppression and, ultimately, reinstating our sovereign power to exist unapologetically in the bodies we have right now. Radical self-love can change the world, but we must see it beyond concept or methodology. It must be practical if it is to be transformative.

Reading about radical self-love will not be enough to transform ourselves or this majestic mess of a planet we have inherited. Radical self-love is a return to the love of our whole being, and to truly mine the fullness of its riches we must engage a whole-being approach to our lives and bodies. Creating a radical self-love life is a three-step process:


Thinking


Doing


Being



Thinking

Our thoughts are the cornerstones of how we engage in life. They often give way to our feelings, and our feelings are indicators of our beliefs. We have millions of uninterrogated beliefs, a large multitude given to us by a system of bodily hierarchy and body terrorism. Some of our thoughts have not grown the roots of belief just yet. They operate more like a lint filter or a social media newsfeed (you know these are similar!), filled with information and ideas that you've intentionally collected, but you have not refreshed your feed or emptied your lint trap.

Our thoughts are an amalgamation of all manner of input mixed with a dash of original content. Often, it's a mess in there, a vessel filled with self-loathing and judgment. It is unsurprising that we avoid being present with our thoughts. We think tons of repugnant, petrifying, miserable things about our own bodies and other folks' bodies every single day. It is easy to slip into a pit of shame for having these thoughts. Unfortunately, shame keeps us distant and detached from our personal center of governance. It puts us out of operational control.

Have you ever felt like you were living your life on autopilot? Somehow you just keep recycling old behaviors and ideas that you know do not serve you, but you cannot seem to interrupt them. Yeah, been there! That sense of autopilot is the result of being disconnected from our thoughts. Without awareness, our thoughts run covert operations all through our lives, assassinating our sense of worth and blowing up our connections with other humans. When we avoid our thoughts, they go rogue.

Awareness of our thoughts surfaces the how and why of our behaviors. It gives us a fighting chance at transforming how we live in the world.

Share any fears, reflections, reactions, or concerns you may have about taking on your **Thinking** in this workbook.

Doing

Awareness of our thoughts is not enough to change our behaviors. Knowing why we do something will not necessarily keep us from doing it. Doing is a choice. It is an act of will. Doing often demands that we act despite our thoughts.

When we are no longer on autopilot, we are forced to deal with the discomfort of new action. Think of radical self-love as resistance training against our decades-old, tight, calcified thoughts. Adopting actions that promote radical self-love is comparable to working a muscle that has not been moved in years. The muscle is going to be sore and tender. You are going to be tired. But the exhaustion and frustration will lessen over time, and there will be ease where there once was pain. Old habits of body-shaming yourself, judging the bodies of others under your breath, or acting from a sense of failure or lack of self-worth will become uncomfortable behaviors, and radical self-love action will begin to feel like the path of least resistance.

Over time, you will notice that your thoughts flow in alignment with your behaviors. The junk in your brain will start to occupy less space, and when it starts to clutter your thoughts again, you will recognize it and move it out. You are thinking and acting in radical self-love.

Share any fears, reflections, reactions, or concerns you may have about taking on your **Doing** in this workbook.



Being

Have you ever met someone and thought, “Wow, Lisa just emanates love from her whole being”? The experience of being around someone who radiates a discernable energy is an act of being. However, it is not always a positive experience. We engage every day with people whose energy is not welcoming— or sometimes even downright hostile—but we also meet people who radiate unencumbered love. Children are a glorious example of this ability to radiate love. Having not yet experienced layers of body shame, young kids are reflections of the source relationship of all our beings: love.

We, too, can access that source relationship. Through the power of thought and action we become who we have always been; we enter a new way of being in our bodies and in the world. We return to our inherent state of being *radical self-love*.

Share any fears, reflections, reactions, or concerns you may have about stepping into **Being** as you use this workbook.



Four Pillars of Practice

We know that adopting a radical self-love lifestyle is a process of thinking, doing, and being. But changing the way we think, act, and are in our daily lives can feel like an assignment of planetary proportions. Implementing practices to structure this endeavor is the equivalent of turning on the high beams amid the fog to help you navigate. Rather than collapsing under an avalanche of new ideas and behaviors, we can install signposts and guardrails that help us know if we are still on the road to radical self-love. The following four pillars of practice can help us corral our wily thinking, fortify love-laden action, and give us access to a new way of being in the world:

Taking out the toxic

Mind matters

Unapologetic action

Collective compassion

Dismantling body shame and body terrorism is a process of de-indoctrination: it requires that we excavate the thoughts we have internalized about bodies and evict the voices of judgment, hierarchy, and shame. In *The Body Is Not An Apology*, I recounted how my fear of sharing a selfie was an early prompt in my radical

self-love journey. The voice I heard in my head telling me I was too fat, ugly, and black to post the photo was not my voice. It was the propaganda of body shame, the “outside voice.” Our inherent sense of radical self-love doesn’t speak to us with cruelty or viciousness. Radical self-love does not malign our gender, sexuality, race, disability, weight, age, acne, scars, or illnesses. A world of body terrorism that impugns us because of our identities is the only thing that would dare speak to us with such malice. The four pillars teach us to make peace with our bodies by distinguishing and diminishing the outside voice and cultivating a practice of listening more deeply to our authentic selves, our radical self-love voice, our “inside voice.”

Taking Out the Toxic and ***Mind Matters*** ask us to imagine the inside and outside voices as though they were volume knobs in our minds. These radical self-love practices teach us how to adjust the sound and filter the static, turning up our authentic voice and tuning out our body-shame brainwashing. ***Unapologetic Action*** integrates our thinking with our physical selves, moving our radical self-love practice out of our heads and into our bodies. ***Collective Compassion*** synthesizes how we emanate radical self-love, learning to radiate love through our own beings and onto the beings of others. Under each pillar are specific tools we can practice using to disrupt body shame and divest from systems of bodily hierarchy. They are concrete action steps designed to help you move through the thinking, doing, being process, ultimately landing you in the seat of your most powerful location: reconnected to your inherent sense of radical self-love.



Pillar 1

Taking Out the Toxic

To live in a world of body terrorism is akin to forcibly imbibing three hundred milk jugs of body shame daily. From the moment we turn on a television, radio, or computer in the morning until we close the laptop or put the phone on silent at night, we are inundated with messages relaying our supposed inherent deficiency. The average adult consumes fifteen and a half hours of media each day, and even when they don't contain overt body shame, the shows we watch, the music we listen to, and the articles we read deliver messages about bodies in the world, including our own. Taking in toxic messages blocks our pathway to radical self-love without any real effort on our part. Just walking down the street or standing in the grocery store checkout line can be a stroll down body-shame lane thanks to billboards, bus advertisements, and tabloid covers.

By engaging in the everyday activities of our society, we subconsciously absorb views about our bodies that are antithetical to radical self-love. Therefore, being connected to our thoughts is a crucial process for battling body shame. The tools in pillar 1 are about identifying our external and internal body-shame chatter and learning to quiet the "outside voice" blaring inside us. The following exercises are designed to help you begin today to revolutionize the way you live and love in your body. Use these pages to try on new ideas, challenge faulty beliefs, and forge new pathways guided by a radical transformative love.





TOOL 1

dump the junk

On any given day we may find ourselves in our local grocery store, waiting in line to buy organic kale chips, when we feel the energetic tug of the current fashion or tabloid magazine calling to us from just above the Orbit gum. Of course we want to know why Kim Kardashian put hubby Kanye West out of the house last week, and of course we need to know the Five Secrets to Solving the Sin of Cellulite. Before we are even consciously aware of it, we are handing the cashier a twenty-dollar bill for kale chips, Kim K, and diet tips. Getting sucked into the vortex of escapism is alluring. Wanting to dive head-first into anyone's life besides our own is certainly understandable, but that mini mental vacation is not without cost. The content we are exposed to impacts us. Whether we like it or not, we are taking in toxic messages.

Is the answer to swear off all media and adopt a monastic life? No, not unless you are into that sort of thing. But we can be intentional about the media we ingest, and we certainly do not have to give our hard-fought dollars to industries that profit from self-hate and body terrorism. Dump the Junk is a tool for detoxifying our daily lives from mass-media body shame. Ducking every awful message lobbed at us via television, radio, and the internet is unrealistic. We are humans living in the world. Nevertheless, we can be intentional and strategic about how we engage with media. Toxic media creates a cumulative effect of body shame that erodes our sense of self and places a scrim of distrust and scrutiny on the bodies of others over time. Dumping the junk turns down the high-decibel volume of body-

negative messages, creating some space for us to assess our own bodies and the bodies of others with less background noise.

Media Memories

The first step in detoxifying our relationship with media asks us to deep-dive into our own history, thinking about its influence in our lives. Use the questions below to explore the earliest impressions media left on you.

- What is your earliest media memory? Was it a song, commercial, movie, or something else?

- What about the images, ideas, or messages made it memorable?

- How old were you when you started using social media?

- What do you remember about your first experiences on social media?

Clock Your Consumption, aka Media Audit

Based on current data projections, it is estimated that the average adult spends approximately 153 minutes per day on social media platforms. Should the data continue trending in its current direction, it is likely that the average person will spend 3,462,390 minutes or 6 years and 8 months of their entire life on social media applications. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics only two activities take up more of humanity's time: watching television (with lifetime usage of 8 years and 4 months) and sleeping (which will cost you 26 years and 5 months of your life).

We take in astronomical quantities of content via media channels. Information and ideas regularly seep into our brains, creating both conscious and subconscious ideas about our bodies and the bodies of others. We rarely take the time to investigate the nature of the messages we are consuming each day. Conducting a media audit

allows us to identify the messages we are taking in and then get intentional about what to do about it. Let's take a moment and audit our intake.

As you move through your typical day, count the number of negative body messages you encounter. List examples from the following types of media.

Television/film

Social media

Radio

Billboards

Magazines

- Which media messages feel directed at your body specifically?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- What messages do you think you are being asked to take away?

- Which media messages feel directed at the bodies of others? (Consider messages about age, weight, gender, sexuality, race, ability.)

- What are the messages being conveyed about those bodies?

- Who is missing from this media? What bodies are not visible in the media you consume? Remember, absence also conveys a message. What does that absence tell you?

Sorting through Shame

Many of the reflection exercises you will be asked to do in this workbook may bring up feelings of shame. You may find yourself thinking, “How have I let myself get sucked into all of these horrible messages?” “Am I a terrible person for all of the uninterrogated thoughts I have about my body and other bodies?” “I must be failing at radical self-love.” These are all incredibly common feelings to have as we journey to discover and disassemble how the Body-Shame Profit Complex and systems of body terrorism live inside us. First, take a deep breath—literally.

Remember that we are all impacted by and indoctrinated into a centuries-old system of bodily hierarchy. In *The Body Is Not An Apology*, I remind us that we all have been in an immersion school of body-based oppression. We had no real choice in absorbing these messages of body shame, but we have all the choices in working to dismantle them inside ourselves and in the world. Our radical self-love journey is not linear. We will grow, contract, grow more, revisit

old habits, and shift them again. The work is to love ourselves radically at each step of the way. Try on the following questions to shake off the shame and radically reflect without judging or shaming yourself.

Shame in Our Bodies

Shame is not only an experience of the mind but also an experience of our physical selves. Tightness in our chest, sweaty palms, tension, headaches, hives—all of these can be physical responses to shame that we may sometimes feel before we ever even consciously notice thoughts related to shame. Learning to tune in to our physical responses can be transformative in processing and releasing shame. Somatics is an area of bodywork that is concerned with how we experience and perceive ourselves and the world through the body. Somatic practices are an invitation to explore how various experiences are held in our bodies. Throughout this workbook, you will be asked to check in with your body and listen to the information it wants to share with you on this radical self-love journey.

- When feelings of shame arise, where do you notice them in your body?

- When you think about your relationship with your body, what physical sensations are you aware of and where do you feel them in your body?

The Stories We Tell Ourselves

Our brains are naturally and unconsciously telling us stories about what the world means all the time. This is a necessary neurological process to help us make sense of our surroundings and our place in the world. But body terrorism has hijacked this system to its own ends. It persuades us to believe stories with negative messages, such as “I am not worthy of happiness until I _____” or “Because I am not _____ I will never have ____.” These stories are the shame-based beliefs we have internalized about what living in our bodies means for our lives and our futures. Body shame reinforces our negative stories that often become self-fulfilling prophecies in our lives.

List three stories (statements) that your feelings of shame bring up for you. What does the shame tell you to believe?

Story 1

Story 2

Story 3

Radical self-love helps us see the illusion of these shame-based stories and connects us to a sense of self rooted in possibility and purpose and connected to our inherent worthiness and value. Radical self-love changes the story. It gives us a counternarrative, a new story to replace the old one.

Write a response to counter each story listed above. (You don't have to believe the new story to practice it.)

New Story 1

New Story 2

New Story 3

When feelings of shame arise, say aloud, “I did not have power over the body-shame messages I learned growing up, but I do not have to keep them. Here are three things I am doing today to take back my power from the Body-Shame Profit Complex.

1.

2.

3.

Focus on a Fast, aka Media Detox

It is not uncommon to feel a bit gross after we uncover the contents of the messages we’ve been ingesting on a daily basis. After all, we

have been taking in some pretty disturbing ideas about ourselves and others, messages designed to have us feel deficient, unworthy, and in constant search of a solution to our presumed lack and "not enoughness." It's like looking inside a stomach full of body shame. Ick! However, now that we know what we are taking in, we have an opportunity to *do* something about it. Taking on a media detox is an opportunity to give our psyches a much-needed break from toxic media messaging. To actively dump the junk, we will focus on a media fast.

Commit to a twelve-hour fast in which you actively choose not to engage in television, radio, or social media content. It will mean turning off your social media apps for the day, switching off the television, and not listening to the radio station in the car. Yikes! Sounds extreme, right? It's not nearly as extreme as the poisonous daily messages of the Body-Shame Profit Complex. Many of us no longer notice the impact of these messages on our energy and internal dialogue because we have been in the junk for so long that we might not know it is impacting us. We can't imagine a different feeling or experience because we have grown so accustomed to our current one. Media detoxing is your opportunity to experience how your energy and sense of self shifts when you take out the toxic. Yes, it can be challenging, but don't fret! There will be support and check-ins throughout the day to help you stay on your media-fast track.

Guided Twelve-Hour Detox

This detox is going to be a journey, and giving yourself mile-markers will help you through. Throughout the twelve hours, check in with yourself here and follow the prompts at the specified intervals.

Before You Start: Prefast Check-In

How do you think the experience of a twelve-hour detox will impact you? Are you looking forward to it or dreading it? What is the best thing that could happen?

Write down the time you began your detox.

Four-Hour Check-In

How is the detox going for you? What has happened or what reactions have you had that you didn't expect?

Eight-Hour Check-In

Which part of this fast is most challenging for you? Why? When the urge to break the fast comes up, what strategies are you using to move through those moments?

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

Reflect on Your Fast

It is likely that you had the urge to turn on the radio or television, internet/social media, or pick up a magazine. If you didn't, you might be a comic book superhero (and will you please share your powers with me?). If you are not superhuman, like most of us, please take a moment to reflect on the experience by answering the questions below.

- What was happening with you or around you when the urge to break the fast came up?

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

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. . . . . .

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

- What were you feeling at the time?

- Were you hungry, angry, lonely, or tired?

- What did you choose to do instead of engaging with media?

Reflect on how differently you feel after your detox.

What surprised you?

What did you learn about yourself or your body?

The practice of noticing what we use media for and its relationship to how we feel in our bodies can give us powerful insight into how we use media to avoid being present in our relationship with our own lives and our bodies.

Fill in the Blank, aka New Content Strategy

When we remove media messages from our daily lives that reinforce our experience of shame and deficiency, we may find that we have an abundance of time on our hands. We can fill in the blank spaces where body shame used to be with new content and creativity. Dumping the junk gives us a new treasure chest of hours to fill with pursuits that cultivate peace, pleasure, joy, ease, and love. Let's see what new delights we can access with all this radical self-love space!

Now that you have taken your time back from toxic media, consider what you would like to fill those hours with. Use the space below to complete your new radical self-love strategy. Consider what activities bring you peace. Maybe you love sleeping, reading a book, or sitting by the water. Pleasure might be having a great meal, lying naked in the sun, inhaling the scent of a beautiful candle or incense, or experiencing a good foot rub. You get the point!

Under each category, list two activities that help you connect with peace, pleasure, joy, ease, and love.

peace

1.....

2.....

pleasure

1.....

2.....

joy

1.....

2.....

ease

1.....

2.....

love

1.....

2.....



Draw yourself into a perfect day
with absolutely no media.

Remember, give yourself permission to do the exercise whether you are good at drawing or not. We are practicing radical love for all our perfect imperfections.

TOOL 2

boot body bad-mouthing

Does the following scenario sound familiar? Two friends are in a clothing store trying on potential purchases, when friend 1 says, “OMG, I look like a cow in this!” In response to that self-effacing comment, friend 2 retorts, “No you don’t. You look great! Now, I would look like a cow in that!” The two friends proceed to volley mutual accolades over fitting-room doors, all the while tossing darts of body insults at themselves. We call this friendship.

Oppression and marginalization often force female-identified people and other marginalized folks to play small as a strategy for survival. Consequently, many of us have formed a sense of cultural camaraderie around body shame that dictates we affirm one another at the expense of ourselves. This is a menacing mechanism of body terrorism.

In a society that applauds our ability to make ourselves literally and figuratively smaller, it is no surprise we employ this strategy within our social relationships. How often are we asked to shrink ourselves in size, presence, and power? To be bold and unapologetic is to quickly be maligned as cocky, arrogant, or worse. Couple this with the capitalistic model of scarcity that supposes there is not enough money, space, time, or love for us all, and it is no wonder we find ourselves abdicating our personal power to uplift our friends.

What happens when we toss out that tired model and stand unapologetically in our power? We not only embolden ourselves but also inspire those we love to do the same.

Criticism Is Not Camaraderie

Not only is body shame a terrible foundation upon which to structure our friendships, but it is also highly contagious. How we talk about our bodies impacts how others see and experience their bodies. In a body-shame system that thrives on comparison every time we assess our bodies as bad, we unwittingly enroll others in the same system of comparison, forcing them to sort out if their bodies are "good" or "bad" within the system of bodily hierarchy. Our interconnectedness means we impact each other.

Radical self-love summons us to be our most expansive selves, knowing that the more unflinchingly powerful we allow ourselves to be, the more unflinchingly powerful others feel capable of being. Our unapologetic embrace of our bodies gives others permission to unapologetically embrace theirs.

- Reflect on a memory where you and a friend or friends bonded over body shame. What messages did that moment convey to you and to them?

- Without planning to send it, write a letter to a friend that you have bonded with in this way. What could you do or say differently to shift from a body-shame dialogue to a radical self-love conversation? How are you thinking differently about ways to connect with friends without shaming your bodies?

Turn Down the Body-Shame Volume Knob

The voice of doubt, shame, and guilt blaring in our heads is not our voice. It is a voice we have been given by a society steeped in body shame that profits off our investment in a system of bodily hierarchy. That voice is the “outside voice.” Our authentic voice, our “inside voice,” is the voice of radical self-love. Of course, we have been listening to the outside voice for such a long time that it is easy to think it is our own voice of criticism and judgment. But we know this is not true because radical self-love would never speak such viciousness over our lives. We did not give ourselves that voice, and we are not served by operating like it is ours. We must first raise the voice of judgment to our conscious awareness. Only then can we actually turn down the dial on body shame.

Big Thyself Up

Make a list of twenty compliments you could give yourself. Include compliments about your **personality, character, skill, talent, and energy**. No more than five should be about a physical feature. You can always enlist a friend to help if you are short on ideas.

Big Thyself Up

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2 .....

3 .....

4 .....

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8 .....

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18 .....

19 .....

20 .....

Every time you think or say something critical about yourself or your body today, pause, take a deep breath, and replace the thought with one of the compliments on the list you created. If you say the critical thought aloud, give yourself a verbal compliment and then give someone else one.

- Notice how your body felt when you gave yourself the compliment. Was there a difference in the physical sensations of the compliment versus the critical thought? Share your reflections below.

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Character Traits to Compliment

Adapted from CreativeAffirmations.com

accountable

Adventurous

alert

ambitious

Appropriate

Assertive

Astute

attentive

authentic

Aware

brave

CALM

candid

capable

Certain

Charismatic

CLEAR

collaborative

committed

Communicative

Compassionate

Comradely

connected

CONSCIOUS

Considerate

Consistent

contributing

cooperative

courageous

Creative

Curious

dedicated

Determined

diplomatic

Directive

Disciplined

dynamic

easygoing

effective

efficient

Empathetic

Empowering

energetic

enthusiastic

Ethical

Excited

Expressive

facilitating

Fair

FAITHFUL

Fearless

Flexible

friendly

Generative

Generous

grateful

happy

Hardworking

Honest

honorable

humorous

Imaginative

Immaculate

independent

INITIATING

Innovative

inquiring

Integrating

intelligent

INTENTIONAL

Interested

Intimate

Joyful

knowledgeable

leading

Listening

Lively

logical

LOVING

Loyal

Networker

nurturing

open-minded

optimistic

organized

Patient

Peaceful

planning

PLAYFUL

Poised

Polite

Powerful

practical

present

Proactive

problem-solving

Productive

Punctual

reliable

resourceful

Responsible

Self-confident

Self-generating

SELF-RELIANT

sensual

Serving others

Sincere

Skillful

spiritual

spontaneous

Stable

Strong

Successful

SUNNY

supportive

Tactful

TRUSTING

Trustworthy

Truthful

versatile

vibrant

WARM

Willing

Wise

zealous

- How did people react when you complimented them?

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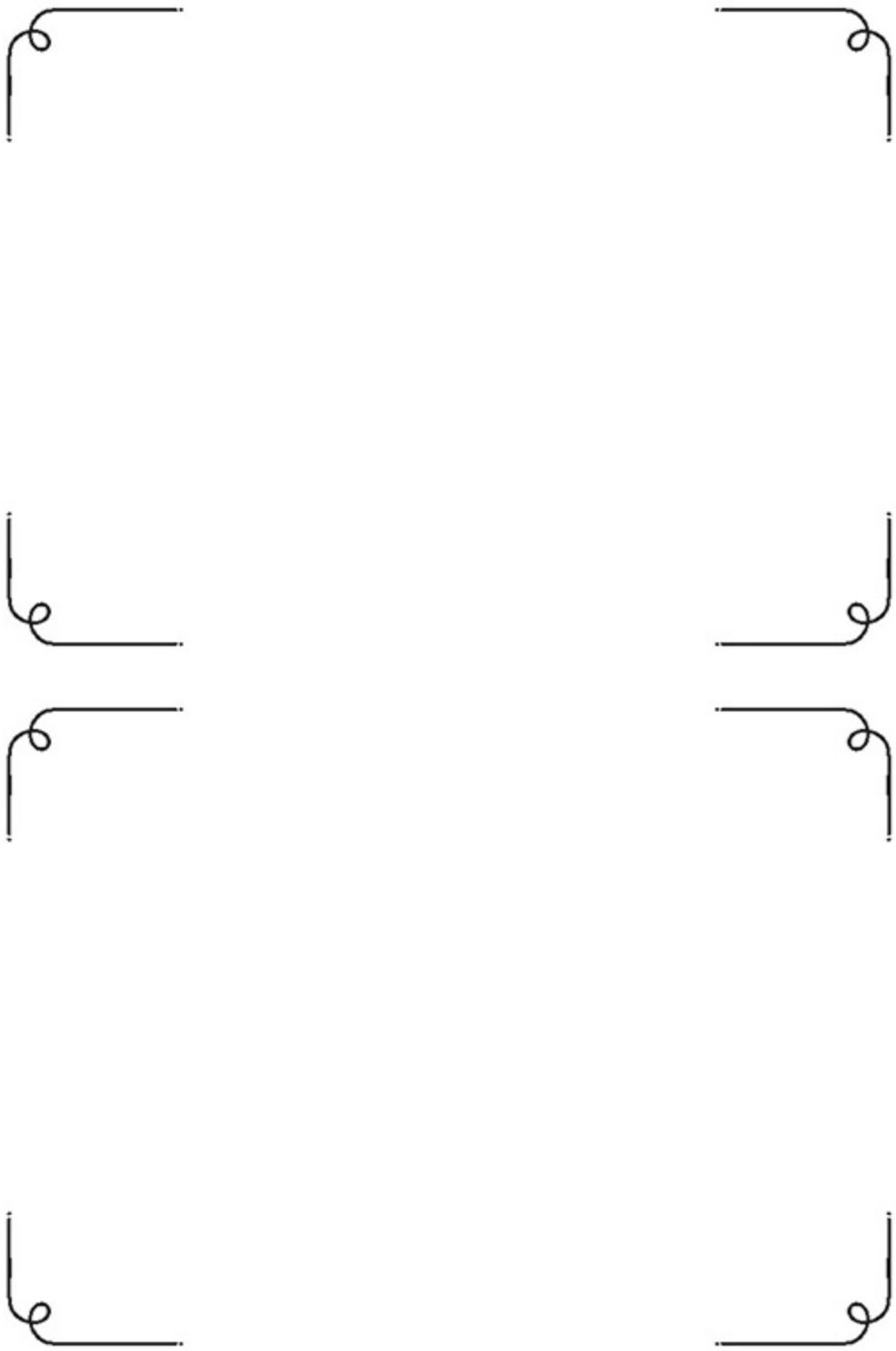
❋ How did it feel to be a messenger of radical self-love?



Slather on the Superlatives

Write compliments on Post-it notes and stick them on your mirror, your friend's locker, or a teacher's desk. Remember to try to use compliments that are related to personality, character, skill talent, and energy rather than physical traits.

Draw your friends as you see them—
the incredible, powerful, loving people they are.



incredible, powerful, loving people

Draw yourself the way your best friend would draw you.

Radical Tip: Don't be so literal! Try drawing symbols, shapes, and flowers to represent how you feel or experience yourself or others. Take all the creative licenses! These are your masterpieces, no matter how they turn out!



Pillar 2

Mind Matters

If pillar 1 is the equivalent of a body-shame yard sale (except we don't want anyone else to buy this junk), then pillar 2 is emptying out the attic and basement and considering what we might do with all the amazing space we've freed up. Once we have stopped imbibing body shame on a daily basis, we can begin to explore how our old ways of thinking have kept us stuck in cycles that dishonor our bodies. Body shame not only shapes how we see our bodies but also clouds the lens through which we view our lives. If living a radical self-love life is a process of thinking, doing, and being, then Mind Matters asks us to try on some new mental attire. Let's call it the season's latest collection on the radical self-love runway.

Guess what? Your brain is part of your body! Why am I yelling this? Because too often we treat our brain as though it's a separate operating system tucked away in a room we call the skull. Our tendency to divorce our brains from our bodies is one of the sneaky ways in which body shame thrives. Isolating our brains gives us permission to treat them differently. Depression, bipolar disorder, and other examples of neurodivergence are stigmatized because we are unwilling to extend the same care and treatment to our brains that we afford our bodies. If I broke my arm and never went to a see a doctor, not only would I be in extreme pain, but the people in my life would be incensed by such a reckless choice. Yet we often make statements like "It's all in your head," minimizing the experiences of our brains and neglecting their care.

Reintegrating our brains and our bodies is a necessity for a radical self-love life. Pillar 2 highlights how our reintegration gives us access to new levels of care and offers us new opportunities to examine our thought patterns and, with hard work, create new ones.





TOOL 3

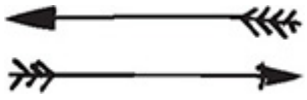
reframe your framework

Did you know that your body is not the enemy? I know how difficult this concept can be when we feel as though we have been at war with our bodies for our entire existence, but this is a case of friendly fire, folks, and we are usually the shooters. Think back to your last cold or flu. Chills, fever, scratchy throat, fatigue, that crusty stuff that builds around your—you get the picture. Awful, right? And it is our mean old body's fault! After all, the body is working overtime to disperse those white blood cells to the site of the virus, attempting to squash its insidious attack on our immune system! Awful, mean old body, right? Wrong. Feeling crappy when we're sick is not a sign of a body that is mutinying; it is the unfortunate byproduct of a body working exceedingly hard to return us to wellness. Our body is fighting on our behalf even as we curse it as though it were a cheating lover.

When we are struggling to see our bodies as a sacred friend on this journey through life, it might mean it is time for a radical reframe. Much like the example given above, at any moment we can adjust how we are perceiving our body and our relationship to it. This not always an easy task, but it can be a transformative one. We often relate to our bodies as if it were a mortal enemy we must battle until our death. That is an emotionally and physically exhausting way to move through life. Often, what we see as a fight against our bodies is an opportunity to be in a more loving relationship with our bodies. And sometimes, a simple mindset shift can get us there. That shift is a radical reframe.

Practicing radical reframe can sound impossible for those of us navigating chronic illness, trans identity, or gender nonconformity. Feeling trapped in a body that does not feel like it has your best interest at heart assuredly makes sense. It is hard to love a vessel that appears to be the author of significant pain. What a terrifying experience to wake up in constant pain or in a body that does not feel in alignment with who you know yourself to be. It may very well feel like your body is against you. Remember that this is a thinking, doing, being journey, and we will need to try on new beliefs and actions in the service of radical self-love. With tool 3 in mind, we are invited to ask ourselves, “What peace, power, or joy can be gained by deciding that this body I am inextricably tied to for the rest of my life is my enemy?” If there is no access to peace, power, or joy in your current framework, then it simply doesn’t serve you.

Radical self-love asks us to try on new ways of thinking and doing that give us access to new ways of being. Trying on a new framework is like trying on a new coat. It may or may not fit. The coat isn’t wrong for not fitting. You are not wrong for not fitting in the coat. It just doesn’t fit. Far too many of us have been walking around the world wearing our “my body is the enemy” coat, wondering why we feel trapped and miserable. We tried on a thinking that doesn’t fit our pursuit of radical self-love. Deciding our body is the enemy leaves us fighting an unwinnable battle on our own soil. It all comes down to a simple question: if you decide to be at war with your body, how will you ever have peace?



Identify Friendly Fire

Friendly fire describes the times when we have blamed our poor bodies for issues that are not our bodies’ fault. Maybe we blamed our bodies for not fitting into those jeans in the store rather than the designer for not making them with more inclusive sizing. Perhaps we blamed our bodies for an illness when our bodies were trying to fight off the bug the whole time. Maybe we decided that the doctor’s

bigotry, society's narrow beliefs, and systemic inequality were not about those things at all but instead about our bad, wrong bodies. By identifying the moments when we are scapegoating our bodies, we become better able to turn all that body blame into accountability for people, systems, and structures that fail to treat all bodies with compassion, equity, and justice!

List two examples of times when you aimed friendly fire at your body.

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Return Responsibility

In the examples you gave above, consider the systems, structures, or circumstances that may have been at play in the times you blamed your body. Can you identify the systems that may have been operating— for example, fatphobia, racism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, ageism, or some other oppression? In clude any personal beliefs you have that may have been impacted or shaped by those systems. What systems have responsibility?

✻1 .....

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Lay Down Your Weapons

Don’t think of your body as the enemy but as an ally working in solidarity with you to help you live your best life. Ask yourself, “If I think of my body as an exceptional ally, doing its very best to support me, how would I reframe the two friendly-fire examples I gave above?”

✻1 .....

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If your body is your ally, then it is time to return the sentiment. What are three pieces of advice or offers of care you could give to your body when it is not feeling well?

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*3 .....

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- What might you suggest to help your body compassionately manage stress?

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Pen a Peace Treaty

Write a letter of radical reconciliation to your body. Share why you are surrendering in the war with your body and how you would like to be in solidarity with your body today. How would you like to invite it

back into a relationship with you? What can you commit to in your allyship with it? Be specific, being sure to incorporate all the insights and observations from the above exercises.







TOOL 4

meditate on a new mantra

Do you have a “right now,” a “someday,” or a “remember back when” relationship with your body? Imagine waiting on a subway platform for a train that was supposed to be due in five minutes except it is eight hours later, you’re still waiting, and the train has never come. You have missed an entire workday! Waiting for the train has become an excuse for doing nothing while declaring, “I swear, someday that train is going to come.” At this point the night staff is locking up the place around you.

Now imagine you are running to catch the train, and as you arrive on the platform the train pulls away. Instead of catching the next train, you stand there for eight hours lamenting how you just missed that stupid train. Thirty trains have passed since you arrived, and yet there you are, shivering and alone in the dark, reminiscing about when you almost caught that damn train! In both scenarios one thing remains true: you are stuck on the platform of life, not going anywhere.

Whether you are waiting for the wealth train, the weight-loss train, or the new-lover train to take you to happiness or you are watching the “remember when I weighed 125 pounds” train leave with all your joy, your most amazing life is not happening on the train you missed or the one that didn’t arrive. But your life is happening right now, and all you are doing by standing on that platform is avoiding it. Tool 4 is designed to get us off the platform and back to a “right now” relationship with our bodies.

Meditation is an invitation to focus on right now. Meditation calls on us to be present in the immediate moment, the right now.

Meditating asks us to notice what sensations, pleasant or unpleasant, are arising in our bodies, not for the sake of eradicating them but to simply make peace with our present state. Miraculously, through the process of meditation, unpleasant states dissipate on their own. We don't even have to try to make them go away.

Recognizing Right Now

Meditation invites us to arrive in the present moment because in the present moment most things are less stressful, painful, and uncertain. In our current moment we can access peace if we allow ourselves. To be clear, I mean the literal moment. Even just a few moments from now might be a mess! This is why recognizing **right now** is such a necessary tool for connecting to our radical self-love root.

Consider the ways you have been living in a "someday" and a "back when" relationship with your body or life. What have you put off until you achieve some future way of being? What past way of being are you still holding on to? List two examples of "someday" and two examples of "back when" thinking in your present-day life.

Someday Thinking

1 .....

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2 .....

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Back When Thinking

1 .....

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2 .....

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Sit and Silence

Visit YouTube.com and search for “meditation for beginners” videos, or download a meditation app to your phone. Spend five minutes at the beginning of your day and/or five minutes at the end of your day doing one of the meditation practices found online or on your app.

• REMINDER •

You do not need to feel good at meditating to practice it. Release the need to get it right.

You will get distracted, and that is okay. You are learning how to come back to the moment.

Like anything, it will take practice before you feel “good” at it. Truthfully, it isn’t even about being good/bad, right/wrong.

The only wrong way to meditate is to not do it!

If you are trying,
you are winning!

- After each meditation, write whatever reflections may have come up from the activity.

Power-Pack Your Mantra

Our brains are cunning and resilient, storing decades' worth of information for the sake of keeping us alive. As is true of our social media profiles, there are upsides and downsides to having that much information stockpiled in one place. We are hardwired to retain negative experiences. This cognitive function is why we have not intentionally touched a hot stove since we were three or used Aqua Net hairspray since we were fifteen. We are biologically predisposed to remember painful things as a function of evolution. These experiences form the informational autobahns of our brains—our neural pathways. This is where mantras come in. A mantra is a word or phrase that you chant to yourself repeatedly. In Sanskrit, *mantra* means a tool or instrument of the mind. Mantras not only soothe us but when used in conjunction with meditation can reroute the neural pathways of our brains by replacing negative thought patterns with new ideas—radical self-love ideas.

Choosing a mantra is about finding a phrase or word we desire to live by. It should be big and juicy and make us slightly uncomfortable. It should make us think, “How dare I believe such an audacious thing about myself?” If you feel a little queasy when you speak your mantra aloud, you have probably found the right one. A good mantra may make your body-shame voice louder at first. This is a good sign. Mantras that challenge our current neurological pathways of body shame will initially trigger those pathways as we endeavor to disrupt them. Think of a mantra that will help you remember that you are a spectacular human.

Below are some examples.

“I live in my greatness and brilliance.”

“As I heal my relationship with my heart,
I can trust my relationship with my body to follow.”

“I love the body I have today.”

“I have always been and will always be enough.”

Your mantra can be anything. If one of the above speaks to you, try it out. You can also create your own!

Find Your Mantra

Start by reflecting on the following questions:

- What positive statement about myself have I been told but simply do not see as true or honest about me?

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- What part of my body do I feel the most shame or discomfort about?

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- If I were free of that shame or discomfort, what might I say about that body part?

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- If I were unafraid of failure or disappointment, what would I do right now?

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- Using the answers to these questions and three adjectives you wrote for the “Slather on the Superlatives” exercise in tool 2 as a guide, write two sentences of affirmation that reflect what you would like to be true but that may not feel true currently.

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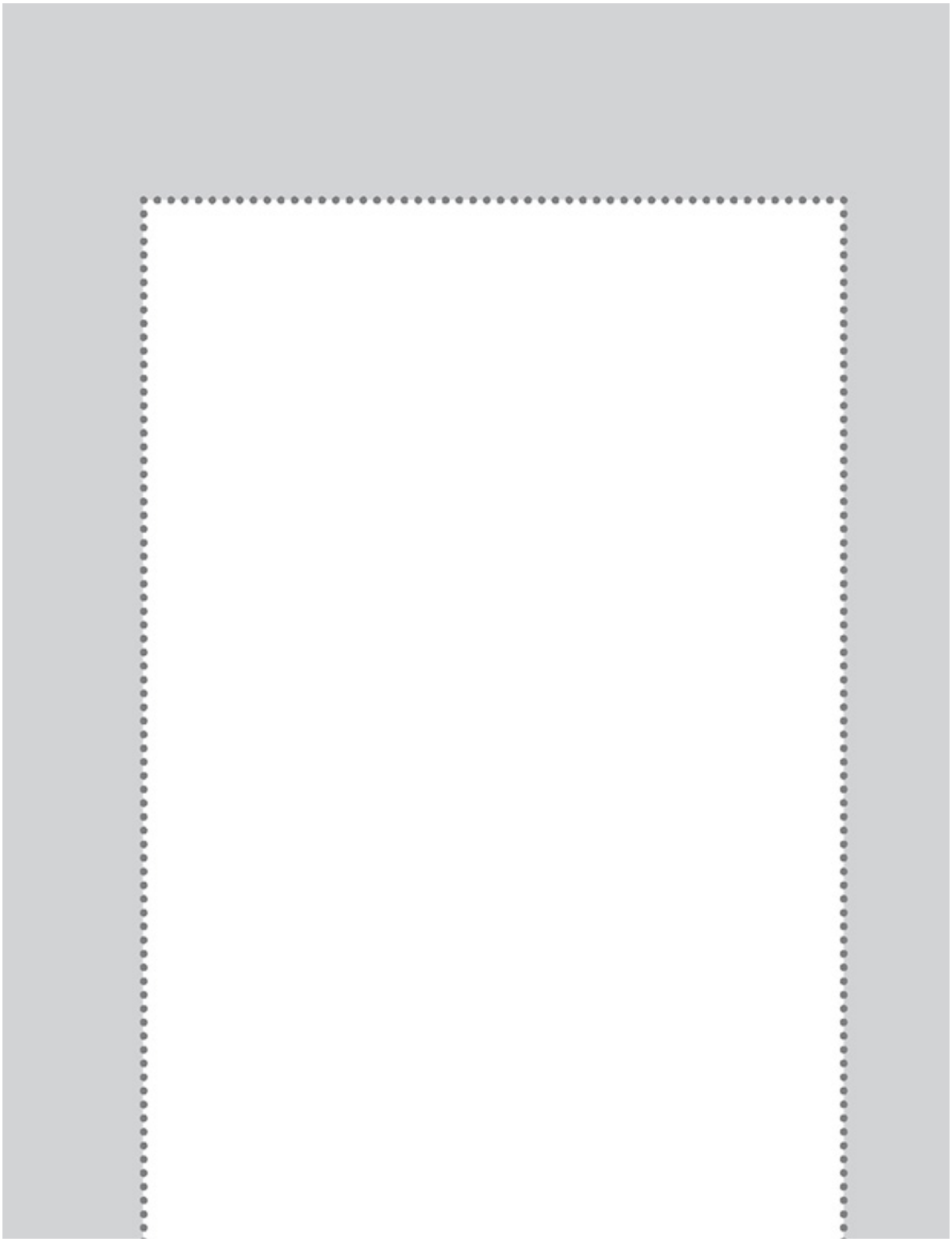
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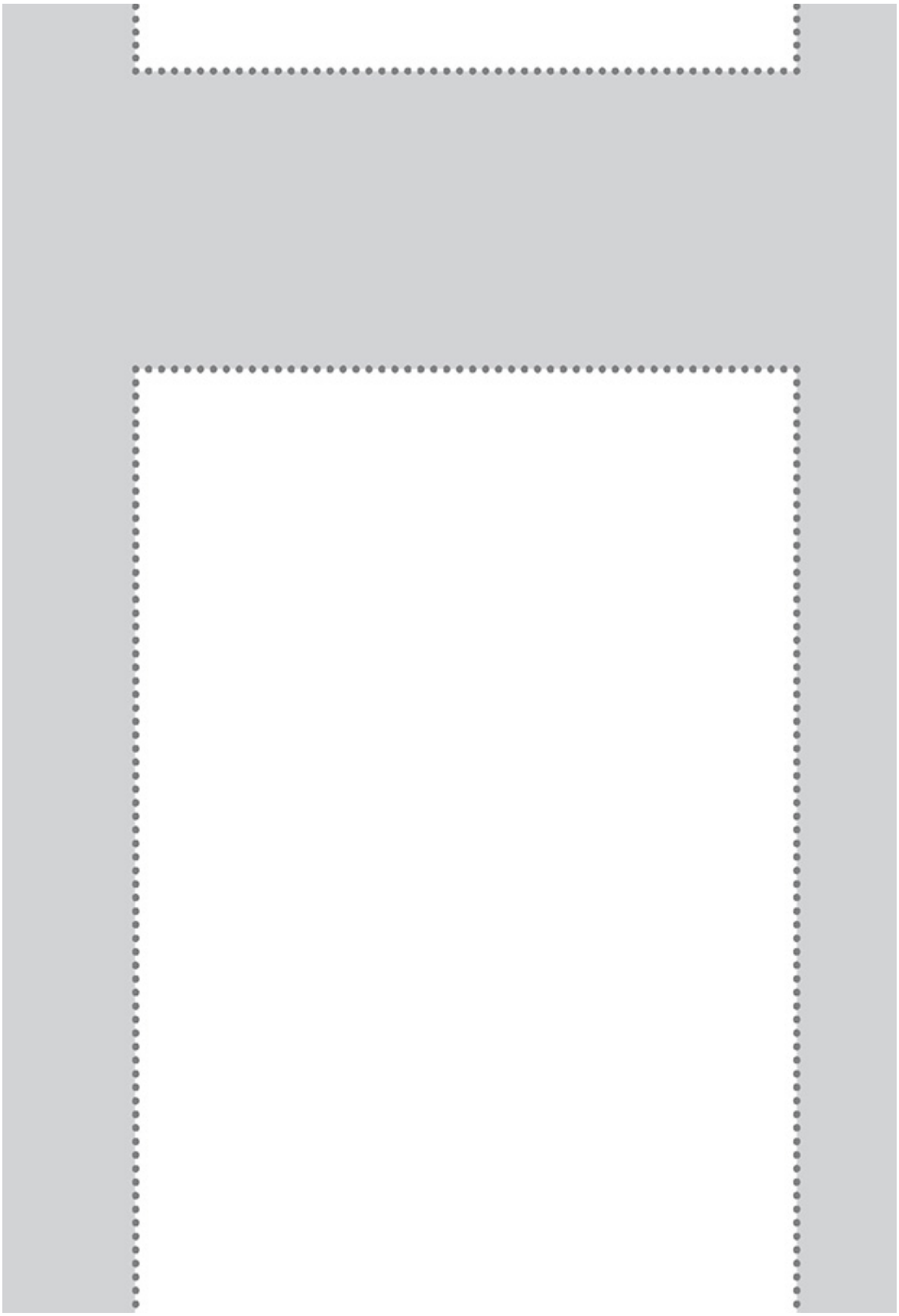
Now, pulling from these sentences, you will create an aspirational mantra. Mantras should be active, presenttense statements. They should begin with ***I am, I have***, or any active version of a verb—for

example, “I love my body”; “I am a powerful, unafraid communicator”; “My body is an asset and I treat it as such.”

Your mantra should feel large and maybe even a bit scary, but it should not feel impossible—unless you are feeling particularly daring! Write one, two, or three mantra possibilities in the boxes below.

Use the next two pages to doodle your mantra over and over to help you remember it. If you wrote more than one possible mantra above, choose the one that resonates with you the most. Think of it as a radical self-love spell you are casting over your own life.





Pro Tip: Put your mantra someplace where you will see it daily. Try spelling it out in large magnet letters on the refrigerator, writing it in bright red lipstick on your bathroom mirror, or posting it some other place where it will get your daily attention.

Merge Your Meditation and Mantra

Now that you have a powerful mantra and a bit of practice meditating, it is time to merge the two. Practice meditating at least five minutes each day while silently repeating your mantra. Do this for thirty days and see what happens. Invite the discomfort of sitting in the stillness of the present and speaking words about yourself that you are not yet certain you genuinely believe. I promise your radical self-love transformation will be birthed in the quiet of those vexatious moments. Meditating on a mantra reminds us that it is time to get off that subway platform and get to living. Life is not behind us or before us.

Our most amazing,
unapologetic
LIFE
is right here,
right now!





TOOL 5

banish the binary

Humans have developed myriad ways to organize the vast quantity of information we take in every day. We categorize life like we separate laundry: lights, darks, gentle cycle, permanent press. But much like laundry, life doesn't always fall into neat and easily definable categories. Neither do we. We are messy, we humans. We are plaid and polka dot, silk and denim—all in the same shirt. We are hard to sort out, which is why binary thinking doesn't serve our radical self-love journey.

Historically, we have used the term *binary* to talk about number sequences, a land reserved for statisticians and computer coders. A more contemporary treatment of the term deals with our often rigid and dualistic understanding of gender as strictly male or female, feminine or masculine, and whether we are attracted to men or women based solely on those assignments. This inflexibility erases the nuance and diversity of human gender and sexuality. Furthermore, binary thinking, when expanded to include all the ways we marginalize the gradients of human behavior and identity, illuminates how either/or thinking limits the fullness of our human potential and clouds our radical self-love vision.

We are not simply good or bad; vessels of pure, divine light or mongers of hate; interrupters of body terrorism everywhere or upholders of the oppression of bodies across the planet. If "good" and "bad" were the choices on a quiz about who we are, the answer would be "all of the above." Humans (you and I) are doing and being all those things all the time. Binary thinking limits our possibility, squelches compassion, and reinforces narrow ideas of how we get

to be in the world. That marginalization is a function of internalized body terrorism.

Our thinking, doing, being practice becomes more expansive when we can observe our thoughts without overidentifying with them. Just because we have a thought does not mean we are that thought. You are not your thoughts. Recognizing that our inherent value does not diminish because we sometimes think in ways that are contradictory to what we truly believe allows us to examine our thoughts from a place of curiosity and diminished judgment. It gives us the space to interrupt unwanted thoughts before they birth themselves into actions. The same is true for our behaviors. We can change our behaviors but only when we see them as mutable—*of* us but *not* us.

Honor that you will be many things throughout the course of your life. Sometimes you will be a phenomenal gift; sometimes you will get on someone's damn nerves. All of us have gorgeous potential and heinous instinct. Singularity does not define us. Our instincts influence and shape us but do not define us. When we find ourselves in the land of either/or thinking— characterized by words like *never*, *always*, *only*, *every time*, *mostly*, *rarely*—it is a great sign that we may be off our path. Binary thinking is the antithesis of radical self-love.

Recognize Rigidity

Take a moment to notice the places in your life where you are holding rigid and judgmental views about yourself. Are you prone to use limiting language or sweeping generalizations when talking about your own behaviors, actions, or body? Consider the ways in which you have historically viewed yourself through a binary lens.

- Where in your life and in your relationship with your body do you find yourself in either/or thinking?

- What are the binary ways of being that you judge yourself by (for example, I am either ugly or pretty, smart or dumb, lazy or hard working, etc.)?

- What are some binary adjectives that you use frequently (for example, words you use with *never*, *always*, *only*, *every time*, *mostly*, *rarely*)?

- When are you most inclined to use binary language (for example, in a certain situation, emotional state, or relationship)? Share an example of what you said below.

- Think about a specific time recently when you used binary language. Was it an authentic reflection of the situation you were in?

Rework Your Words

Think about the example from above. What could you have said that would have been a more accurate and expansive statement about the situation?

Instead of using binary words such as *never*, *always*, *only*, and *ever*, try to use more accurate words that express the truth of the situation such as *sometimes*, *of ten*, or *occasionally*. For example, instead of saying, “I always mess up everything!” try “Sometimes I make mistakes.” Instead of “I am never gonna get through this,” say “This feels hard to get through.” Use the suggested words to help you think of alternate ways of phrasing things.

Generalizations

Phrases like “Men do this” and “Women do this” are almost always inaccurate for a myriad of reasons— firstly, because gender is a spectrum that cannot be confined by the limited categorizations of only *men* and *women*. Healthline.com lists sixty-four potential terms for gender identity and expression. That is way more than two! Additionally, we limit the fullness of our human expression and reinforce often harmful stereotypes when we peddle in sweeping generalizations, particularly those based on bodies. Interrupting

binary thinking in ourselves will help interrupt the generalizations and stereotypes we often make about others. Banishing the binary helps get us all closer to radical self-love.

- What are some generalizations that are often applied to your various identities?

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- What are some situations where you were the object of a generalization?

- How do you feel when you are being stereotyped?

- What are some ways that you do not reflect stereotypes often applied to you?

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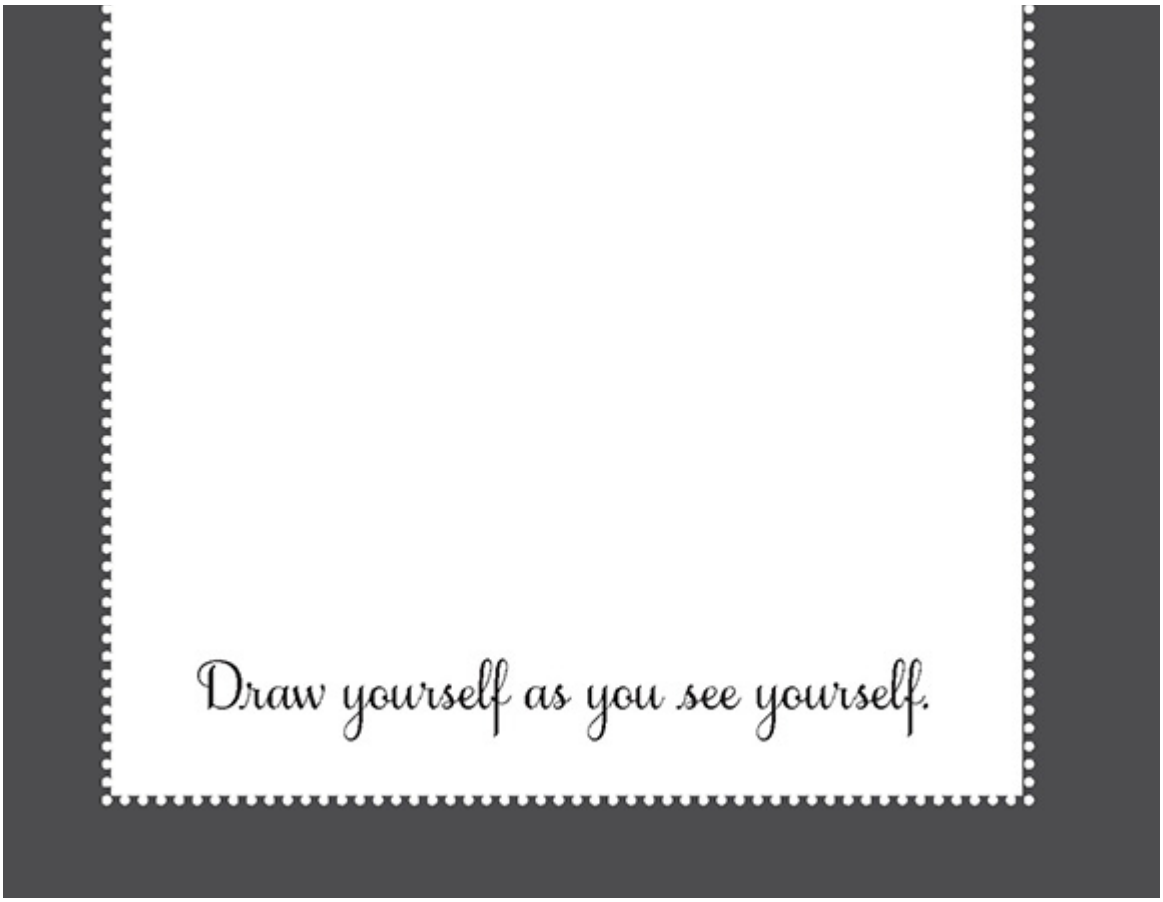
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- Are there any times that stereotypes of you are accurate? When?



Now that you have spent some time reflecting on how generalizations have impacted your sense of self, let's take some time to consider how we have generalized others.

Answer the questions below. Remember to be in reflection without judgment. We are all unlearning and there is no shame in that.

- What are some generalizations that you have made about other identities or bodies?

- What are some situations where you made others the object of a generalization?

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- What ideas, circumstances, teachings, or beliefs may have contributed to your applying these stereotypes?

- What are some ways that you can see the inaccuracies of those stereotypes now?

- What strategies might you employ today to interrupt the impulse to stereotype others?



Pillar 3

Unapologetic Action

If we are diligent in our practice of pillars 1 and 2, the volume of our external body shame will over time become a light buzz while our own resounding voice of radical self-love begins to ring loudly in our ears. Now is the time to get started on the ***doing*** portion of this work. Radical self-love is a muscle, and as with every other muscle, if we do not work it, atrophy will set in. Living in a world of body terrorism is like having our sense of value and innate worth set in a plaster cast for decades. Cracking open the cast and moving through the world in tune with our bodies can feel like starting a new workout routine, but there has never been a more perfect time to lean into the discomfort and fear. Remember, most of the fear is just fog.

Pillar 3, Unapologetic Action, asks us to get to know these bodies of ours. If you have been avoiding looking at or touching your body, this is your chance to shift. By now, we understand that our avoidance of being intimate with our bodies is part of being conditioned to believe that our bodies are bad, wrong, or disgusting. No one wants to hang out with a bad, wrong body. As we clear out those thoughts, we are better able to see our bodies for what they truly are: amazing vessels, capable of awesome feelings, sensations, and experiences. By getting to know them, we open ourselves to deeper levels of pleasure, care, and ultimately radical love. Pillar 3 invites you to take yourself on a body expedition and discover your own remarkable landscape.

Not only have we avoided intimately knowing our bodies, but we have forgotten that our bodies like doing stuff—

walking, dancing, running, having sex! Body shame has severed our love of activity. In the chronicles of body shame, movement became something we avoided lest we jiggled while in motion! Unapologetic Action is our departure from those old stories, prompting us to reconnect to the joys of movement.

Pillar 3 is not singularly focused on our physical selves; it also summons us to action by telling ourselves new stories. In our work together we have realized how the things we were teased about or shamed for as children became part of how we saw ourselves later in life. Those early incidents became the yarn tethering our adult selves to our childhood histories of shame and isolation. Unapologetic Action empowers us to make new stories, better than the ones we've been saddled with for years. Humans have made up stories since the beginning of time. Some of the stories have helped us understand this wild ride through humanity, whereas others have kept us cut off from radical self-love. We do not have to be bound by crappy stories. Make a better story.





TOOL 6

explore your terrain

In our daily lives of work, family, school, and friends, we rarely allow ourselves true intimacy with our own bodies. Getting to know our physical selves is an activity we postpone or avoid altogether in service of what we have been told are more essential responsibilities. Consequently, parts of us have gone unobserved, let alone touched, for decades. This neglect is not without cost. A 2003 National Health Interview Survey found that 57 percent of breast cancer survivors found their cancer through breast self-examination or by accident. We must touch our bodies, in all manner of ways and for all manner of reasons. It is impossible to be a responsible steward of a body we constantly avoid being intimate with. Building love relationships requires getting to know the other party. Our relationships with our bodies are no different. As we learn about them, we can access their unique power and gifts.

Knowing our bodies allows access to caring for our bodies, and caring for our bodies is an avenue for finding pleasure in them. Being disconnected from our bodies is often how we miss early diagnosis and intervention for health issues. When we are intimately familiar with our own bodies, we can advocate for our health, our safety, and our pleasure. Try on the three *E*s of your own terrain: exploration, examination, and ecstasy.

Exploration

Pick four parts of your body you rarely look at or think about and intentionally look at them. Using a hand-held mirror to look at parts that are difficult to reach, observe the shade, texture, and shape of each selected part of your body.

Draw two of the four body parts you choose to explore. If drawing is not your thing, describe them with words—and don't feel limited to a literal description! Use metaphors or analogies. Be poetic!

Later, come back to this exercise and work with other parts of your body that you have not spent time with until you are familiar with your entire body.



- How did you feel when looking at this part of your body? What thoughts, emotions, or sensations came up for you?

- How did you feel when looking at this part of your body? What thoughts, emotions, or sensations came up for you?

Tips for Exploring Your Terrain as a Survivor

For some trauma and assault survivors, being present with their bodies can be a tremendously vulnerable and even frightening experience. Much of our experiences of harm get stored in the body, making it difficult to connect with our bodies in ways that feel safe. If these activities feel difficult, know that you are not alone in your experience nor are you failing at radical self-love. Below are some suggestions for navigating this tool. Use the structure of the three *E*s to invite intention and preparation into your bodily terrain practice.

- ***Make a date for exploration.*** Set a specific date and time for your practice. This will allow you to scaffold the experience with before and after care. Perhaps schedule a therapy session before or after, or plan a bath or other symbolic clearing activity afterward. You may want to debrief the experience with a trusted friend.

- ***Talk with your body.*** Practice speaking aloud what you are going to do with your body and include your intention in the statement—for example, “I am going to lovingly hold my belly.” This practice helps your body’s nervous system anticipate what is going to happen. Trauma often involves a lack of consent or autonomy. Speaking to your body invites the energy of care and relationship to the experience.

- ***Connect with the breath.*** As you prepare and as you are actively touching your body, invite a deep breath to that part of the body, and remember to take long, slow, regular breaths. Breath reminds your nervous system that you are not in danger and welcomes life energy to parts of your body that have been subjected to harm.

- ***Seek out healing tools.*** In the book *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*, author Bessel van der Kolk discusses how trauma lives in the body and highlights the necessity of addressing the mind-body connection in healing from trauma. Treatment options such as EMDR (eye movement desensitization and reprocessing), somatic practices, and creative arts therapies are potential modalities for supporting your continued healing. Consider adding them to your self-care practice.

Examination

Understanding our unique terrain gives us access to awareness. With awareness, we can be alerted when something is off-kilter with our bodies. Noticing skin discoloration or variations in our body mass gives us the information we need to advocate for our well-being. Doctors are fantastic, but they do not know your body better than you. Examination makes you an expert in you, and you should be.

Home exams are one of the most common ways we can detect if something unusual is happening with our bodies. If you are

unfamiliar with the steps to do home breast and testicular exams, check out the following sites, which can walk you through these self-checks.

- Maurer Foundation's "How to Do a Breast Self-Exam (BSE)," https://www.maurerfoundation.org/about-breast-cancer-breast-health/how-to-do-a-bse-breast-self-exam/
- American Academy of Pediatrics' "Testicular Self-Exam," https://kennesawpediatrics.com/files/8113/8686/0784/TesticularExam_HE0274.pdf

✣ When is the last time you did a monthly home breast or testicular exam? What did you notice?

Check in for a Monthly Checkup

Add a monthly exam practice to your calendar and record your exam details for each month below.

January .....

February .....

March .....

April .....

May .....

June .....

July .....

August .....

September .....

October .....

November .....

December .....

Ecstasy

Our bodies are designed for pleasure, but so many of us deny ourselves the riches of our own sensual touch. Too many of us treat *ecstasy* like a naughty word. Our bodies are made to feel good, and there ought to be no shame for enjoying the powerful and pleasurable sensations we have access to in them. When we touch ourselves sensually and sexually, we are not just getting ourselves off (which is wonderful); we are becoming masterful tour guides for our lovers. We know all the most breathtaking views and the best places to dine! Giving ourselves pleasure is a powerful way to teach others how to please us. Radical self-love is built on the foundation of intimacy with our bodies. Get intimate with your body and it will teach you and others how to love it.

What are the four most pleasurable sensations your body enjoys? For example, you might include “sand between my toes,” “pressure on my shoulders,” or “fingers on my scalp.” (Your choices can be sexual too.)

1 .....

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2 .....

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3 .....

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4 .....

.....



Choose one sensation from your list and spend five minutes giving yourself the sensation. Describe the experience below.

TOOL 7

be in movement

Do you remember kindergarten recess? The bell rang, the teacher dismissed the class, and, if you were like me, you sprouted wings, levitated above your chair, and promptly flew out of the classroom, landing squarely on the hot black asphalt of the schoolyard. Before the playground became a site of body shame and terrorism, before crushes and elementary school politics, there were swing sets, tetherball, you, and ten to twenty other sweaty, gleeful little children. We loved recess because recess meant movement. After hours of being confined to uncomfortable wooden desks, recess was body liberation. Movement was an axis of joy, not drudgery.

Today, many of us move from a sense of shame or obligation, which generally means the movement doesn't last long. Here's a thought: stop moving in ways that don't feel good. If movement doesn't feel loving, it is not radical self-love! Move in ways that bring you joy!

Ax Obligatory Exercise

Make a list of physical activities/exercises you have done over the last year that you did not enjoy.

- What was your reason for doing those activities/exercises?
- How did doing them make you feel?

- How did you feel when you stopped doing them?

RECLAIM Recess Joy

Remember the things you loved to do when you were a child: dance, run, cartwheel, spin in circles, play in the water, roll down a hill, sway to music. What were your favorite childhood games? Did you play kickball, Mother May I, Red Light Green Light, or capture the flag? Did you love to go walking along a creek or in the woods? Did you love swimming? Below, make a list of your favorite childhood activities and physical games. Do you still do any of the activities on the above list? If yes, which ones?

- How does participating in them make you feel?

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- Do you no longer do any of the activities on the list that you still love? If so, which ones, and why did you stop?

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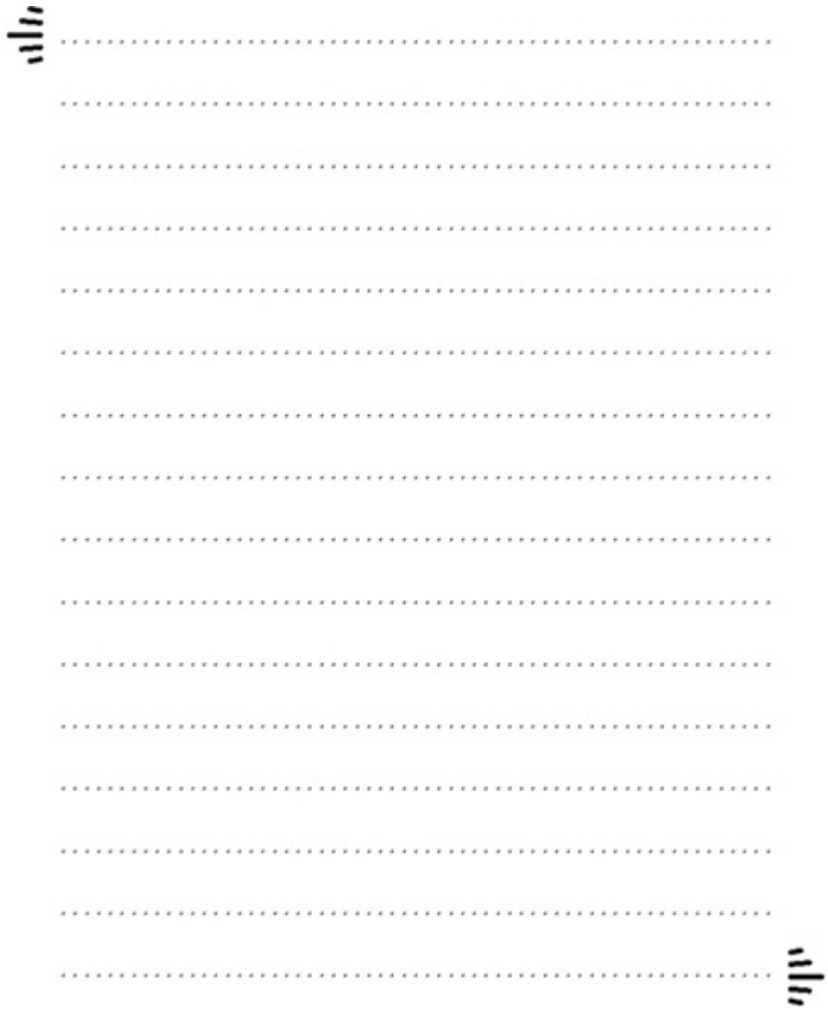
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- What might happen if you invited those activities back in your life? (Psst: You still deserve to be delighted.)

Choose two of the activities you love but no longer do and do them for twenty minutes during your week. After you have completed your movement practice, use the space below to reflect on what you noticed.

WHAT MEMORIES SURFACED FOR YOU?



- What did you notice about your relationship to your body that felt familiar?

- What felt unfamiliar or new?

What does movement mean to you?
How has doing this set of exercises changed your relationship to movement?
Share your reflections, thoughts, and ideas here.

TOOL 8

make a new story

Our body shame is a story whose chapters began being written in some of our earliest memories. Body shame is not a thrilling page-turner but a grueling text of embarrassment, judgment, and grief. Our story made us believe we would never have love, we would never be good enough, we would always be rejected. Decades later we find ourselves still stuck, the body-shame story on loop in our minds. Here is the awesome truth: **we do not have to keep that story**. We absolutely have the power to turn in that cheap and tawdry tale and make a new story.

Access Your Origin Story

Body shame is most frequently attached to an experience in our youth—a message we received as children or young adults that had us believe that something was wrong with us and our bodies. Connecting to our earliest memories of body shame gives us a starting point for creating a new tale of power and possibility in our bodies and our lives. In many ways this tool asks us to take on the Ghanaian principal of Sankofa—that one must go backward to go forward. In the space below share your earliest memory of body shame.

Where were you? .....

.....

- What was the experience?

- How did it make you feel?

- What story or stories (a core belief or beliefs) did you create about yourself because of this experience?

- In what ways is the story still with you today?
- How does it inform your choices or your behavior?

- How would your actions or feelings change if you were free of that story?

Throw it out the window! Let's create a new story to replace it.

Remember your mantra!

Locate Your Points of Power

Take a moment to reflect on your early childhood experience of shame. Can you identify four traits that made you powerful or unique at that time? List them below.

1 .....

.....

2 .....

.....

3 .....

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4 .....

.....

Using the four traits you listed above, consider how you might respond to your body-shame origin story differently today using the power of your insight and your unique gifts. Rewrite the experience below.

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You can use the exercise above whenever you find yourself buying into a negative story. Use your mantra, power traits, and your insight to make a new story to replace the negative one.

Activate Your Inner Child

What appealed to us as children reading fairy tales was the unconstrained power of imagination. We could be a princess, a powerful wizard, or a talking dog. Our possibility has no boundaries. Making a new story returns us to unbounded possibility. Allow yourself the magic of a radical self-love possibility with no boundaries! When answering the next set of reflection prompts, fully embody your childlike imagination.

- If you were an animal, which one would you be? Real or fantastic, anything goes!

- If your life were a fairy tale or superhero movie, what kind of superhero would you be?

- What are your superpowers?
- Who are the villains you successfully defend against?

Make a New Story— Mad Libs Style!

Using the following Mad Libs template, have a partner write down your responses to the list of descriptions below. Your partner will use your completed list of words to fill in the Mad Libs story. Once the story is complete, your partner will read it aloud to you. You will then read the story silently to yourself. Lastly, you will read the story aloud to your partner. If you feel judgment, simply notice it and release it. After you complete the activity, take two minutes to reflect with your partner about the experience. Finally, complete the post–Mad Libs reflection exercise later, in private.

NEW STORY

1. Your name _____

2. Noun that describes something special/magical/powerful

_____

3. Positive adjective _____
4. Body part/part of your identity you struggle to radically love _____
5. Same positive adjective _____
6. Same body part/part of your identity you struggle to radically love _____
7. Name of a gift, talent, insight, or ability you would like to have _____
8. Same positive adjective _____
9. Same body part/part of your identity you struggle to radically love _____
10. Verb phrase describing what you feel called to do for those you will serve/your most important job _____
11. Noun describing whom you feel called to serve _____
12. Same verb phrase describing what you feel called to do for those you will serve/your most important job _____
13. Same noun describing whom you feel called to serve _____
14. Same verb phrase describing what you feel called to do for those you will serve/your most important job _____
15. Same positive adjective _____
16. Same body part/part of your identity you struggle to radically love _____
17. Same noun describing whom you feel called to serve _____

18. Same verb phrase describing what you feel called to do for those you will serve/your most important job

_____

19. Same positive adjective _____

20. Same body part/part of your identity you struggle to radically love

_____

21. Negative adjective _____

22. Negative adjective _____

23. Your name _____

24. Same noun that describes something special/magical/powerful

_____

25. Same positive adjective _____

26. Same body part/part of your identity you struggle to radically love

_____

27. Same noun describing whom you feel called to serve

_____

28. Same verb phrase describing what you feel called to do for those you will serve/your most important job

_____

29. Same positive adjective _____

30. Same body part/part of your identity you struggle to radically love

_____

• • • A NEW TALE TO TELL • • •

Once upon a time in a far-off land, I,

1. _____ *(your name)*, was a powerful and divine

2. _____ *("magical" noun)* with a/an

3. _____ *(positive adjective)* 4. _____

(body part). This **5**. _____ *(positive adjective)*

6. _____ *(body part)* gave me the ability of

7. _____ *(desired ability)*. I used my

8. _____ *(positive adjective)* **9.**_____

(body part) to **10**._____ *(your calling)*.

One day, after great debate, the powers of the great land decided that I must go to the land of humans to help

11. _____ *(whom you can serve)*

12. _____ *(your calling)*. The powers of the great land assured me that I was the only one capable of achieving this mighty and unique task. And with that I set out on my journey to the land of the humans.

In the early years, I remembered

my mighty and unique calling to help **13.** _____ *(whom you can serve)* **14.** _____ *(your calling)*.
But as I got older, the memory of my task began to fade. The powers of the great land knew that they needed to remind me of my mighty and unique task by restoring to me my **15.** _____ *(positive adjective)*

16. _____ *(body part)* so that I could use it to help **17.** _____ *(whom you can serve)*

18. _____ *(your calling)*.

When I first received my

19. _____ *(positive adjective)* **20.** _____ _____ *(body part)*, I was devastated. I thought it was

21. _____ *(negative adjective)* and **22**. _____ *(negative adjective)*. Slowly, however, the powers of the great land restored my former knowledge, and I remembered that I am **23**. _____ *(your name)*, a powerful and divine **24.** _____ *("magical" noun)*.

My **25.** _____ *(positive adjective)* **26**._____ *(body part)* is part of my mighty and unique task to help

27. _____ *(whom you can serve)*

28. _____ *(your calling)*.

Today I know I am alive, I am free, and I am enough.

My mighty and unique task requires me to radically love all of me. I am grateful for my **29.** _____ *(positive adjective)* **30.** _____ *(body part)* for aiding me on my journey and reminding me of my highest calling.

All of me is powerful and divine.

After reading the story with your partner take five minutes, in private, to write down your reflections.

- How did it feel having someone read your new story to you?

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- How did it feel to read it for yourself?

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- What part of the story resonated for you? What part of the story did not?

. . . . . .

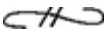
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Do you believe a different story
would be more powerful for you?
If so, write it down.





Pillar 4

Collective Compassion

In the beginning of the workshops I teach, I tell participants that they can do everything I say, but if they avoid pillar 4, Collective Compassion, then radical self-love will continue to elude them. Every word in this workbook is unsustainable without the fourth pillar. Collective Compassion is the being part of radical self-love. It is our internal compass, quickly alerting us when we are off course. Not only does Collective Compassion provide an internal structure of governance (i.e., the rules that guide our personal work). It is also the bridge to the *socially* transformative power of radical self-love. Collective Compassion offers direction for how we ought to treat ourselves, but as importantly, it is our directive for being with others.

Before body shame stripped us of our inherent sense of self-worth, it stripped us of compassion. We saw failure in every mirror; we judged our every thought. We berated and abused ourselves because we were berated and abused by others. We thought the outside voice was our own, and we let it run roughshod over our lives. And then we judged ourselves for judging ourselves, trapped on a hamster wheel of self-flagellation. Oh, honey, that is no way to live. Without compassion for ourselves we will never stay on the road of radical self-love. Without compassion for others we can only replicate the world we have always known. Radical self-love is not about “getting it right.” “Getting it right” is a body-shame paradigm. Radical self-love is honoring how we are all products of a rigged system designed to keep us stuck in stigma and shame. The only way to beat that system is by

giving ourselves something the system never will: true community and true compassion.





TOOL 9

get vulnerable and be in community

Many of us are willing to extend a helping hand but very reluctant to reach out for help when we need it ourselves. We have seemingly divided the world into “those who offer help” and “those who need help.” The truth is that we are both. Radical self-love is not a solo journey. A complicated and multilayered amalgamation of systems, structures, and experiences authored our body shame and built the larger social complex of body terrorism. We cannot dismantle that system in isolation. Our perception of vulnerability as weakness is a function of body terrorism. Any belief that keeps us disconnected from our truth and from others will always be antithetical to radical self-love.

Vulnerability gives us access to our wonder and magic through the eyes of others. Through this, we get the opportunity to see ourselves anew. To move beyond the narrative of individuality is to move beyond the narrative of scarcity and not-enoughness. In community, our stories are held up to the light of connection, and we begin to see clearly how we are having a shared experience of being human with other humans—stories, fear, fog, and all. As Brené Brown wrote in *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead*, “If we can share our story with someone who responds with empathy and understanding, shame can’t survive.”

Vulnerability as a Door

On the following pages write down five things you have been keeping in secret, shame, or embarrassment. The choices should vary in intensity.

Sec ret

1

_____

Write your first secret here.

Why have you kept this a secret?

_____

_____

_____

What did you believe the secret meant about you?

_____

_____

What did you believe the secret meant about others?

What were you afraid would happen if you told?

Secret

2

Write your second secret here.

Why have you kept this a secret?

_____

_____

_____

What did you believe the secret meant about you?

_____

_____

_____

What did you believe the secret meant about others?

_____

_____

_____

What were you afraid would happen if you told?

_____

_____

_____

Secret 3

Write your third secret here.

Why have you kept this a secret?

What did you believe the secret meant about you?

What did you believe the secret meant about others?

What were you afraid would happen if you told?

Secret 4

Write your fourth secret here.

Why have you kept this a secret?

_____

What did you believe the secret meant about you?

_____

_____

_____

What did you believe the secret meant about others?

_____

_____

_____

What were you afraid would happen if you told?

_____

_____

_____

Sec ret

5

Write your fifth secret here.

Why have you kept this a secret?

What did you believe the secret meant about you?

What did you believe the secret meant about others?

What were you afraid would happen if you told?

Sharing Your Secrets

- List three to five people you trust most in your life.

- Why do you trust them?

- What have they done to earn your trust?

- How do they move through the world that reinforces your trust for them?

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. . . . . .

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

Assign each one of the secrets listed above to one of the people on your trust list. If you have more secrets than people on your trust list, you can assign more than one secret to the same person.

- What did it feel like to consider sharing the secret with that person.

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. . . . . .

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. . . . . .

- What is your biggest fear about sharing the secret?

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- What are the stories you may have made up about people's responses?

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- Write down a new story to tell yourself about how they might respond that empowers you and feels good.

Community as Cure

Science has much to offer us in our efforts to subvert the internal and external forces of body shame. In the study of infectious diseases, epidemiologists use the “epidemiological triad” to explain how pathogens spread from person to person. This triad consists of an agent, a host, and an environment. *Agent* refers to the specific pathogen present in the triad. *Host* denotes whatever vessel (or conditions within a vessel) allows the agent to thrive. *Environment* refers to the external forces that foster the transmission of the agent to the host. When any of these three elements is disrupted, the trajectory of the disease is halted. In the work of radical self-love, body shame is the disease, we are the hosts, and body terrorism is the environment.

Body shame thrives because our world cultivates and nurtures body terrorism through media, government, and culture. Society then transmits the pathogen of body shame to susceptible hosts (us), who carry it around and pass it on due to the internal conditions of stigma and shame. Being in community is how we interrupt the triad. Our refusal to host body shame in secrecy and isolation is the death knell of this disease. Community is also how we pool our resources to

create collective change, ultimately dismantling the systems that thrive on our oppression and disconnection. Community is how we create a world free of body terrorism.

- What communities are you currently a part of?

- How do you participate in those communities?

- What are the values or beliefs of your closest communities?

- How do your communities support you and lift you up?

- What do you bring to your communities?
  How do you lift others up?

- Sometimes communities can be a wrong fit for us. Which communities, if any, take energy from and bring negativity into your life?

- Sometimes a community can be hard to extricate yourself from—it might even be your family. What are some ways that you can shield yourself from the negative forces within this community?

Finding Your Folks

We may find that the communities we are a part of no longer align with what we desire to create in our lives. Perhaps we have never really felt like we belonged to any community. It may be time to find our folks. Use the questions below to help you take action in finding the community that will best support your radical selflove journey.

- What are the five qualities of a community that make you feel most welcome?

1.....

2.....

3.....

4.....

5.....

- What are five areas of interest you would like to learn more about?

1.....

2.....

3.....

4.....

5.....

- What are five gifts or talents you have that you believe would be an asset to others?

1.....

2.....

3.....

4.....

5.....

- Considering your answers to the three questions above, make a list of five groups or communities that you might want to be a part of. They can be formal groups or people you would like to be in community with based on your answers.

1 .....

2 .....

3 .....

4 .....

5 .....



Spend the next few days researching potential groups or communities that are available and contact two to start a relationship.



TOOL 10

give yourself some grace

The historical systems of power and control want you to feel isolated and ashamed for profit. And some days we may not like our bodies. That is okay. I call these BRB days (Body Road Bump days). Remember that you can love your body even when you don't like it.

Every day we awake to messages that reinforce the narrative that we are deficient. The body-shame amplifier will occasionally ring loud enough to feel like it is drowning out the chorus of our divinity. On those days, the work is still to love. In Christian doctrine, grace is described as the free and unmerited favor of God. Free and unmerited favor is a gift we can extend to ourselves regardless of faith or religion. We do not have to earn radical self-love. Our perfect execution of each pillar and tool will not get us a higher grade in the radical self-love class. The act of giving yourself some grace is the practice of loving the you that does not like your body.

On the days we feel the most deficient, the most chased down by the dog of shame, what is being called forth from us is more love—not because we earned it but because we never had to. To give grace to oneself is to move beyond words like worthy and deserving, terms that imply qualification and quantity. When we recognize ourselves as the embodiment of radical self-love, we stop trying to assess our worth. We begin to understand that it is inherent and unquantifiable.

Love just is.
We just are love.

The Welcome Rule

Bringing grace and compassion to an experience you will not allow yourself to be present to is difficult. Our emotions and feelings are information. They are trying to convey a message to the rest of our body. That message could be a need—like for food, water, or sleep. Or the message could be trying to help us look more deeply at some underexplored area of our growth and healing. When we deny our feelings, particularly the unpleasant ones, we also deny the vital communication our feelings and emotions are trying to have with us.

Find a quiet space wherever you are and sit as if you are preparing for meditation. Take a deep breath and practice welcoming a negative feeling you may have had today. With your eyes closed, imagine welcoming the feeling into your heart with curiosity. Spend five minutes sitting with the feeling and then answer the questions below.

- What is the negative feeling that was present?

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- Did you feel resistance to welcoming the feeling? If so, why?

- Could you notice the resistance in a specific part of your body? Which part?

- What did it feel like?

- When you allowed yourself to be curious about the negative feeling, what did you notice?

- When you welcomed the negative emotion, did you notice another emotion underneath it? If so, what was that emotion?

- What ultimately happened when you allowed yourself to sit with the negative emotion?

The More Love Principle

In a world organized around and anchored in body terrorism, we will have moments when we do not feel particularly loving toward ourselves or our bodies. We humans are energetically impacted by a world of messages we are given about the validity of our own bodies and the bodies of others. Staying grounded in your own radical self-love energy will be difficult at times, and those are the times that you will most need the More Love principle. When you do not feel loving toward your body, when you are brimming with self-doubt, uncertainty, and the voices of unworthiness, that is the perfect time to offer more love to yourself. Try the exercises below to bring more love and grace to hard BRB days.

In a quiet, distraction-free space, take five minutes to sit in meditation. During your meditation, imagine your inner three-year-old. Remember, three-year-olds can be frustrating, but they are not bad or wrong. They are developmentally exactly where they should be, learning through trial and error. They rely on adults to lovingly and patiently guide them. Your inner three-year-old needs your loving guidance and care.

- If your three-year-old were beside you, how would talk to them?

- What words would you use?

- Imagine that your three-year-old has done something naughty or is throwing a tantrum. If you wanted to be the most loving parent, how might you treat them then?

Spend the rest of the day being patient and kind with yourself as if you were a three-year-old just learning about the world. In many ways you are relearning radical self-love. When you find yourself engaging in negative self-talk, respond to yourself as you would a three-year-old you loved deeply. At the end of the day, write down your reflections.

- What was it like to treat yourself with the gentleness of a small child?

- How did it change the way you spoke to yourself?

- How did it change the way you felt?



MORE LOVE STATEMENTS

Fill in your name and practice these statements on BRB days.

I love you,

_____

_____,

who doesn't like this body today.

I love you,

_____

_____,

who feels like I'll never be good enough.

I love you,

_____

_____,

who is afraid and unsure of myself.

I love you,

_____

_____,

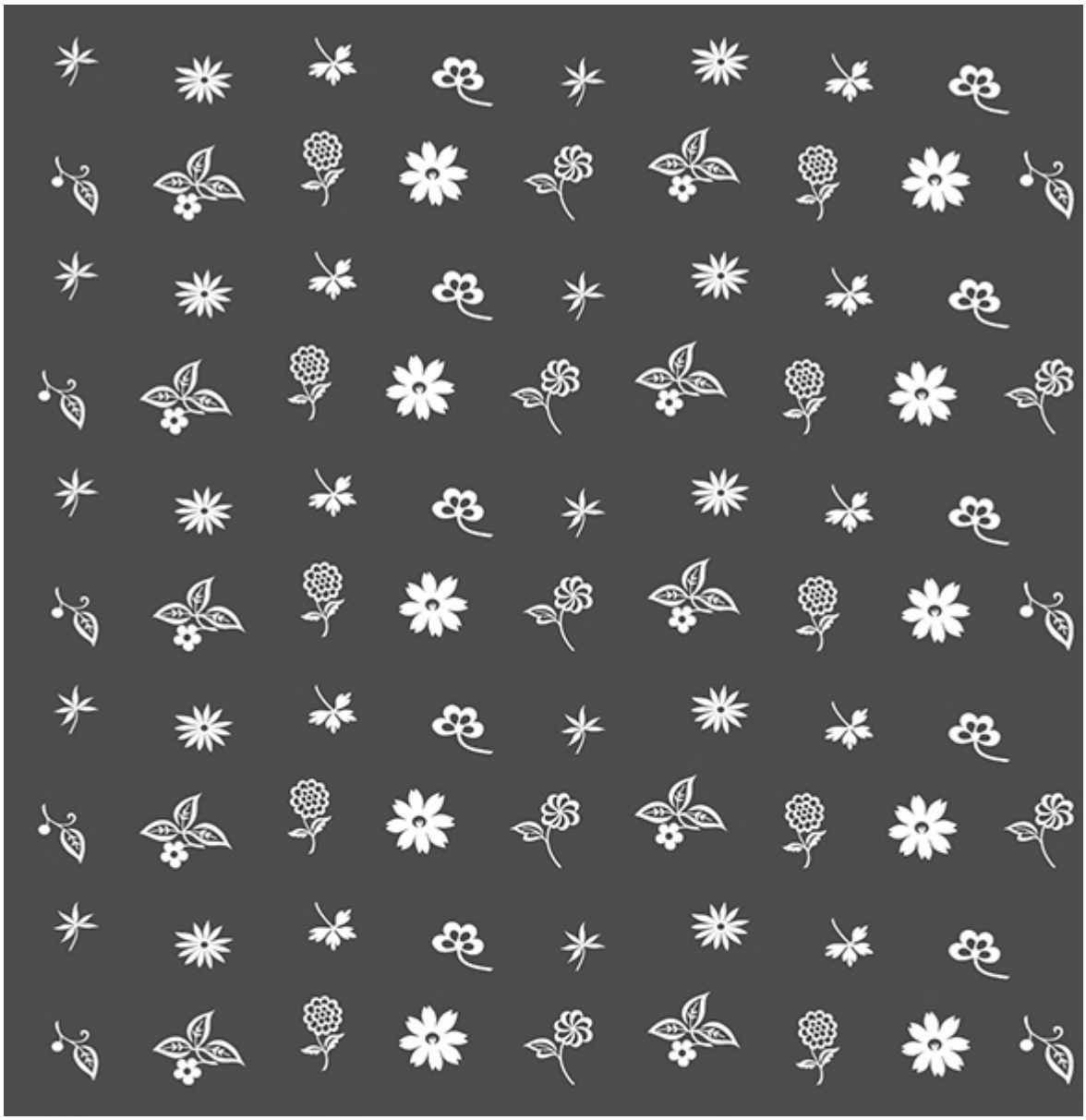
in all of my
imperfections.

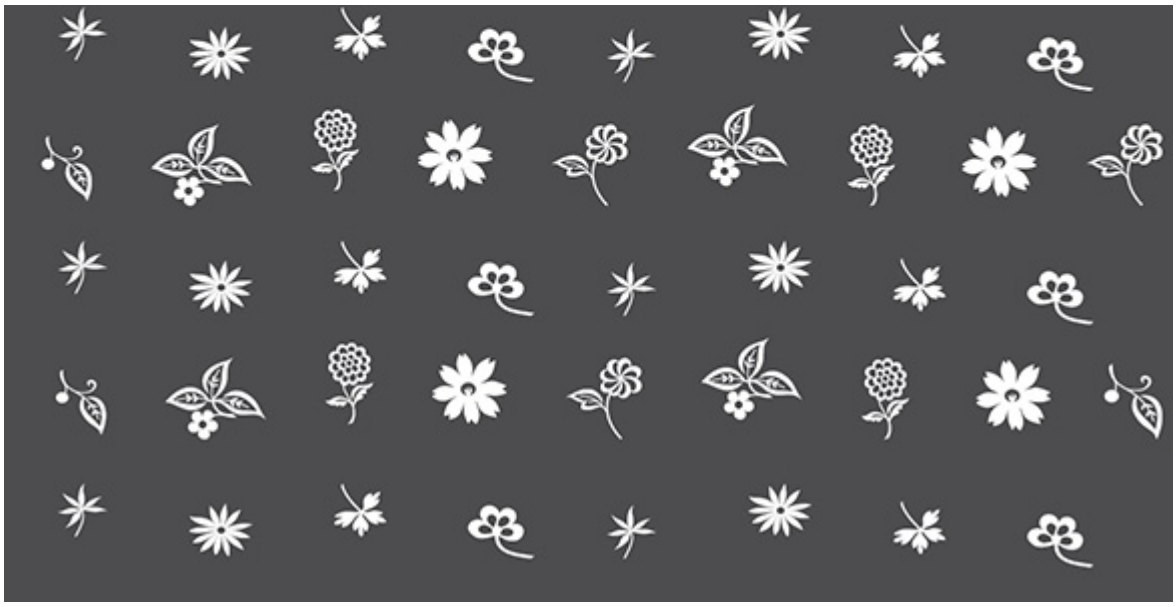
I love you,

_____

_____,

because I am worthy of love
right now, exactly as I am.







EPILOGUE

Embodying Radical Self-Love to Change the World

Radical self-love is the foundation of all human love. It is our inherent and original relationship with ourselves and our bodies. It is the intrinsic knowledge that we are divine, we are enough, and we arrived on this planet deserving of connection, community, joy, pleasure, and abundant love. Radical self-love is the choice to unapologetically love and value ourselves even when the world tells us otherwise.

Our embodiment of this love and the work we do to divest ourselves from the systems of body shame and body terrorism are not only about our individual well-being but also the cornerstones of how we dismantle those same systems in the world at large. Humans' interdependence requires that whatever transformation and justice we seek for ourselves we seek for the bodies of others. If your radical self-love does not work to ensure a planet where everyone has access to their own unobstructed pathway to self-love, then it ain't radical self-love.

As you integrate the work you have done on these pages, consider how you can expand this work in your own life and in the lives of others. How can your radical self-love journey create a more just, equitable, and compassionate world? Because only then can we truly create a world that works for everybody and every body!

Your Radical Self-Love Journey

Reflect on the following questions.

- What are the four most powerful epiphanies you have had about yourself since starting this book?

1 .....

.....

2 .....

.....

3 .....

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4 .....

.....

- What are four negative body beliefs you had about yourself that have been challenged since beginning this work?

1 .....

.....

2 .....

.....

3 .....

.....

4 .....

.....

- What body terrorism systems were at play in your internalized experiences of body shame?

- What are five strategies you have developed since reading this book to interrupt the voice of body shame when it arises in you?

1 .....

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2 .....

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3 .....

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4 .....

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5 .....

.....

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Radical Self-Love beyond Your Body

After completing this workbook by answering the questions as they relate to your body and experience, return to the beginning and reflect on the questions based on the ideas, thoughts, and behaviors you have had about other people's bodies. As you explore how body shame and systems of body terrorism have impacted you, you also have the opportunity to explore how those systems have impacted the lives and bodies of others. Through this reflection you may notice places where you can learn more about the experiences of other groups and bodies and how you can work alongside others to eradicate all forms of body terrorism.

- What are three areas of body terrorism that you will commit to learn more about that do not directly impact your body?

1 .....

.....

.....

2 .....

.....

.....

3 .....

.....

.....

- What are three groups or organizations you will commit to learn more about that address systemic issues of body terrorism?

1 .....

.....

.....

2 .....

.....

.....

3 .....

.....

.....

Create a mantra for how you will help create a world of radical self-love.



All my life I have waited for endings
the chapter complete
the road met with wall
the note trailed off
into silence.

What if I was wrong;
if the song is a ceaseless ode
to birthing myself
again and again
into newness?

What if the task is to read the chapter
over this time, each line a different
offering somehow spelled the same?
What if the road does not end

but bends time-space?
If every wall is a door deeper inside?

What if incomplete
is only an invitation to more?
What if I stopped waiting to be
finished with this journey?

As if love
were ever a thing
we should long
to be done with.

May your journey never be complete.

With Radical Love,

Sonya

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Sonya Renee Taylor is a world-renown activist, author, artist, and spiritual trans formational leader and the founder of The Body Is Not an Apology, a movement and digital media and education company exploring the intersections of identity, healing, and social justice using the framework of radical self-love. The content and message of her book *The Body Is Not an Apology* have changed the lives of millions of people across the globe, shifting how we live in and relate to our bodies and the bodies of others, and shifting us from a

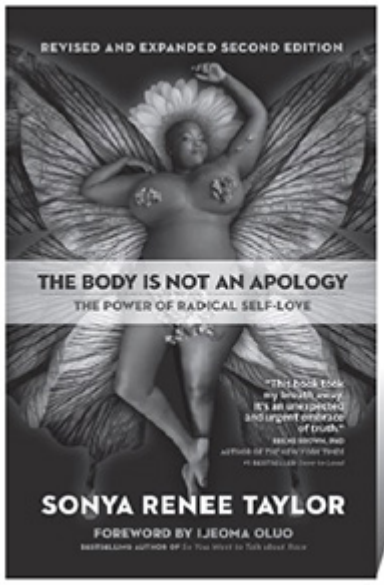
relationship of shame and injustice to a relationship bound by love. She is also the author of several books, including *Celebrate Your Body (and Its Changes Too!)*, and coeditor of the *International Handbook of Fat Studies* (Routledge, 2021), and her writing appears in numerous anthologies. Sonya is an international-award-winning performance poet and speaker who has appeared across the United States and in New Zealand, Australia, England, Scotland, Sweden, Germany, Brazil, Canada, the Netherlands, Bosnia, and other countries. Sonya and her work have been featured by CBS, CNN, NPR, HBO, BET, MTV, TV One, PBS, the *New York Times*, *New York* magazine, MSNBC.com, Today.com, *Huffington Post*, *Vogue Australia*, *Playboy*, Shape.com, *Ms.* magazine, and many more forums. She was a 2016 invitee to the Obama White House to speak on the intersection of LGBTQIAA and disability issues. In 2017, she was an inaugural selectee of the Edmund Hillary Fellowship for global change makers, and she has shared stages with luminaries such as Angela Davis, Sonia Sanchez, Amy Goodman, Carrie Mae Weems, Theaster Gates, Harry Belafonte, Dr. Cornel West, Hillary Rodham Clinton, the late Amiri Baraka, and numerous others. She continues to perform, teach, and transform lives globally.

Visit her at www.sonyareneetaylor.com.

Also by Sonya Renee Taylor

The Body Is Not an Apology

The Power of Radical Self-Love, Second Edition



The Body Is Not an Apology offers radical self-love as the balm to heal the wounds inflicted by violent systems of oppression. World-renowned activist and poet Sonya Renee Taylor invites us to reconnect with the radical origins of our minds and bodies and celebrate our collective, enduring strength. This second edition includes stories from Taylor's travels around the world combating body terrorism and shines a light on the path toward liberation guided by love. With new anecdotes and a brand-new final chapter, the book offers specific tools, actions, and resources for confronting some of our most challenging systems of oppression, such as transphobia, racism, and more. Together with the accompanying *Your Body Is Not an Apology Workbook*, this book brings the practice of radical self-love to life.

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We believe that the solutions to the world's problems will come from all of us, working at all levels: in our society, in our organizations, and in our own lives. Our publications and resources offer pathways to creating a more just, equitable, and sustainable society. They help people make their organizations more humane, democratic, diverse, and effective (and we don't think there's any contradiction there). And they guide people in creating positive change in their own lives and aligning their personal practices with their aspirations for a better world.

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