

13 STEPS OF WELLBEING

TO FEEL BETTER IN 10 MINUTES

A SHORT HANDBOOK OF HEALTHY PRACTICES
BY BENEDETTA ARIANNA ARTIOLI

THE AUTHENTICITY SERIES



This handbook is dedicated to all my teachers. To my partner Igor, who supports me daily with his loving presence. To my sisters/friends, who believe in me (and always answer to my emergency calls), and to all the Explorers out there, searching for ways to reawaken the Human potential!

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Introduction

If you had told me twenty years ago that I would write these kinds of handbooks, I would have laughed! I had been going around my life quite light-heartedly, following the “normal life” rules of study, graduate, work, get married and make babies, wear some make up and dress as fashion dictates. I was trying to fit in while burying my head in the sand about how I really felt. But in 2002 the baby I had been carrying inside my belly for the past 8 months, suddenly and without apparent medical reason, died. On Valentines Day I woke up with a scar, a blurry mind and no baby. The hospital offered me the option to see “someone” to talk about it, but I was too shocked, frozen. The following year was mainly tears.

This event dragged me in to a process of mourning that changed every part of me. At the time it was excruciating, but looking back at it now I am very grateful as it triggered a deep and powerful change in my life and led me on to authenticity, transformation and a happiness that I never even knew was possible before. That’s how I started my journey in search of answers and over the last 15 years I have been an independent researcher, studying and applying self-development tools to promote health, wellbeing and personal growth.

In 2009 I left almost everything connected to my past, including my marriage, to live a more authentic life and I started teaching Yoga. Since then it has been one of my passions and I love being both a teacher and a student of this incredible practice. Not long after that, I partnered up with Igor- the Man of my New Life, and began travelling all over Europe with him, sharing the teachings of Singing Freedom, vocal and emotional labs. It is a great gift for me to be able to facilitate people to find their authenticity, to express and transform emotions, to reconnect with others and with Life itself. Nothing makes me happier then being

able to share a variety of tools that enable the people I work with to lead healthier, happier lives.

In my experience of Being Human, I –like all of us- have been going through many moments of stress, confusion, pain and challenge. With each of these hurdles a new lesson was learned and many times a new tool was found that helped me cope and process, grow a deeper authenticity, become better and stronger. With this first short practical handbook, I want to share some of the steps that I have taken that have worked wonders for me. These are a selection of the practical exercises I have found in the past 15 years of participating to and leading self-development sessions and workshops. They come from a variety of different approaches but they have in common the ability to help me, and the people I work with, to come back to Life. They come especially handy even when things are hard, when we most need to harness the energy to move forward.

Whether you are a woman, a man or any other gender, I am talking to your feminine and receptive part, the inner *curandera*. She represents the Medicine Woman archetype, that is present in each of us at a different degree. She is the one who wants to heal and take care of all living beings and the amazing planet we call home.

If you are at a time of Life, health, relationship or career challenge, here you will find practical suggestions to accompany the unfolding of this transition; no one else can do it for you, but you can definitely have good support from the outside. Although this period may seem endless or the difficulties you experience insurmountable, I want to remind you that there are various ways you can ask and receive the support you need. One option is going through *mirroring* with a good friend; another is to choose a personal work with a holistic practitioner such as a life coach, a psychotherapist or therapist of your choice, depending on the approach you prefer. Please don't get into the old obsolete trap-thought that asking for help is sign of weakness. For many of the older generations it would have been humiliating to share their vulnerability with a stranger. In my experience the opposite is true. Consider that nothing is worth the pain of isolation and the burn out that comes from insisting to manage everything on your own. *Reach out and ask.*

Ask, and you will receive. Search, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened for you.

Matthew 7:7



Missing links

At school (in most cases) we have not learned what we really need. Few of us have had the chance to be raised by "enlightened" parents. Moreover, in most cases, we no longer live in tribal societies. We have lost the initiatory practices that, in many traditions, accompanied the developmental steps of a human being. So, quite often we don't live consciously through all ages of life (infant, child, adolescent, adult and elder). Instead, we can get stunted in our development remaining rather children or adolescents until death, and coping forever with all the mess that this entails!

Without these steps and education we *don't learn to know and manage our wonderful Human Being system, we do not master the functioning of our bodies, we do not know how to express and deal with our emotions, we do not experience what it means to have mature and lasting relationships, we do not learn to educate our children, and therefore to create a healthy family.* To make matters worse we are pushed into poorly functioning models and behavioural clichés we receive from modern society... *it's a real mess!*

Growing up in this way, we can easily reach moments of crisis. Many of us find ourselves in great relational, emotional and psychological difficulties. Over times these can even turn into physical suffering. Our bodies express our dis-ease through symptoms, which consequently push us (with more or less force) in search of answers and solutions. We can consider this research as a Treasure Hunt, since it is not at all simple but that what we find on our path is very precious!

Modern life has put us in a unique position. The Internet has changed everything, within a few clicks we can make connections all over the world and access a level of information never seen before. Our curiosity is free to travel around the world and on the way we can find many answers that can help us in any field of life. The catch is the addictive nature of this technology. We have to find ways not become screen slaves, and instead train ourselves to use our computers and mobile phones as tools that work for us, rather than against us. This is not easy and requires our awareness to set healthy boundaries but if we master it then we can have the world at our fingertips.

I regularly spend periods in which I research interviews, documentaries and online classes. I use these resources to clarify my questions, make new distinctions, vary my practices and discover interesting people all over the planet. I am sure you have shared this experience and I thank you and your curiosity for bringing you to these pages!

The tools I chose to present come from different traditions; you'll find exercises from Western and Eastern heritage. All these practices are based on a holistic view of the Human Being; *the foundation of this approach is the knowledge that everything is connected and interdependent*. My invitation in order to be able to start adopting a more holistic way of life is to find ways to slow down, every single day. That's one of the reasons to take these 13 steps. When we are well, the practices help us keep our system healthy and balanced, when we feel challenged, half-hearted, or overwhelmed, these tools help us regain our most positive energy... and get us out of *the movies!*

What movies?! Each of us creates movies, every day! For example, in the very popular movie of *suffering* we are not in the present, we have no power and we easily become victims of situations, of others and of the world. When we play the suffering movie we lose energy and we don't feel able to change anything. *The good news is that we are the screenplay writers, the directors and the actors of these movies! Once we get this insight we can learn to choose and create only those that make us (and those around us) feel good.*

This handbook gives you a beginning look at the 13 practices, but this is only a foundation. I invite you to go deeper and seek other resources to explore anything that seems interesting and important for your journey. I also want to share more, and am working on another handbook that describes my experience with several more complex holistic techniques, that I have experienced on my journey.

"All we have to do is preserve our personality, live our own life, be captains of our own ship. And everything will be well."

Edward Bach, "Free yourself"



THE BASICS

To build a house we must start from its foundations. To be able to take care of ourselves in a holistic way, it is useful to consider, and eventually update, the focal points on which we base our daily actions.

Maybe you were expecting to already find the practices to feel better, but I rather start with offering you a solid foundation upon which you can build your work and have effective and lasting results. Nowadays we are experts of finding quick fixes. I am not saying there are no good fast remedies, I am sure some of the exercises I am sharing will work their wonders in a just few minutes. But I really care about offering you a more balanced life, a deeper experience and long lasting benefits. These fundamentals help you become more aware and widen your comprehension, if necessary.

Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it.

Rumi

Know Yourself

The Human Being is a complex system that includes three worlds: Mind, Body and Spirit. All three have their own needs and languages. Western culture, based on science and materialism, has produced generations of people *disconnected* from the needs of their bodies and *undernourished* on a spiritual level.

As long as we accumulate information, we do nothing but enlarge and weigh down the world of the Mind. Most of us are in the habit of almost totally ignoring the worlds of the Body and the Soul. This imbalance is the basis of a frequent sense of *incompleteness*, of *lack* and *restlessness*. When we feel these unsettling sensations we often try to hide them with different harmful behaviours, to which we often become, unconsciously, *addicted*.

One of our best allies at the start of our path is *discomfort*. When we reach a point that our situation and/or emotions feel so uncomfortable that we do not want things to continue for even one more day... then we have a real impulse to change. This change is up to each of us to give to ourselves, we each can reach for solutions that serve us and seek to restore balance in our mind, body and spirit.

The ancient Greeks left us a clue. In front of the temple of Apollo in Delphi there is a famous sentence that, to me, contains a profound invitation: "Know Thyself". If we welcome this advice we can begin to improve, enrich and transform our own lives in ways that we couldn't have imagined possible.

In the years of my research, I have realised that to really *know* something, it is not enough to study it. Gathering tons of information keeps the knowledge at the mental level; it is only through *practice* that we can integrate and understand the other two worlds of body and spirit. This active process of *learning while doing* allows us to experience a fuller and more fulfilling Life.

Some questions that can help us in meditation or for journaling are:

Who am I?

What are my values?

What are the talents I have cultivated until now?

Which talents do I want to cultivate for my future?

If I had just one more year to live, what would I really want to do with my life?

Take Care Of Your Nourishment

This is a vast topic so let me take a moment to point out that nourishment does not involve only food. Its broader meaning is, in fact, "*what makes us function and grow*". Human Beings may need more than what most of us is aware of.

Let's consider what the American psychologist Maslow named Motivation theory. He discovered that there are five interdependent levels of basic human needs that must be satisfied in a strict sequence, starting with the lowest level:

- The *Primary needs* we all share are *physiological needs for survival* (to stay alive and reproduce) and *security* (to feel safe), these are the most fundamental and most pressing needs.
- The Secondary needs that are *social needs* (for love and belonging) and *self-esteem needs* (to feel worthy, respected, and have status).
- The *highest-level secondary needs* are *self-actualization needs* (self-fulfilment and achievement). Without these distinctions and acknowledgments, we often oversimplify our needs to food, water and shelter. In fact there is a lot more to being a healthy and happy human being, and if we are not aware of the importance to dedicate ourselves to fulfilling our secondary needs, then we may survive but we will not thrive.

Of course food is also a huge part of our nourishment! Try to eat plenty of fresh organic vegetables and fruits, nuts, seeds and cereals and what makes you feel good. Try eating fruit before meals or just as a snack as it is digested easier on its own. The same goes for salad, which is healthiest when consumed *before* cooked food. Eating in this way forms less fermentation within your gut and should make you feel lighter. In order to support a good digestion another good habit is to drink more during the day and less during the meals.

Vegetarian, vegan or omnivorous?

Diet is a very individual aspect and even the top scientists cannot agree on which exact diet is best for people! Here is my experience: I was a strict a vegetarian for about ten years, but today I eat a bit of everything. At the moment I am flexitarian! Even if the dictionary may not include this quite recent term, it means that I eat a little bit of everything, mainly vegetarian. Since I've been spending more time in Greece I've been eating also some fish and meat (very rarely... like a few times a year. I recently started eating meat so I find it very strange when it happens, I'm not sure I will continue but at the moment it is so, let's see where the experiment will take me).

I try as much as possible to listen to what my body is asking for. I notice that every day is different and my habits around food change from season to season, year to year. I find it very important to be informed about what I eat. For example I am aware and very saddened by the methods of intensive livestock breeding, not only by the cruelty towards the animals but also by its negative environmental impact. I have watched and shared several documentaries on this subject and I think it is a very important topic to raise awareness about. In case you eat meat, I invite you to do it as little as possible, choosing meat preferably from game or from sustainable and reliable breeding. I also try to buy mostly at local farmers and organic stores. I have chosen to spend more for what is really important to me, while letting go of some spending habits that were not necessary.

The meat industry is not the only ethical issue around food. Did you know that our consumption of avocados, especially those imported from South America, is causing a big problem? An article in 2017 explained that in Chile, one of the largest producers and exporters of this fruit, the demand is so high that the plantations want to produce more and more quantities. In order to reach this result, the growers are using a lot of water, needed by these trees to fructify, creating a huge drought for the vast cultivation area and its inhabitants. And it

doesn't stop with avocados. Have you heard the Quinoa story? In Peru and Bolivia, the countries where it is grown and exported, the demand and consequently the price of their basic food have exploded since it became a popular health food in the west. The cost has increased so much that the poorest people can no longer buy it. This "super grain" is now not accessible to them, and for the poorest locals of this region it is being replaced with cheaper alternatives, often constituted by import junk foods. Can you imagine the consequences?

As you can see our choices do have an increasingly *ethical* aspect. We have no other option but to become responsible if we really want to live and give others the right to also lead happy lives. On a practical level this means we need to become *conscious consumers*, eaters and shoppers. Local products are preferable to imported foods; you don't need to run for the latest super-antioxidant berry launched in the market to eat healthily. Every country has its local varieties of super healthy foods; we just need to know about them. Perhaps you also have the opportunity to join an organic buyers group or food co-op from local producers? This can be an excellent resource far superior to large supermarkets, as it eliminates thousands of kilometres and gas emissions into the environment while supporting a farm in your area. If you like soft drinks start your own production of Kombutcha, it's tasty and fizzy, healthy and delicious. In the Countries where this drink originated, it's considered a secret to longevity! Traditional medicines of the East such as India and China, food has been considered and used for thousands of years also as medicine. In the Western World we are slowly realizing this; until recently it was mainly religion preaching to fast at particular times of the year. Even if I haven't managed yet to do a complete fast, I understand more and more about the benefits of purification for healthy and spiritual reasons. Thanks to Yoga I have been experimenting with purification practices with very good results.

Your conscious choice will lead you to make decisions based on your needs and only you can truly define your best options after a thorough research on the world of food and nutrition. If you have any health issues, deepen your knowledge of the effects of various foods in your body. If you have an issue with your weight or eating habits then try to figure out what you compensate eating or not eating for. Is it love? Is it a much needed moment of you-time? Is it a way of coping with hard feelings? Work out why you have your relationship with food and face it head on. You don't need to starve yourself or weigh each bite, rather choose to dedicate more of your time doing other things that nourish you. In the long run you will feel much better and your body will follow. *This constructive, rather than destructive attitude holds true and very effective for any harmful habit or addiction you may have today.*

The wonderful Human Being System does not consume only the food it ingests, but also the information it lets inside. Does the information you take in nourish and empower you? Always remember that you have the choice to change channels or even better - *turn off* the television! Filter the information you let in or be at the mercy of greedy advertisers and fear mongering media messages. Try to *become consciously more selective*. Notice how you feel after letting in certain information. Does the news you watch empower you to make positive changes in the world or depress you into feeling helpless? Do the TV shows you watch leave you feeling good about life, or bad about yourself? Begin to consider the term

"nutrition" more broadly and take small steps to become more and more responsible for it. The measure will be your sense of wellbeing!

Create Your Daily Practice

A daily practice is probably the most useful tool of all. A daily routine that inspires you, relaxes you and connects you to your true nature can keep you on your path of authenticity and self-development like nothing else. There are many different ways to create a daily practice and, as always, I suggest you explore all the choices that resonate and find the ones that work best for you.

In my own practice I spent 15 years going to Yoga classes for a couple of hours, a couple of days a week, while today I practice less time but every day, I added more breath, a lot of nature and I definitely feel much better. When I don't feel like practicing Hatha Yoga on my own, I choose YouTube: Yoga with Adriene, because of the different options (I love variety!) and Yoga with Sacha, an inspiring yoga teacher and friend.

I also practice breathing exercises daily. I love the yogic breathing exercises (Pranayama) called *Nadi Shodana* (the Alternate Breathing) to *rebalance my energy* and Agni Prana, (the Breath of Fire) to *stimulate and balance the vital energy flow*. You can try many options, take some time to search, follow your intuition and experiment what's best for you. As Adriene says: "*Find what feels good!*"

If you would like to add some yoga or exercise in to your daily life but don't know where to begin then I recommend Yoga and Tai Chi as beautiful practices that work on your mind, body and spirit. Especially if you don't feel fit, if you feel short of breath, stressed, rigid or anxious. I also suggest Pranayama (yogic breathing exercises) and simple, short meditations, every day. Depending on the situation, you will have to feel if a few minutes are enough or if you need something more substantial.

Try it for a few days and if you don't like it, do not continue with the same thing, change it! Change teacher and style until you find the one that's right for you. Whether you are a beginner or an advanced practitioner, find the way to practice every day at least 10 minutes (try for longer if that is possible for you). It is great to do these things once or twice a week but even better to do them every day! Continue also to do the activities that make you feel good and support a local centre and people in your area running inspiring groups and classes. Practicing in a group is also an amazing factor for growth and we all need good company to live nurtured lives.

Through my research, I have seen that all major philosophies and religions from the East and the West include in their teachings sections on movement, affirmations, moral conduct, ethics, hygiene, food, and seasonal healthy habits. I have found some of this advice to be profoundly useful and beneficial. It's up to us to find or create our own updated versions of these ancient tools here and

now. Adapting the practices in a way that makes sense for us in our personal and interpersonal development.

When we are truly centred and listening, we feel when something does not work for our system. We are all creators, after all!

When we find the right practices that help us stay connected to our centre, we get to the point of naturally meditating during various moments of the day, feeling more and more often present in our body, becoming more able to relate to ourselves and others with deepened intimacy. This sustains us on our journey of unfolding and blossoming. We can lean on these practices when times are good or bad. We become more able to surf through the various moments and challenges of life with ever-greater fluidity! I wish that you can achieve this flow, and that you find your way to inspire others in their lives. Yet it all starts here, from your first steps!

Responsible Is The New Sexy

As a final note before diving into the practice, I would like to introduce **The Path of Responsibility**, and to invite us to walk together on this path. We can use the steps in this book to help cultivate the *ability-to-respond* to the impulses that Life brings us. We can learn many new ways to respond to feelings, emotions, people and events *rather than reacting to them*. This is the distinction I created to become more aware of these two possibilities we can almost always choose from. *Reaction* happens fast and is a way to *defend* ourselves; it's also what many of us still do most of the time. *Response* happens after one or more deep breaths and it's a way to *affirm* ourselves. It implies having access to our inner worlds and the capacity to communicate our boundaries and our real needs in a way that they can be understood.

A much sexier meaning of Responsibility can shift our perception of it: from a burden (that most of us wanted to get away from), into a key for our empowerment. We can start walking this path by no longer blaming the outside world for whatever happens in our lives. This shift has been challenging for me, I haven't mastered it fully yet, but it's already bringing many positive outcomes in my daily life and in most of my relations.

You can use some of the self-reflecting practices of this handbook, to find out about your limiting beliefs. Through some of these exercises you can discover the expectations you may be projecting upon others. Becoming responsible is a way to take the past, the present and the future into your own hands. It allows you to be free from all the blame games and the resentments. These are heavy weights that may be preventing you to fully thrive. As you start with these 13 steps, you hold the keys to open your inner doors: to become more in-tune with your unique body signals, to keeping track of the tricks of your mind and to connect to affirm boundaries and deepest needs.

When your inner movies are clear, the responsible step is to communicate in an effective way. If you feel like many times what you say is not welcomed by the people you are talking to (family, partner, friends, colleagues) you can explore the work of Marshall Rosenberg and NVC, Non Violent Communication. Studying its principles has been very helpful for me to learn how to express myself to create an encounter, rather than a clash. When I stay focused on my feelings, talk about my needs and myself in a clear way, I am giving the chance to the listener to stay open and receive my message. The result is in most cases a mature and constructive exchange.

Once you start walking the path of Responsibility, you start creating the life you love to live in each moment. Imagine how empowering it is to feel when you are and when you are not attuned with Life, and have the tools to use to re-establish your ideal balance!

So take a deep breath and lets see how this experience will go. At any time you feel like changing the exercises that I suggest, I invite you to do it and follow your instinct. If you like to contribute to my research, do get in touch; I would love to know about your experiments and what worked best for you.



THE 13 STEPS FOR WELLBEING

These are the 13 very effective practices and some creative variations to let go of the things that weigh you down and help you regain perspective, vitality, clarity and direction. The aim of all these tools is to start exploring the new possibilities right in front of you, right now. The present... is a gift.

I chose 13 different practices because it is the number of *rebirth*; it indicates the symbolic transformation of the individual towards a more refined state of consciousness. Its sum is 4 (1 + 3), which makes the 13 also associated with the quality of bringing tangible results into the material world. All good reasons to strengthen our journey with this number!

Enjoy the journey!



1. Centering and Grounding (Approximately 3 Minutes)

This tool is perfect as first thing to do as you come out of bed in the morning. It can be used any time you feel your head is “in the clouds”. It becomes especially beneficial in moments when you need to feel more in contact with yourself: when you want to take important decisions, set boundaries, or you want to feel more space around you.

Each of us has an *energetic centre*. This is a moving point that shifts according to where we put our attention. *How we manage this non-physical focal point has the power to uplift, or drain us, inspire us, or deplete us.* Learning how to bring this centre back to us is important in order to be fully present, allowing us to access the vast possibilities available exclusively in the HERE AND NOW. I had the good fortune of perfecting this exercise with a really good teacher, someone who embodies grounding, centering and presence just like a mountain: Clinton Callahan, the *father* of Possibility Management.

The *physical centre* is a very important physical point. It is our centre of gravity; the point at the centre of our body positioned about four fingers below the navel. In the Oriental disciplines it is known as the Dan Tien point (literally translated as *Field of the Elixir*). In Chinese medicine it is called the *Sea of Chi*, (Chi is the term for vital energy). In the Hawaiian tradition it is called the *Ku*, the place where are stored our memories from the beginning of time. In Pilates it's called Power House, you can imagine why.

Step 1: Start in a standing position. Breathe in and out from your nose in a way that feels natural.

Step 2: *Imagine, visualize or feel* the connection to your *physical centre*.

Step 3: Put your hands on this point.

Step 4: Close your eyes for a moment and mentally visualize bringing your *energy centre* (your mental attention) over on to your *physical centre*. There is no wrong way to do this, just play with this idea in a way that feels right for you! Take a couple of deep breaths and feel the sensations.

Step 5: Imagine a *grounding cord* going down from your physical and energetic centre to the centre of the Earth. You can visualize this cord in any way you like. Some people see it as long line as thick as piece of a straw, while others see a thick root or branch. Your grounding cord is connecting from your physical centre deep into the earth. Maybe it has a particular shape, colour and texture that can stay the same or change, depending on the day.

Step 6: Feel any excess energy travelling from your physical centre to the centre of the earth.

Step 7: Feel cool grounding energy travelling up from the earth to your body.

Step 8: When you feel grounded, gently bring your awareness back into your whole body. When you are ready open your eyes.

Notice how you feel after this exercise. Continue to breathe deeply and relax your body. With confidence and practice, this simple exercise can be carried out daily and can bring *many* benefits. You will notice the difference in your presence, especially if you are in front of people or in situations that would usually unsettle you. Keep on centering and grounding yourself whenever you need it!

Step 5: Notice what happens during and after the practice. Observe carefully and notice if you feel light headed or even a little bit dizzy. This can be the effect of most deep breathing exercises as we start practicing them, and it will naturally go away after a few normal breaths. It is a safe exercise, but stay seated until you feel present in your whole body. Then stand up slowly; give yourself a moment before going back in to the activities of your day.

Step 6: If you feel you need to, you can follow this exercise with the Centering and Grounding exercise shown above.

4x4 Variation: Breathing Walk of the 6 Steps

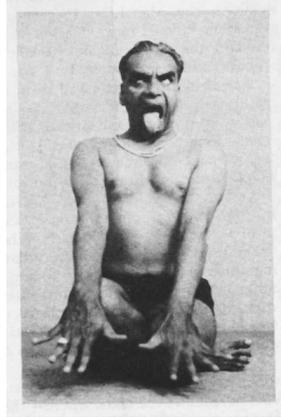
When you are in Nature (at the lake / sea / mountain/forest) where the air is clean, take the opportunity to practice walking and breathing consciously. Try the exercise below breathing in and out from your nose, but if it's not possible for you at this time, you can also breathe from your mouth.

Step 1:

- Inhale as you count 6 steps
- Hold your breath with full lungs (without effort) for 6 steps
- Exhale as you count 6 steps
- Hold with empty lungs for 6 steps

Step 2: repeat for as many times as you like!

If a count of 6 (or even 4) is too much then choose a lower number that feels good to you and increase over time.



3. The Lion (Simhasana)

(Approximately 2 to 5 Minutes)

This tool comes from Hatha Yoga. It helps to develop our sense of courage, and is particularly good if you tend to hold back emotions. This is a wonderful practice to help us to let go of unexpressed anger and to calm anxiety. This is also a great one if you tend to take yourself too seriously! On a physical level The Lion Breath improves the body energy circulation, so it is a great practice if you often have cold hands and feet.

Step 1: Sit on the ground, preferably kneeling and sitting on your heels (if at first you're uncomfortable, it's fine if you practice cross legged or even sitting with an upright posture in a chair).

Step 2: Inhale from the nose as you *contract* your body: bend your upper body forward. Curve your shoulders and chest, retract your arms towards your torso, contract your fists, hunch your body over and even squeeze all the muscles in your face, pulling aloof your features towards your nose while closing your eyes.

Step 3: Exhale from your mouth as you *expand* your body: arch your spine up and back, open your shoulders, lift your chest, extend your arms downward, open your hands and straighten all your fingers. Open your eyes wide, crossing them if you can so that you look towards 'the third eye' point (at middle between the eyebrows). Open your mouth fully, pull out your tongue and give a roaring sound to the breath that comes out!

Repeat at least 3 or 4 times and practice whenever you need it! You can end the exercise after a roar or if you have time you can move to the next position. Sit on the floor and briefly stretch your body allowing it to guide your movements.

Step 4 (Optional): Sit in a comfortable crossed legged position or lie down on the ground. Feel the sensations in your body and allow your thoughts to come and go, without attachment. Keep breathing deeply in a relaxed way, and allow the energy to redistribute in your body.

Step 5 (optional): If you feel any tension or pain in your body, you can imagine or visualize the vital energy as sparks of bright Light that, along with your breath, run

through your body. Your attention can direct this Light to bring relief in the points (muscles, bones or organs) that need it.

Complete the exercise whenever you are ready by stretching your whole body. If you have some more minutes try the variations that follow, otherwise slowly and mindfully get back to a standing position.



Lion Variation: Cat Pose (Marjariasana)

If you want to improve the energy flow in your body, you can perform another few repetitions of the Lion, using this variation that increases the movement in your spine. This is a very natural and pleasant movement. It improves the flexibility of the spine and opens the chest. It works on the two spinal fluid pumps, located under the skull and at the top of the sacrum. This helps the flow of cerebral fluids between the spine and the brain and improves your circulation. Try it a few times and notice how this feels for you.

Step 1: Start on all fours or sit comfortably on the ground with crossed legs, take a couple of natural breaths. When you feel ready start breathing in and out from your nose.

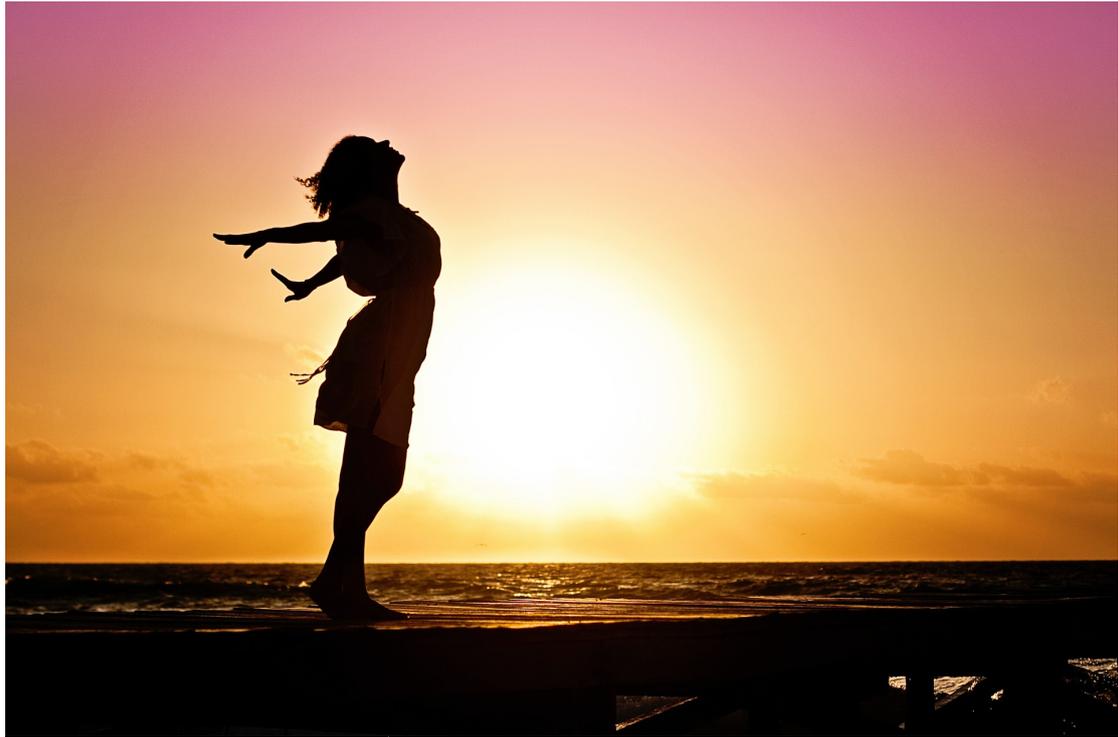
Step 2: As you inhale slowly bend your spine, curving your shoulders forward, as you tilt your pelvis forward. Connect your breath with your movements and your movements with your breath.

Step 3: As you exhale slowly arch your spine, open and lift your chest open the shoulders, bringing your shoulder blades towards each other and tilt your pelvis backwards.

Step 4 (optional): When you have repeated this exercise several times, move to a sitting position. Rub the palms of your hands together quickly until they are warm, and then place one hand behind the neck and one hand on the sacrum. While you do this continue to breathe deeply from your nose.

Step 5 (optional): Visualize, feel or imagine, a golden color light that flows along your spine, making everything it touches shine.

Stay for a few moments to relax before getting up carefully in an upright position. Give yourself the time you need to fully come back and remember the Grounding and Centering exercise, if you need to. Drink a glass of water before doing anything else!



4. Shake it!

(Approximately 2 to 5 Minutes)

Shaking the body is an amazing way to let go of tension, heaviness and stuck emotions. This is something I do a lot; the wonderful thing is it can bring great benefits in a very short time.

Step 1: Start in a standing position. Take a few breaths, relax your shoulders and keep your feet and ankles well anchored to the ground.

Step 2: Shake! Start shaking your body, bouncing smoothly on your knees. Experiment with various speeds while you continue to breathe deeply. I would recommend trying a 3 minute practice and then building up to 5, 8 or even 10 minutes.

Step 3: When you have shaken enough and you feel like stopping, stay motionless for a few minutes. You can stay standing or lie down. Feel the effects of the exercise: you will notice a sparkling sensation throughout your body that revitalizes all your cells.

Shake it! Variation: Shake it! Ho ho ha ha!

Once you are familiar with the shaking exercise, you can make the internal organs vibrate even more by adding a deep belly laugh. You can even play with various types of laughter (this can be fun! If you continue for a couple of minutes, you will

feel the belly relaxing and the whole body vibrating. Imagine what a *party* this is for your cells!

Keep noticing the various sensations in your body. *It's the first Teacher you have; the more you listen to your body, the more it will communicate its needs to you.* Practice observation without judgement; learn to watch it in all its expressions as if you were just a witness.

You don't need music to do this simple, powerful exercise, but if you want you can use a drum or have a background that helps you with the rhythm.

Curiosity

Although it may seem a rather bizarre and somehow wild practice, this shaking is a movement already widely used in history. Ethnic tribes as well as philosophical and religious groups have used this tool to access an ecstatic state.

In the 70's the controversial spiritual teacher Osho, created a series of meditations that were specially tailored for his *restless* Western followers. These have been named *dynamic meditations* and are still widely known and practiced worldwide. In these practices shaking the body has been combined with other phases of emotional release and types of movements including other forms of emotional release, and movements.

In 2013, on a visit to Bali, we heard about Ratu Bagus, a spiritual teacher who uses this technique of shaking and laughing at the same time, to help people dissolve and transform their discomforts. The retreats he offers start from a minimum of five days, during which people spend several hours a day practicing mainly this technique. Following this trend, in Europe, America and Australia there are *shaking groups* being born, mainly dedicated to the practice of *shaking meditation*.



5. Dancing Queen

(Approximately 3 to 10 Minutes)

Dance! To anything that makes you move with pleasure. It'll have a relaxing effect on your body and will give you a sense of general joy and well being within a few minutes. During this practice, the cells are revitalized, the immune system is strengthened and we feel very alive.

Step 1: Put on some music, your favourite song or find something that makes you want to move. Allow yourself to reconnect to your Life energy. Dance with all your energy for as long as you wish.

Step 2: While the music makes you vibrate, dare to allow some authentic sounds to come out. Give yourself permission to express your whole self, whatever this means to you.

Step 3: After dedicating the time to your wild dance, stand or sit for a few minutes motionless. Take this time to notice the internal movements. Feel the awakening and the redistribution of energy, just where your body needs it. Fully enjoy the sensations given by this experience.

I recommend not waiting for a special *occasion* to dance. Instead use this immediate way to shift your energy state at any time you feel the need. Do it for you and enjoy doing it alone. If you feel it's an easy way for you to feel alive, make it into a daily habit!



6. Let's Sing!

(Approximately 5 to 10 Minutes)

I recently came across several scientific studies on the beneficial effects of singing. These researches confirm that singing helps lower the production of cortisol in the body, which means less stress. It also boosts the nervous and immune systems, providing a healthier digestive system. Let's try to choose songs with words that make you feel good, start finding any excuse to reignite your voice! *You don't need an audience. You can sing for yourself. Express your authenticity, explore all your inner voices and have fun!*

You are not looking for perfection. You are simply letting sounds out of your instrument. Remember that, if you haven't been practicing, it may take time to tune it; put into account the patience you need to discover how your instrument works. The more you dive into singing in a playful and joyful way, the less tension you create and the better it feels.

In my experience singing was a great gift, it has helped me in the exploration and expression of my emotions and has given me a much easier access to meditation. Looking for my Voice, I also found Love.

This is my story! I have a very old picture of myself, a cute 2 years old with a big open mouth; I wonder what was I singing back then. My mom tells me as a child I first wanted to become a singer/dancer. Then around 10 years old I changed the dream into wanting to become an archaeologist, but anyhow I kept singing the cartoons songs with full voice! My first real songs were the Italian melodic romantic songs; I could feel the passion and easily relate to them during my

adolescent years. Then came the pop music of the 80s / 90s, that made me dance and sing my first full sentences in English. The Yoga practice introduced me to the world of ancient mantras. Singing started becoming not only a pleasant expression but also an amazing instrument. I had found direct access to meditation and bliss. Thanks to the hula, which I danced for about 8 years, I discovered the beauty and power of the Hawaiian sacred chants. I reconnected to the old traditions of group chanting; I enjoyed the sense of belonging and praying together through ancient songs.

Then came the time of improvised singing and overtones singing. Feeling Sound's Singing Freedom workshops, led by my partner Igor, supported me in the magical exploration of my Voices through free singing and toning. Overtone singing is a powerful way to create a strong inner vibration. Its effect is like a massage for every cell of my body; as I use my voice I create all sorts of vibrations along my spine. I have also become more sensitive to the effects of sound and of people's voices.

Since 2010 I have travelled together with Igor far and wide, to share this powerful work. We co-lead Feeling Sound's Singing Freedom workshops. In these workshops we work with improvised group singing, Sufi circle songs and explore Overtone singing. Singing as a meditation can be an incredible way to create a strong inner vibration. Its effect is like a massage for every cell of your body. Many times I have experienced the feeling of being united to every other person singing in the circle, by something bigger and magnificent. When this happens I am moved to my core, I often feel tears of joy flowing down my cheeks. During these chants I easily access to a deep meditative state; I experience very long minutes of stillness in my body as well as in my mind. I feel the wonder of *pure silence*.

I suggest you try, just go for it! Start standing or sitting comfortably with your spine straight. Relax your body and allow your inner child to show you how to do this!

Step 1: Let go of any judgments, relax any tension you are creating in your body. Take a deep breath. Inhale from your nose and exhale from your mouth. Repeat this 2 to 3 times.

Step 2: When you are ready, while exhaling open your mouth a bit more and allow the breath to become a sound. Like Aaaaaaaaaaaa. You're already singing, keep going! Inhale and with every exhalation try a different sound. Allow yourself to play and be creative.

Step 3: Play with the vowels, U O A E I. Try first one vowel at the time, then all in one breath. If you find that singing one specific vowel has a particularly beneficial effect while singing it, keep going! Explore your body with the sound, allowing your energetic centre to move up and down as you exhale.

Step 4: Once you are done with singing, stay still for a few moments. Just listen to the silence. You can easily enter a meditative state; enjoy it as long as you can.

When you finish, give your body a good stretch. Ground yourself and drink some water before going on with your day.



7. Keep walking...

(Approximately 10 Minutes)

A walk in Nature can bring us many benefits; oxygen, beauty, space, healing and so much more. There are scientific studies that confirm it's a simple, free and natural way to increase our general wellbeing.

Step 1: Put your phone on flight mode so you won't be disturbed. Set the timer if you need to be back at a certain time. Wear comfortable shoes. Go out of the house, walk to a park or forest. Breathe deeply in and out through your nose; let the air oxygenate each organ, muscle, tissue, bone and every cell of your body. Find a steady pace to walk that feels pleasant for you.

Step 2: Observe everything as if it were the first time you were experiencing it. Let the thoughts flow, without judging them, following or blocking them. *Like the clouds in the sky, thoughts come and go by.* Allow your self to feel gratitude for everything you see, and for your amazing body for allowing you to experience it. You can give a thanks or a blessing with each and every step you take. *When possible, try to walk barefoot, to experience grounding directly with the Earth.*

Step 3 (optional): If you feel the call, go hug a tree! Or place your left hand on the tree and ask it a question or simply allow yourself to feel its energy. As you are touching the tree focus your attention to your heart. Keep breathing deeply and relax your body. Notice any sensation that arises and stay connected to what is happening inside of you.

Variation Walking Meditation

In addition to walking whenever you have the chance (including up and down the stairs) you can try this simple walking meditation. It's a practice I received from a Sri Lankan Buddhist monk, who had spent 15 years living alone in the forest. He suggested this exercise to enter a dimension that pacifies our breath and our mind.

Step 1: Start walking slowly and breathing from your nose.

Step 2: Bring your attention to one foot at a time, connecting the movements with your breath. Inhale and lift your leg. Exhale, lower your leg and put your weight upon your foot. Try doing this sequence slowly and mindfully, one step at the time.

Step 3: Observe how your mind will try to get your attention; some thoughts take you away from the practice. As soon as you notice your mind wandering, return focusing on your breath. Do this every time and without judgment. Keep bringing your attention back to your breath and to the movements of your legs and feet.

You can start from 3 minutes and if you feel comfortable, build up the practice to 10 minutes at a time.



8. Water!

(Approximately 10 minutes)

Our planet as well as our bodies consists mainly of water. This element is a key to our wellbeing; in some traditions it's considered as the symbol purity and fertility. This is a series of suggestions and reflections I collected on the water element as a way to invite you to bring your daily attention to this powerful resource.

1. *Drink* alive water, explore if there is a source in the neighbourhood where you can go to get really good water. Some see water as our matrix and mother. Do you drink the necessary amount for your body? Usually the “right amount” could be around 9 glasses per day. I suggest you learn to listen to yourself. When it's too much the kidneys work in excess, when it is too little the whole body is affected. Many symptoms can arise from a poor hydration. As each plant needs a certain amount of water, so do you. Find your right fit!

2. *Take a bath*, jump into the lake, river or the sea. If you have a tub, put a handful of sea salt, or clay. Eventually add 8/10 drops of your favourite essential oils (preferably organic). The classics are: *lavender* to relax, *rosemary* to revitalize, *cypress* to decongest, *cedar* to ground, *ylang ylang* or *rose* for heart and femininity.

3. *Try alkaline baths*; these can be done for your whole body or just in the form of foot/hand baths. In winter this is a great way to rebalance the important acid-alkaline balance of your body. Most Western habits (overeating, fatty foods, meat, sugary drinks and caffeine, frenetic lifestyle, worries) cause acidity in the body. The level of acidity seems to be one of the main causes of the inflammatory process. When our body keeps having inflammation, it can develop physical

symptoms and disease. The alkaline baths work very well in a period of purification, they can be used in conjunction with fresh juices, eating very clean food, drinking cleansing herbal and alkaline teas and eliminating meat, alcohol fried foods and sugar to create a profound detox. The yogic breathing practices of Pranayama mentioned in Chapters 2 and 3 also act on this balance. When done regularly, they help keep the body in an alkaline state.

4. A *cold shower* can be very pleasant in the summer and much less (almost impossible for me!) in winter. We can unhurriedly accustom our body over time. When it's warm, start with a fast final cold flush. Gradually, stretch the jet of fresh water up to a couple of minutes. We can thus enjoy the benefits on the levels of skin tone, circulation and energy. Once we manage to get used to rinse with cold water, we provide a boost for the immune system that promotes general health.

5. Start, if you are not already doing so, to *thank and bless the water*, both inside and outside of yourself. You can write a blessing or prayer for the waters and put it near the tap in your house. Create your own blessing, use one of the examples below or find something else that you like.

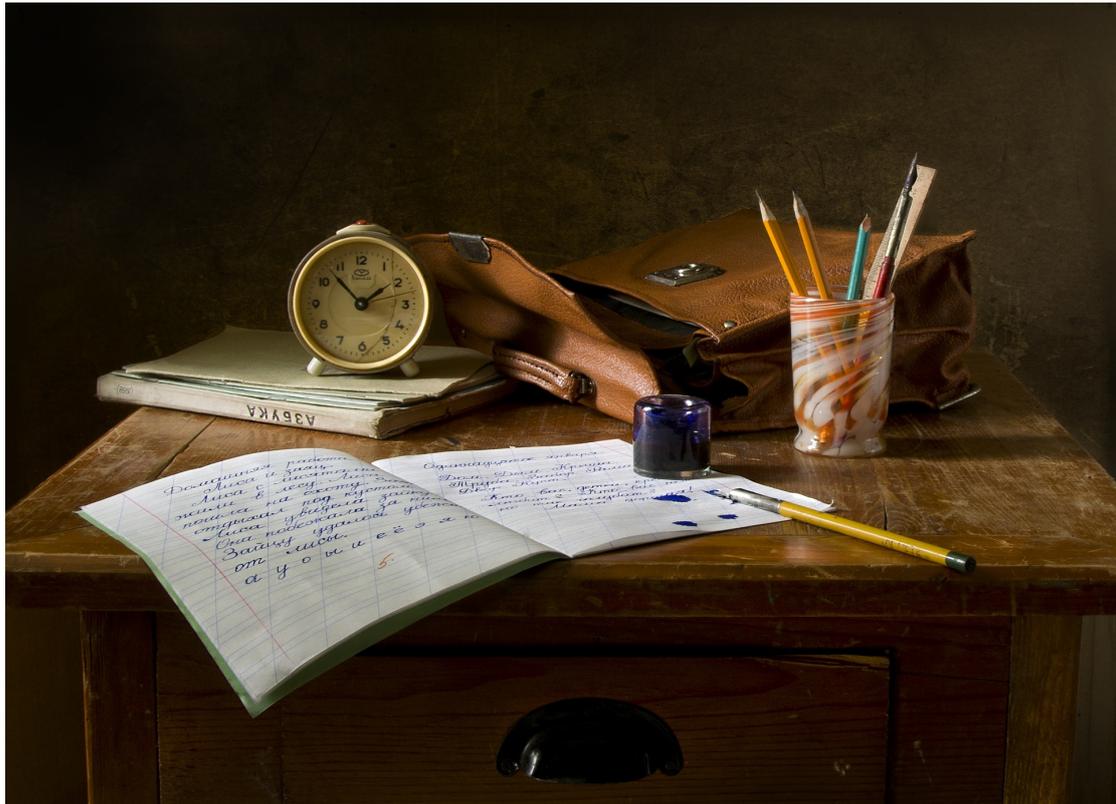
Search for Masaru Emoto's work on water crystals. If you have not come across his work before, this man was a Japanese author who dedicated around 20 years of research to study water crystals. He subjected water to various input (words, images, sounds) and took pictures before and after the process. The result is a series of beautiful geometrical crystals in case of positive messages and mostly unshaped crystals in case of negative messages. Moto's research wanted to show how water could register and transport information.

Several scientists have attempted to discredit these experiments, and it has not yet been widely accepted that water is a vector... but *what if?* If water is able to record the messages to which it's subjected, then we need to consider an important fact: our bodies are composed mainly of water. I want to invite you to make your experiments: pay attention to what you say. Start choosing the words that you use more consciously. Do your best to send good information to your own body's water and see what happens!

Here are two ideas: the first inspired by friend Ruby May and the second by Masaru Emoto:

Blessings for the healing of the waters, Blessings for the healing of the seas, Blessings for the healing of lakes and rivers, May all waters flow with crystalline purity.

Water, I love you. Water, I thank you. Water, I respect you. I ask for the Purification of my Waters and all the Waters of the Earth. And so it is!



9. Take Paper and Pen

(Approximately 10 minutes)

In this chapter are different options to inspire you to take some time writing down the things that you love. This is a wonderful practice to guide you, and a playful way to explore and express what you deeply want to invite into your life. To open the way to access your most daring dreams. You can take a daily appointment with your notebook or leave it for more spontaneous sessions.

Sometimes I feel a little resistance to take this time for writing, it seems there are always more practical things to do, that in the moment seem more important. But I have always gained more clarity by doing some of the lists I am sharing. It's up to your walk on the path of responsibility, to understand how to give priorities on your "to do list" and to act accordingly. Some of these exercises help you focus on your future actions. Once you are clear and focused, you have the power to do all you can to manifest what you want in your life.

You can develop a way that suits your rhythms by writing a few lines every day. You can write weekly, to recap the main challenges and how you are living them. Or you can dedicate some moments to write with the moon: tuning in with the new moon and the full moon, to focus your intentions.

You can observe yourself in your relational dynamics, at home, with you family and at work, and with your colleagues. Find out what your beliefs and stories are. You can give voice to all your characters and collect lots of valuable information about the various parts that live in your movies.

Joy List

Inspired by the work of Jack Canfield. Write the 20 things and activities that give you most joy. You don't need to put them in a specific order and you can go back to adjust this list again over time. When you are in a moment of discouragement, return to the Joy list and choose one among the things listed. Pick something that you can do - immediately!

B-D-H List

I recently experienced this exercise thanks to my friend Sacha Heath (of Yoga with Sacha), who guided it during a group coaching session. Divide a sheet into 3 columns entitled Be - Do - Have and under each column write down *all the things you want to be, what you want to do and what you want to have in your Life*. If you let yourself be guided by your instinct (and let the inner judge go for a coffee break) you will be able to find many things. These lists will help you understand which steps to take to get closer and closer to the life you really want. This list is perfect to do at the beginning of the year, to help you focus your intentions.

Vision Board

Also known as the Manifestation Board, creating your Table of Vision or Manifestation is a process linked to the Law of Attraction, which you can do at any time. You can spend anywhere from ten minutes to a few days to do this process. It is a wonderful thing to do on a rainy day. I have done this for several years and it was always an inspiring process.

Step 1: Take a large A3 size sheet, some old newspapers and some glue.

Step 2: Cut out from the old papers/magazines everything you like, anything that inspires you, whatever makes you feel good. Choose images of places, like landscapes, homes and gardens. You can add some pictures of yourself in moments when you were happy and fulfilled. Find images of your *role models*; people who have achieved something that is very dear to your heart. Add images that suggest the kind of atmosphere you want to be in.

Step 3: Find their place on the board and start gluing them. You can also write some of your favorite quotes, either placing these over the images, or on pieces of paper to add to the collage. Add your *values*, the ones you already stand for and those you want to reinforce. Find a place to add a specific time frame within which you want everything to materialize in your life.

Step 4: Hang your Vision Board in a place where you can easily see it.

Step 5: Have a look at it every day, and find your way to meditate on it. *Cultivate a sense of gratitude and practice feeling like it's all already happening.*

Positive affirmations

Affirmations are quotes or phrases that inspire you and motivate you, which can be repeated over and over to help create new positive beliefs. Write them on paper, on a postcard or a post-it and hang them around your house or in your car.

Put them places where you will see them regularly. Affirmations are a powerful way to help you keep aligned with your intentions, to support you on your journey. Be daring and clear. What are the phrases that could help you overcome your limiting conditioning? What do you want to choose for your life?

To give you an example, at this time that I am writing, I have an important question strategically positioned next to the mirror of the sink, where I brush my teeth daily. I also had a post-it next to my computer that said: "*I have everything I need to do anything I want*".

Gratitude Journal

Keep a diary to write regularly what you are thankful for. Write what you feel right now and what you would love in the future, do this as freely as you can, without filters. This process helps us to express ourselves, to observe ourselves with a little detachment and to support our journey. It leads us within, to take a moment for ourselves. It also helps us to have an overview of the bigger picture. It stimulates us to reflect and to get to know ourselves better.

My New Relationship List

If you are fulfilled by your current relationship, just forget about this section. Instead, if you feel like you never find the right partner, or you always end up with similar unpleasant stories in relationships, then DO take the time to do this list asap! This is just one of the things you can do to gain awareness on your deepest needs. It's the practice of expressing what's important for you; a key skill you will need in any relationship.

To tell you the truth, this is what I did after realizing my marriage was ending. At the time I felt miserable, as I believed I had failed something very big; but through the sadness at my marriage ending came a gift. I felt a huge drive not to repeat the same mistakes again, and I also realized that I didn't really know what I wanted in a relationship, or from my partner besides "being happy and loved". (A statement that is way too romantic and general to be of any practical use.)

To investigate my needs I took paper and pen and gave myself some time to go deeper into this "oh so important" topic. What came out was a list of *all that I liked, appreciated, dreamed of, wished for in my ideal partner and my ideal relationship*. I dared and playfully wrote about physical features, behaviours and kinds of interactions, all with detailed descriptions. I also dedicated a lot of attention to the *feelings and emotions* I wanted to feel with the person and within the relationship.

Ending result: a few weeks after this process I started a new relationship with a friend, Igor. I had known him for a couple of years and realized that he was the perfect manifestation of 99% of the points of my list! Amazingly enough he was also corresponding to the points I had written under "acceptable weakness" and "non acceptable weakness", two sections I had fun including in my list and still make people laugh whenever I share this story!

I went from a 9 year relationship that friends confessed to feel awkward around, (!!!) to my now 9 year partnership with Igor in a relationship that people have often confided has been an inspiration for them. For sure we have our good days and bad days like everybody else, but the difference on a day-to-day level is astounding. We tend to celebrate the good days and grow from the bad days rather than get caught up in destructive patterns and the good far out weighs the bad. Experiencing this difference is really something I would never have thought was possible. I am sure that all the practices that I have been experimenting with have helped me become more mature, making it easier to co-create better relationships.



10. Grow plants and values

(Approximately 10 minutes)

On the balcony or in the garden, in every bit of lawn or dirt you have accessible, you can plant some seeds that will give you fruits or vegetables. Reconnecting with the earth can become a very healthy habit. Horticulture is also used in the context of alternative care. It has been popularized as orthotherapy and it can bring *general psychophysical wellbeing and social development*.

Understand the importance of rhythms, cycles and seasons, feel the *patience*. When the fruits ripen and you collect them, you can nourish yourself and offer them to those you love, feeling *gratitude* and the *joy of sharing*. When you see the quantity of seeds in Nature's produce, you understand better what *generosity* and *abundance* really mean.

Creating a vegetable garden is also an opportunity to *develop your creative skills*. Take some time, alone or in company, to design your terrace or an edible garden project for spring! If you live in an apartment building, you could be one of the promoters of a classic vegetable, or you can try creating a more avant-garde garden, maybe even on the roof. *Rooftop gardens* are something I love and have been reading about as they are rapidly spreading across France and America. They offer a solution for several problems that many cities are facing such as; space management, availability of (affordable) organic local vegetables, social isolation and malnutrition, as well as water excess in rainy seasons.

Another beautiful option for those of you with kids is playground gardens: a space to have fun, make a mess, teach children about many subjects. From the math of counting seeds, to the seasons and how they affect us, to the nutritional benefits

of foods you grow and how lovely it is to eat the produce you have cultivated yourselves. All of this and more can happen, while also having proper time to bond and connect lovingly with your families with real quality time.

When you train your green thumb you can expand your action to your neighbourhood. You could co-create an amazing edible garden, involving children, the elderly and anyone who wants to help you! Any of these projects will take some research and materials but when people come together, anything can happen!

My choice even for a small orchard is to consider Permaculture and Regenerative Agriculture. There are holistic ways to cultivate the land that can regenerate the first layer of soil, burned by the most popular ways to cultivate and leave it bare and exposed to the atmospheric agents. The methods cover the earth, use companion plants instead of pesticides and provide organic produce. I have seen how permaculture is creating a new generation of farmers finally enabled to take care of the land in a sustainable and regenerative way. This gives me hope that there are going to be a good amount of gardeners for this garden planet and I invite you to open yourself to this vision!



11. What a Wonderful World!

Exploring the world means seeing things from another perspective. Whether you can get away for a week, a month or longer the benefits for you as a being work on every level. *Where in our beautiful, wide world do you want to go?!* Maybe you already have a list of places you want to see, or maybe you can give a little time to listen to your instinct. You can get a feeling for anywhere in the world searching on the Internet. If you aren't sure where to begin then you can start by discovering documentaries on places that interest you. If you have the chance, you can prepare to go for a real adventure. I invite you to find out how different is the experience of travelling the world as an explorer and as a tourist.

There are so many amazing opportunities to see the world, in so many different ways. There are alternative holidays where you can get involved in eco-projects, or retreats to dive deep in to your inner world. There are sabbatical breaks where you can take an extended period for travel or study. Travel brings us so many new experiences so whether you want to see the world alone or with a friend, have a think about where you want to be. I have found that seeing the world helps me to resize my reality, I see the bigger picture around many of my 'problems' and always come away with new insights and gratitude. It is also a way to get to know an incredible number of interesting and inspiring people. Travelling can help you discover and express new talents you were not aware of.

On the website workaway.info there are so many opportunities to leave your safe, comfort zone and see the world. Here you will find opportunities to spend weeks or months helping other people's projects. There are many different opportunities: farms, hostels, public activities, and private homes looking for help in exchange for food and accommodation, all over the planet and for all ages!

If you would like to try traveling with a group while practicing tools for personal growth like the ones listed in this handbook and more, then our *Feeling Sound Journeys* may be interesting for you. We organize singing trips woven with personal growth practices. We explore magical places like Cappadocia, Turkey, and Corfu, Greece. If you want to spend a week with us, we will be happy to support you in your transformational process.

Have you have been waiting for a lifetime to make a certain dream trip? Isn't it time to do it? What is holding you back? I wish that after reading this handbook you will be ready to go!



12. Experience New Meditations

To perform these exercises I suggest you read the directions first. Then lie down or sit comfortably and guide yourself to take the steps that you remember. Every time you read the instructions, you will remember more details during the meditation. Alternatively, you can try to record your voice while reading the instructions.

Turn off everything that may bother you and use a timer (like the mobile phone) to keep the time you decided to devote to the meditation. Try it for 10 minutes!

You will soon find these guided meditations on our site. The Internet also provides a wide choice of guided meditations. There are really all sorts of options and you can change every time. *The most important part of this is to take a moment for you. Switch off the daily noise and connect to something bigger. Consider this: if when we pray we are asking for something, when we meditate we are ready to receive the answers!*

"With the practice of meditation you will discover that you have a portable paradise in your heart."

Paramahansa Yogananda

Balloon Meditation

Step 1: Sit or lie down comfortably, relax your body. Start breathing in and out from the nose. As you inhale feel as though you fill your whole body. As you exhale feel as though you empty yourself of air from top to bottom in a circular cycle, without breaks. Try to let go of any control, relax your face, your forehead, your body, your arms and legs, your organs, your bones, all your muscles including your brain!

Step 2: Imagine you are a hot-air balloon or riding on a beautiful colourful hot-air balloon (whichever is easier for you). You can add details or let them come on their own, without stress. *Imagine or visualize everything that weighs you down, from the past and present: fears, worries, judgments, people and situations.*

Step 3: Imagine putting these heavy things in bags and place them around the balloon. Try not to censor what comes up or get into self-criticism. Dare to admit if a certain person or situation is too much for you and prepare to let them go. If there are self-judgments for doing this practice, put those in their beautiful bags too!

Step 4: Lighten up your balloon to fly and rise high in the sky. You can release, one by one, the knots of the weight bags you have just filled, and make them fall to the ground. Feel the heaviness and the sound of these falling weights, feel how burdensome they were and how much they oppressed you. You can accompany this ritual with a sound (if it comes out spontaneously), or simply listening to all sensations and emotions. One by one, with love and gratitude if you can, enjoy letting all the bags come off your vehicle. Appreciate that as you get lighter and lighter you are able to climb higher and higher in to the sky.

Step 5: Admire the spectacular landscape around you. You can imagine a place you love that you have already visited, or you can recall an image seen in a photo, or even a country where you dream of going. It can also be a place of fantasy.

Step 6: Let the wind transport you and your balloon to land gently somewhere near a body of water. You could choose a beach, a clearing near a lake, a crystal clear stream or a river. When you get there imagine entering the water and completely immerse yourself in it. The water can be the exact temperature you prefer! Slowly enter to wash away every last trace of everything you've just let go of. When you decide to come out notice how *you feel lighter, fresher and completely cleansed. Take a moment to thank the water for its power to purify you.* You can dry yourself off with soft fabrics or lie in the sun for a few moments, before returning to the hot air balloon. Then imagine it setting off to bring you home or to the place where you are practicing this meditation.

Step 7: Start waking up slowly. Breathe deeply in and out of your nose, move your hands and feet first and then stretching your whole body. Turn on to your right side and allow any feelings that may want to come up. Notice the sensations in your renewed body.

Step 9: Support your body while gently coming to a seated position. Here you can stay as long as you need. When you are ready, slowly stand up. Ground yourself if

you need to and drink some water.

Step 8 (optional): Enjoy the flavors that this experience has brought to you. You can write some insights in your notebook, it can be sentences or just keywords. You can make a sketch of the places you have visited, drawing some of the images that have stayed with you.

Now that you have become familiar with this, you can repeat it whenever you feel the need to let go of whatever makes you feel heavy.

The Heart 's Garden Meditation

This Sufi-inspired meditation is one of Igor's favourites and we sometimes guide it at our Feeling Sound retreats. This practice enables you to connect with your heart space by creating a place of peace and magic. Everything in this garden is exactly as you wish it to be. Here you are safe, at home. Your body and mind can relax, while you recharge your heart battery!

Step 1: Find a comfortable position, sitting or lying down. Inhale preferably from the nose. Begin to relax all the muscles in your body and take at least three deep breaths, exhaling from your mouth.

Step 2: Imagine or visualize yourself walking in nature, heading towards your own secret garden. You still do not know exactly how this garden will be; you will create it with your imagination. Each time you access this garden, you are free to add or remove details. (There is no wrong way to do this meditation!)

Step 3: Walk around and see some steps in the grass near you. Start walking down the steps, and with each step allow your body and mind relax more and more deeply. Countdown from 10 to 0. As you say or imagine the numbers, visualize an image appearing. It's the entrance to your garden. It can be a small or a large gate, a small fence or a large wall of enclosure surrounding your garden. Look at the entrance and notice any feelings or emotions that come up. You can choose to readjust any details now or after entering the garden. You can choose to add or remove walls, gates, bells and doors. Feel free to include everything that makes you feel safe and secure.

Step 4: When you feel ready, open the gate/door and enter. Start looking around and see that there are beautiful trees and flowers inside. Your favorite animals come to welcome you. The air is filled with the sweet scent of spring. You feel at home.

Step 5: Observe this magic garden; enjoy the various shades of green. Around you there are lush trees full of ripe fruits, you can eat them and feed yourself with everything you like. It's your garden, a work of art created by you and Nature. Admire the beauty and power of this creation, if you need a bench, a swing, a rocking chair, a fountain or a hammock, just add them somewhere! There are so many things you love in this landscape. *It's all so beautiful that you feel joyful as a child. This feeling starts overflowing in your heart. Feel the expansion in your*

chest as you keep breathing deeply. Your heart is so happy that your chest and your whole body are filling with a glowing green light.

Step 6: With this sensation still alive in your chest, find a place to rest in your garden. Imagine lying down on the grass, on the warm sand, on a hammock or on a giant pillow. Feel the warm air caressing your face and body. Listen to the relaxing sounds of Nature. Slowly feel your eyelids closing. As you exhale, you allow yourself to relax deeper and deeper. Your body, mind and Soul are enjoying this blissful state; stay here for as long as you need it.

Step 7: When you are ready, wake up from this powerful regenerative nap. You are still in your garden, surrounded by the elements of Nature. The sun is kissing your body, recharging every cell. The fresh fruits have nourished you, filling you with new energy. Feel fully renewed and happy to be alive!

Step 8: Slowly you get up and start walking around your garden. Admire your creation with wonder and gratitude. You can greet all the animals, the elves and the fairies. If they have a farewell message for you, take a moment to listen with your heart. You can invite them to join you in your garden whenever you want.

Step 9: Start walking towards the entrance. Keep breathing; try saying *Thank You* at every step. *You can still feel your heart in your chest overflowing with joy, love and gratitude.* If there are any doors or gates, close them behind you. You decide to leave now, knowing that you can come back to your secret garden anytime you want to.

Step 10: Walk back towards the steps in the grass that you entered through; they are still there. Effortlessly you start climbing up. Count them from 1 to 10 and on 10 you find yourself in your body, sitting or lying down.

Step 11: Come back into your body by making slow movements. First move your hands and feet then stretch deeply.

Step 12: Roll over to one side and stay a few more moments. Breathe deeply and notice any sensations. When you feel ready, get up slowly and gently. Support your body to come to a sitting position. Check if you need to centre and ground yourself before standing up. Drink a glass of water.

Step 13 (optional): Write in your notebook any insights that came up during this meditation. It can be sentences, feelings, sensations, messages or images that you want to keep with you.



13. Share your Gifts

After 12 practices all for you, devoting almost the whole manual to inward steps, we take the last step, towards the outside, the world.

Your contribution, like that of each of the people on the planet, is precious and necessary. Bringing it out into the world and coming into the open, sharing your talents, is a step of humility and service that nourishes your Spirit. This means that if you can do something, you can already teach it to someone; finding the way you prefer to allow others to improve their lives. If you doubt to not have something special to offer, I invite you to reevaluate. Explore in your area what opportunities you would have for this exercise. You may have the ability to do something that you think is trivial, but that for many is still an obstacle to overcome.

Go out into the open, accept the challenge of helping someone, raise your hand and say, "I can do it". These are elements that bring you in touch with other people and open the possibility to give and receive gifts that you could not imagine before starting. The meeting with the other and the exchange that arise when we put ourselves at the disposal of someone in need, are important steps to nurture a feeling of profound contentment, a *heart space activator*.

Isolation is one of the biggest problems of our time; it seems absurd, given the technology, social networks and ease of travel. Yet many people tend to isolate themselves in their world, to close in a shell that hardens them and deprives them of human contact, necessary to *feel really alive*.

The American University of Harvard has created a Department of Studies (Adult Development Department) that for about 75 years has been studying the development of Human Beings from infancy to adulthood. The first results of this

research, still underway, are bringing to light that the main factor of the well being of the people involved, even before their state of health, was the quality of their relationships. *Those who have satisfying interpersonal relationships live healthier, happier and longer Lives.*

How can you cultivate new relationships? How can you share your gifts? If you do not make yourself “visible”, it's a very hard task. I thought that the best way to accompany you in this last step is to invite you to evaluate if it's time to:

Self-publish your book (or e-book!), your recipes book, your travel journal, your poetry (ask for editing and graphic design help -no matter what!)

Create and publish your website to be found by more people

Organize an exhibition of your paintings or photographs, a reading of your poems (or ask a friend's help organize it and find an arrangement that makes everybody happy)

Host a fundraising music jam, an evening of your favourite dance or food and send the money to a cause dear to your heart

Finish your project closed in the drawer by who knows how long

Offer lessons what you love to do from time to time

Volunteer for a task you can do to help someone

Give a presentation about your latest project to your group of friends or your neighbourhood

Host or co-create a weekly meeting in your home during which you can explore tools for personal growth or empower people (or whatever makes you happy, there are people out there having weekly meetings on anything you can imagine!)

Bring one of the practices that made you feel particularly alive among those in this manual (or from any other manual!) to a group of friends, at the senior center in your neighborhood or at your children's kindergarten or school.

There are so many ways to share your light and when you do it, it shines brighter for you as well!

“There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.”

Albert Einstein



Thank You

Thank you for the trust you have given me, thanks for the gift of being able to walk with you for a few steps of your journey. Whatever reason brought you here I hope you have found my handbook useful. I have undertaken this writing as an exercise of presence, possibility and challenge. It's also a way of affirming my Bright principles of Authenticity, Connection and Empowerment.

You can let me know which practices worked best for you. If you feel that you need to work more deeply on some topics that have come up during the practices of this handbook; I am available for individual sessions via Internet as well as in the cities where we organize Feeling Sound workshops.

If you liked what you read and want more material, download the other Authenticity Handbooks. You can follow and share my work through my FB pages and website, feelingsound.com. Here you can also find information on the work of my partner Igor Ezendam, Dutch musician and voice coach, specialized in overtone singing. He has written a book "Your Sound is Sacred" published in Italian by Salani in 2013, the English version is coming soon.

I am happy to stay in touch, to receive news on your progress, to enrich our journey by sharing moments of growth and celebration.

With Love and Gratitude,
Arianna

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BIOGRAPHY



My name is Arianna Benedetta Artioli. I was born in Italy in 1971 and have lived the last 20 years in Switzerland. I am a cultural creative, a Yoga and Meditation teacher, a lover of the Natural World, of sacred songs and dances and a passionate vegetarian cook.

I studied European languages and literatures, receiving my Bachelor of Arts Degree from Franklin College Switzerland. I worked for 10 years in marketing first fashion and then wellness industries. I collaborated for 3 years in the organization and sales of Tisana, the Swiss Natural Wellness Exhibition in Lugano, Ticino. I have cooperated for one year with the Swiss magazine *Mutamenti*, where I published my interviews with Raimon Panikkar, Krishnananda and Amana Trobe. In 2003 I began my study of the Bach flower remedies. I attended one year of the Swiss Academy of Flower therapy. I collaborated in the translation of Julian Barnard's book "*The Bach Flower Remedies. The Essence Within*", published in 2016.

In 2008 I co-created the first massage and holistic health festival in Lugano, Switzerland: Massaggia-ti! This event has been an innovative interactive platform

for 5 years. In 2012 I have decided to join my partner Igor and devote my time to the new Feeling Sound projects of travels and retreats.

My main teachers have been Life, Selene Calloni Williams (Yoga and Shamanism), Kumu Keala Ching/Kumu Mira/Kumu Lorenza (Hawaiian teachings), Milena Rotmann (Family Constellations and shadow work), Raviji (yoga and meditation), Jacopo Ceccarelli (Anukalana Yoga), Diane Seadancer (Women Circles, Native teachings of the Twisted Hairs), Krishnatakis (Thai Yoga Massage and Meditation), Krishnananda and Amana Trobe (Learning Love Institute, inner child and trauma healing work), Clinton Callahan (Possibility Management, archetypal adult initiatory processes and Igor Ezendam (Singing Freedom personal growth tools and Western Sufi teachings of *Hazrat Inayat Khan*).

My role models vary from Wangari Maathai to Vandana Shiva, from Yogananda to Edward Bach. I find a lot of inspiration in the native elders and in all the amazing people I meet on a regular basis while travelling the world. I don't belong to any specific credo and I support all that helps Human Beings to become more human. To me this means to activate our full potential and live in harmony with the Planet.

Since 2010 I have been teaching Hatha Yoga, offering individual consultations of Bach Flowers and Life Coaching. I am learning Permaculture and Regenerative Agriculture to honour the earth and grow the food that I eat.

At the moment I live with Igor and 5 cats between France and Greece. We have been part of the Sound & Silence Festival for 3 years and are currently working on eco community, composting and recycling projects. We keep travelling in Europe to share Singing Freedom workshops, travels and retreats. Our website is www.feelingsound.com, FB page [Feeling Sound](#). I have also created the FB pages [Movies for Awakening](#) and [Wear a Mantra](#).

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