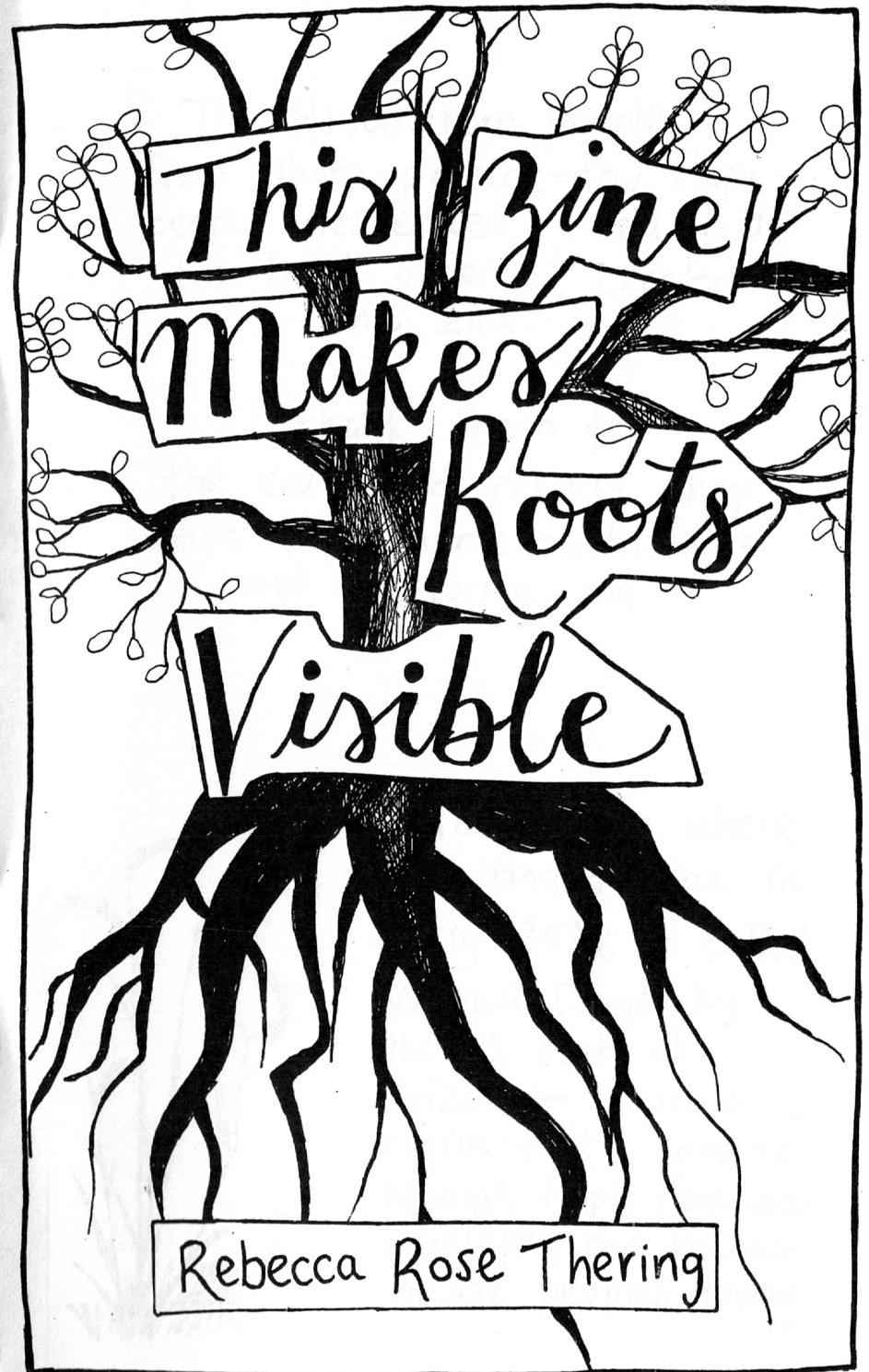




The Hisatsinom people,
from whom present-day Hopi
people descended, lived with
the land where I created
this zine.

I thank them for
the care and respect they
gave their home — which is
now nurturing me.



This land from where
I'm writing to you in
early 2022 — called
Walnut Canyon by
the U.S. state of
Arizona — is in a
region that's home to
Navajo, Hopi, Havasupai,
Hualapai, and Kaibab-
Paiute peoples today.

Note: When I reference "our society" in this zine, I'm referring to modern Western culture — as a white woman born in the midwestern United States in the late 80s.

* * *

Now, take a deep breath.

Feel your body wherever it is — your seat on a surface, hands touching the pages.

You are welcome here.

I invite you to experience this however it feels right to you — pause when you'd like to pause, notice the sensations that arise in your body as you read.

Thank you for your attention.

END OF LIFE STATS

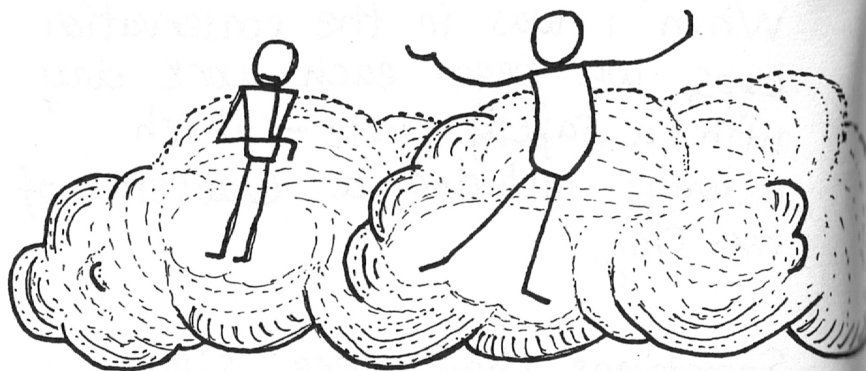
When I was in the conservation corps, we began each work day with a safety circle - which always included a Question of the Day.

Sometimes they were silly superpower questions, and other times questions about childhood. But the question that has stuck with me over the years is what I like to call "End of Life Stats"



Here's the premise:

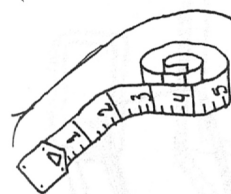
It's the end of your life, you have died. In front of you, though, is someone who will tell you any stat you ask for - from your total time living.



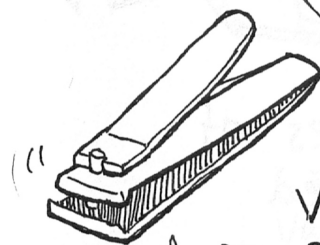
Yes, any figure. Things that would be humanly impossible to calculate/track for an entire lifetime. In this scenario, any stat is possible!

Which would you ask to see?

Among any given crew, there would always be answers related to bodily functions and fluids...



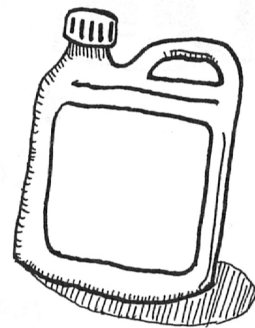
of gallons of sweat dripped



Volume of finger and toe nail clippings



of gallons of urine peed



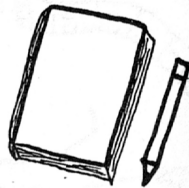
Total length of head hair grown

Answers that gave light to
someone's interests...



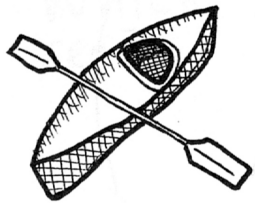
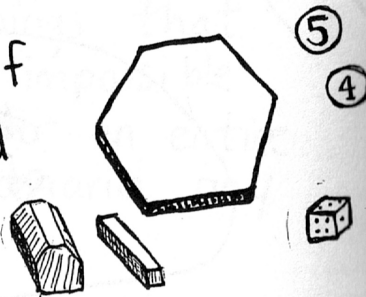
of hours spent
watching birds

of poems
written



of loaves of
bread baked

of games of
Catan played



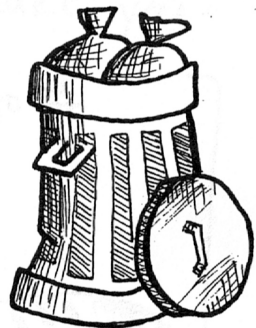
of miles
Kayaked

Answers that perhaps we'd
rather stay ignorant of...



of years on
social media / in
front of screens*

of square
yards of trash
your existence
brought to earth



of times you
made someone feel
unsafe / ashamed /
unwelcome / less than

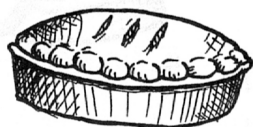
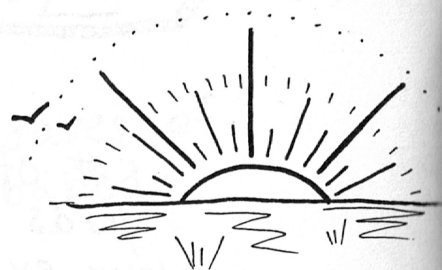
* In 2014, Alex Franzen took note of the time she was spending on Twitter. She calculated that if she continued at that rate, she'd spend a total of 3.4 YEARS on Twitter during her lifetime. It's now been seven years since Alex deleted all her social media accounts. She runs a thriving writing business, wrote 4 books, and feels more present in her life. For encouragement, free resources, and inspiration on leaving social media, visit
→ alexandrafransen.com/2021/10/11/quit-social-media/

And answers that felt warm.



of weeks spent
laughing

of sunrises
seen



of meals made
for / shared with
loved ones

of compliments
given



What I appreciated from this End-of-Life-Stats Question of the Day was the zooming out. It's a helpful tool for me, wondering what I'd want to see when looking at a whole lifetime.

Take a moment to reflect right now:

Which stats would be heartwarming to look at? Which would make you feel proud and fulfilled?

[A large empty rectangular box for writing answers.]

Which stats would be harder to look at? Which would make you feel uncomfortable and regretful?

Let these questions sit with you over the coming weeks, and add to these lists as you go through more experiences.

"[My grandmother] exists in me now, just as I will and already do within my grandchildren. No one ever truly dies. The desires of our hearts make a path. We create a legacy with our thoughts and dreams.

This legacy either will give those who follow **joy** on their road or will give them **sorrow**."

- Joy Harjo
"Crazy Brave"

Now, we could end here, with this thoughtful end-of-life reflection, but there's more. We must take a closer look at the nature of these stats.

THE NON-MEASURABLE

Let's not overlook that the concept of "stats" in and of itself does not cover the full human experience. It's limited to elements that are easily measured in numbers and words.

♥ There's not a direct metric to measure the depth of connection you felt with other people, with yourself, or with your soul.

♥ There's not a direct metric to measure how closely you lived in alignment with your true inclinations in everyday moments.

♥ There's not a direct metric to measure how well you nurtured a relationship with the natural world, and how respectful you were to your fellow life on Earth—humans and all beings, plants, elements, and energies alike.

♥ There's not a direct metric to measure the amount of Kindness you demonstrated, love you shared, nonjudgment you offered, peace you created, or the patience you practiced.

Yet these are the most important things to be bringing into the world: love, kindness, peace, patience, empathy, compassion, forgiveness, loving-kindness.



(There are measurable metrics that can help track each of these things, if we'd like, certainly. We're inherently creative after all. The metrics simply aren't so direct—we'll get to this in a bit!)

"I've learned
that people will
forget what you said,
people will
forget what you did,
but
people will never
forget
how you made
them feel."

- Maya Angelou

THE EASILY MEASURABLE

In contrast, what is relatively easy to measure in our Western society? (which, let's not forget, has been dominated by the mechanistic cause-and-effect worldview from 16th and 17th century European men who valued a power based on money and trade.)

Here's what I'm coming up with, top of mind:

- Time (# years, # minutes)
- Money (earned, spent)
- Square footage
- Temperature
- Distance
- Amt. of gas in tank
- Weight
- # of page views
- Volume
- Cell phone battery level

How much information are these types of stats really giving us?

Consider, for example, the amount of money spent. Many countries measure GDP and talk about "health" of "the economy." This figure gives equal value to money

spent on:

- Divorce lawyers*

- Pain medications

- Seed patents

- Casinos

- Oil pipelines

- Bullets, weapons, tanks

- Carcinogens sprayed directly on plants/food



check out the 2016 documentary "Seed: The Untold Story" if interested!

- Loving childcare

- A meditation class

- Healing therapy sessions

- A typewriter that brings joy & creative energy

- Tea, drunk mindfully for a calm morning

- Vegetables grown with care

- Postage for letters to friends



Can you see, then, that \$1 is not equal to \$1?

But in money stats, the differences

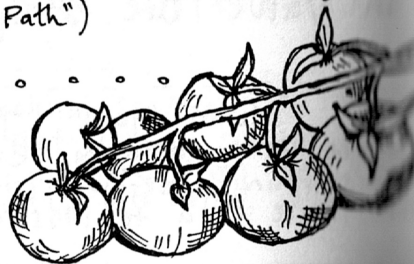
in value are stripped.

* Not everything in the left column is "bad" nor the zine "This Zine Isn't Me" know that I feel simple labels like "Divorce, for example, (or getting unmarried), can be a life-affirming, love-giving situation for all involved. With each of these topics I could go into detail, so please

right column "good." Those familiar with my zine know they're used to illustrate a point about $\$1 \neq \1 .

"We each make decisions all the time, small ones and large ones. Do I spend an extra dollar to buy the organic tomatoes? If I consider the impact on the whole, on my own health and the health of the whole system, and if I have the dollar, then yes, I do. Do I spend the time and effort to grow tomatoes of my own? If I were to pay myself for the hours I spend gardening, account for all the money and effort and thought I expend, each tomato probably costs me thirty dollars (or more if I decide to raise my hourly rate)-terrible value for the money. But if I'm looking at more than the tomatoes, at the whole of what I need and value and take pleasure in-the value of the fertile, healthy soil I cultivate in order to grow tomatoes, the seven-year-old who lives in our house and likes to pick them off the vine (and the introduction it gives her to nature and the garden), the joy the bees take in the borage that grows with the tomatoes and the fruit the bees pollinate, the positive relationship with my friend Brook, who adores the green-tomato chutney I make, the uncountable value of eating something I have a real relationship with-then growing tomatoes is obviously of great benefit to the whole."

-Starhawk
(pg. 35 "The Earth Path")



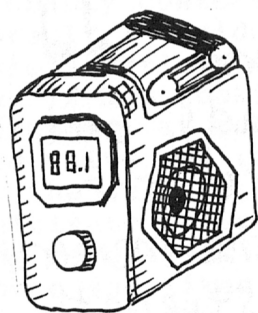
EXPERIENCING

We can measure the length of a song and number of downloads, but we cannot measure the feeling it evokes, the memory in our bodies, the strength it feeds us, the experience of singing it together in community, the shivers it sends down our arms, the pulsing energy we undeniably experience as the notes ring out.

Yet that's what matters.

I heard a radio ad the other week that began with "Studies show..."

It was by a company who sold school supplies.



Studies show that children with proper school supplies perform better...

... Said the upbeat voice.

An "evidence"-based reason for parents (the humans with \$) to spend their \$ at this company.

I want to erase all the "Studies show" phrases and replace them with "experience shows."

My experience shows that children who are loved, have safe homes, are shown kindness, and have a connection with Nature will be kind to those around them.

My experience shows that children who are encouraged to imagine, play, create, and express themselves freely will radiate a light of joy, wholeness, and love.

My experience shows that children who grow gardens, experience the magic of life growing from a seed, and eat that food will care for and protect the Earth and her gifts.

My experience shows that children who are allowed space to feel their emotions without shame or judgment — the joys and sorrows, anger and wonder, sadness and delight — will uplift people around them by sharing compassion and nonjudgment.

My experience shows that children who are celebrated for their inherent interests, inclinations, and identities — never made to feel "wrong" or to hide a part of themselves — will strengthen resilience, creativity, and freedom for all, benefiting our vibrant, whole community.

Think for a minute. Pick up a pen. Set a timer for 5 minutes.

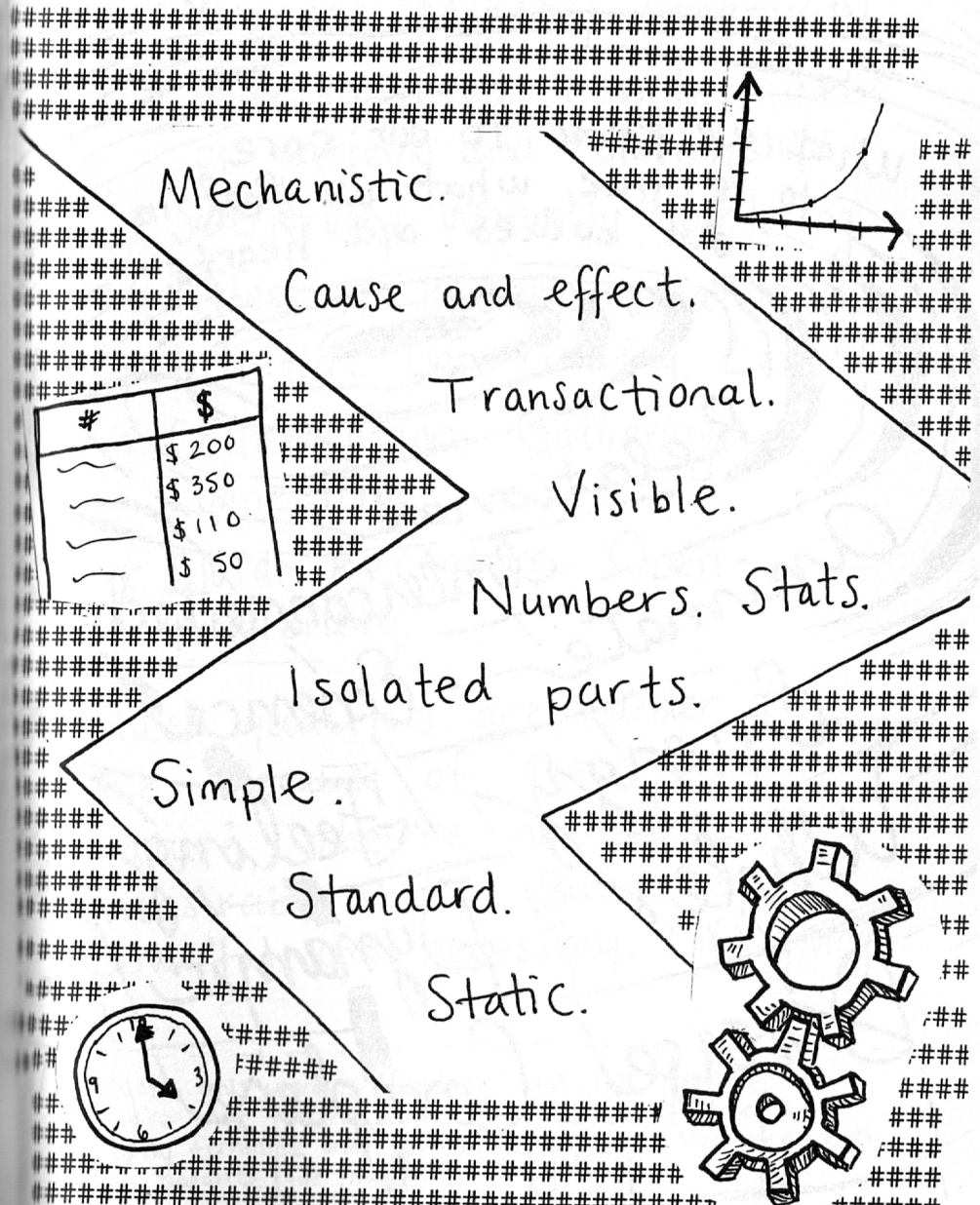
“My experience shows...”

It's worth noting that many folks who didn't have these loving experiences as children are shining / have shone the light immensely bright. We see you. We thank you.

Light can come through pain and suffering, yes.

And, not experiencing love can cause people to spread pain, to withhold love from others. So here, in this reflection, we're seeking to spread love & light in a way that serves the greater good of all beings.

Our society over-values
measuring.



Our society under-values
experiencing.

What we know to our core
to be true, what we feel in
our bodies and hearts.



These "experiencing" qualities
are of the feminine*:

- † Sacredness. Deep connection.
- † Wonder. Mystery. Creativity.
- † Interconnected, complex webs of patterns and relationships.
- † Sensitivity. Warmth. Nurturing.
- † Affection. Kindness. Healing.
- † Intuition. Deep Knowing. Love.
- † Collaboration. Gathering. Connecting.
- † Fluid. Receptive. Open. Possibility.

These qualities are harder to see. Because of their very nature, they're not found in measurable stats. But they're powerful and necessary. Life-giving.

* Note this word is 'feminine' and not 'female,' so we're not talking about gender. All of life has both feminine and masculine energies. We need both in balance for harmony.

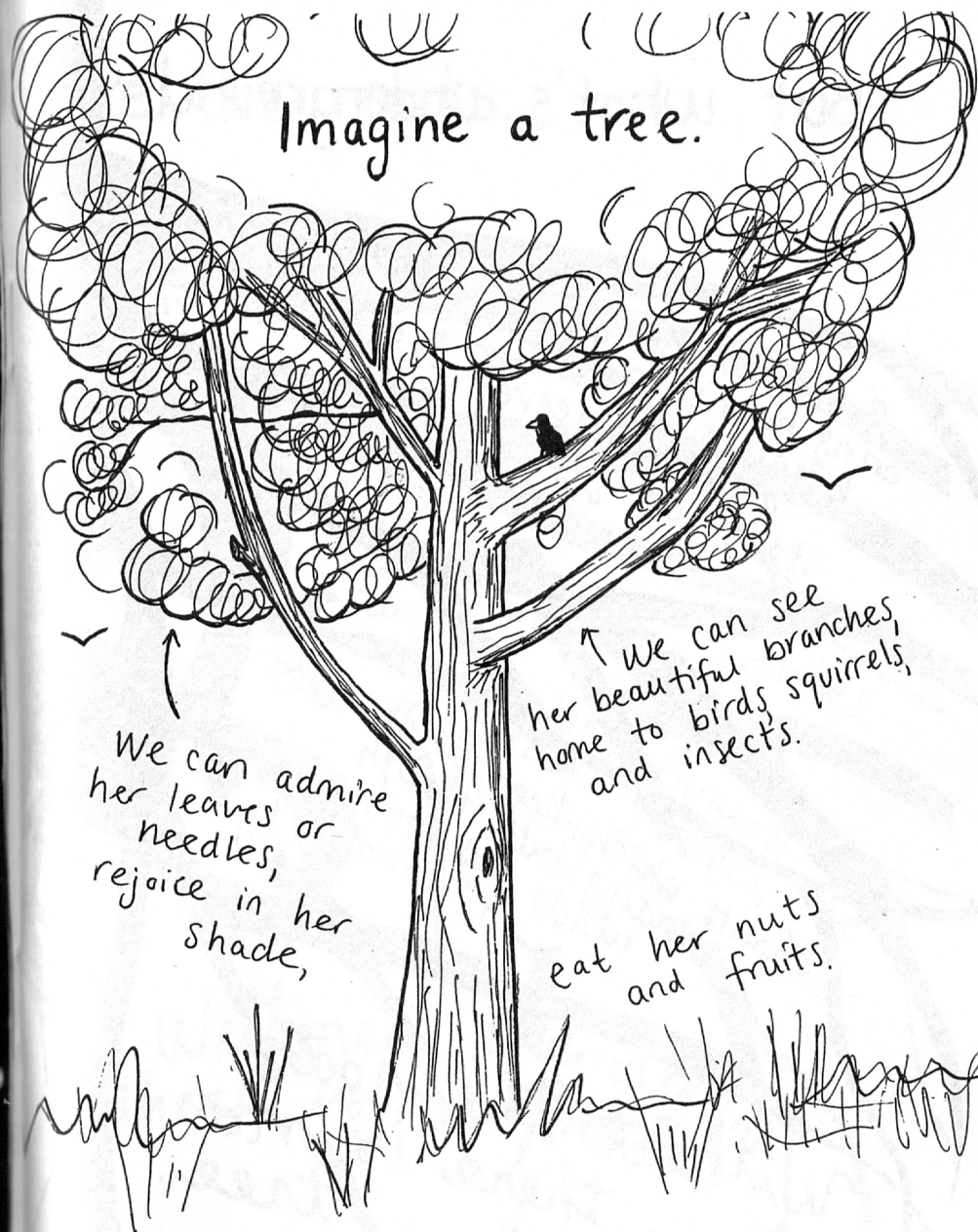
"It's not more
data that we need;
it's more **understanding**
that we need.

It's not more power
that we need;
it's more **wisdom**
that we need.

It's not more technology
that we need;
it's more **compassion**
that we need."

- Marianne Williamson
(Transform column)

Imagine a tree.



We can admire
her leaves or
needles,
rejoice in her
shade,

We can see
her beautiful branches,
home to birds, squirrels,
and insects.

eat her nuts
and fruits.

That's what's easy to
see and count.

But what's underground

are the roots.

Roots which incredibly gather and bring nutrients & water to the trunk, branches, and leaves, allowing for its growth and creation of fruits and nuts

Roots which keep whole trees standing tall through winds and storms, in community.

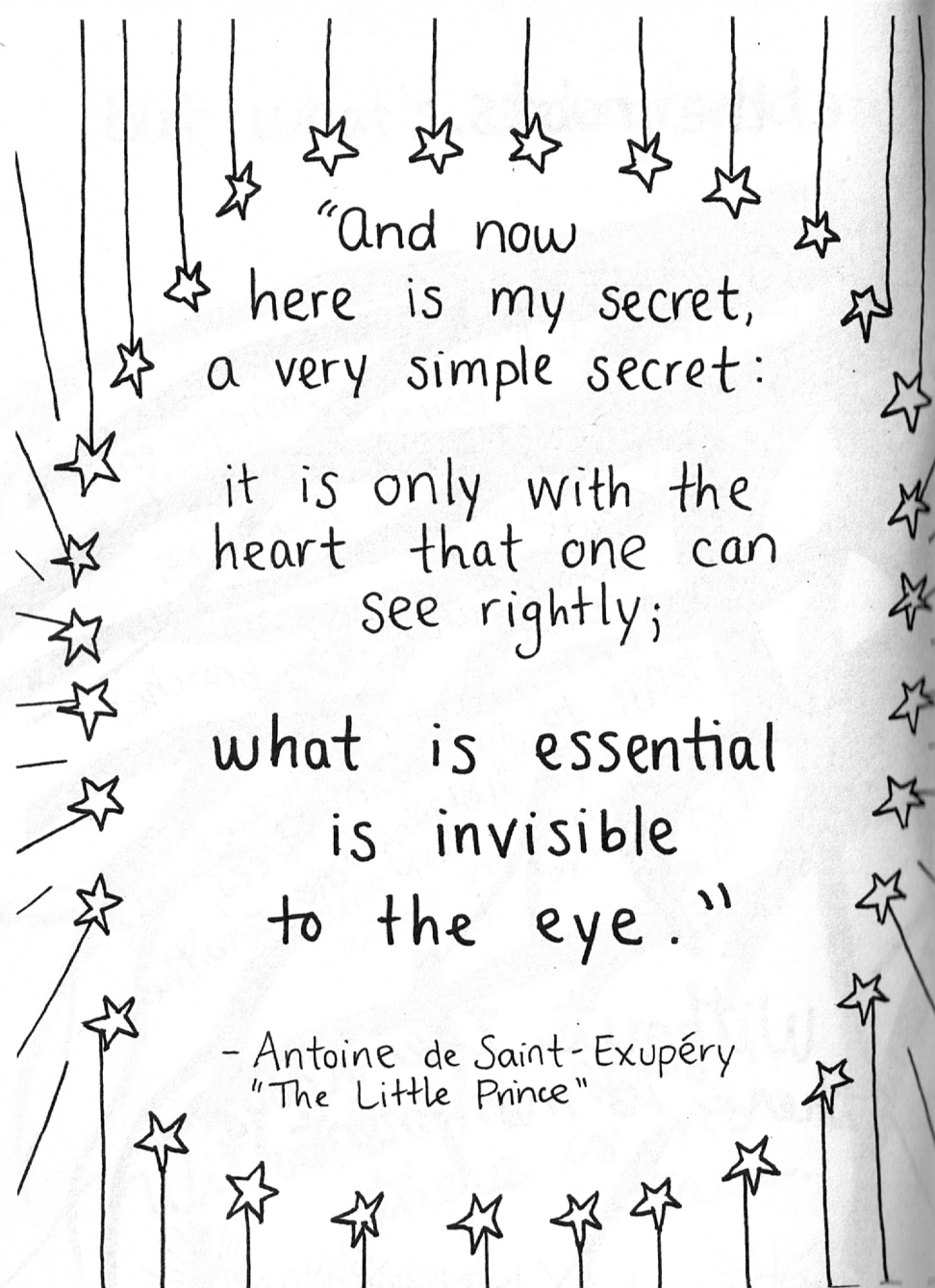
Without the roots, there is no tree.

Roots

Roots which span far beyond where the branches reach, where the branches communicate through the fungi to surrounding trees, helping one another.

Without the roots, there is no forest.

are essential.



"And now
here is my secret,
a very simple secret:

it is only with the
heart that one can
see rightly;

what is essential
is invisible
to the eye."

- Antoine de Saint-Exupéry
"The Little Prince"

↑ This was a well-loved quote of Fred Rogers. The documentary "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" - about his show "Mr. Roger's Neighborhood" - shares messages with this zine.

Felt experiences are the roots
of our humanity, the base
of everything:

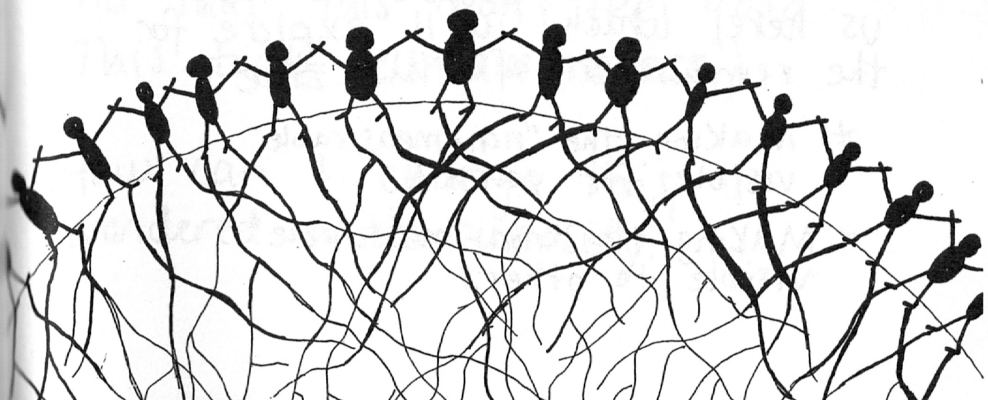
Love, compassion, forgiveness.

How we feel.

How we make others feel.

These roots are what
make us human.

And these shared roots
keep us standing tall
together. Growing deeper.
Loving.



We've seen that our modern society magnifies the already easy-to-see branches and fruits.

With this knowing, now it's time to zoom back in.

If we want our lifetime to be filled with love, safety, nonjudgment, laughs, celebration, and joys, what will our days look like?

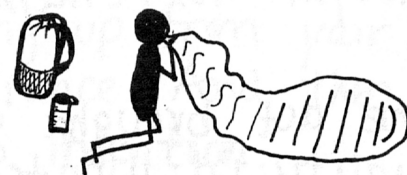
How can we place our attention back to our roots, back to what nurtures us, back to what benefits the whole community — when other stats are much more easily tracked, talked about, & visible?

There are two powers to help us here, which we'll explore for the remainder of this zine:

- * Making the "non-measurable" visible for yourself
- * Making the "non-measurable" visible to others

MAKING THE "NON-MEASURABLE" VISIBLE FOR YOURSELF

In 2019 when I was on a two-month hike, every night I had to blow up my sleeping pad. It took over 20 full blows to inflate, which felt endless after a full day of hiking.



One day, I noticed I was associating the task with dread, and that this didn't feel good. (This took self-awareness.)

How can I change this, I wondered with curiosity.

And then I had an idea.
(This took **creativity**.) With every exhale into the sleeping pad, I would send gratitude to another person/being, or feel gratitude for something from my day.

Thanks to creativity, I now had a focused **intention** when I inflated my sleeping pad each night. Over time, it became woven into my evening rhythms and required less conscious thought to remember.

The act brought gratitude — a quality I'd wanted to foster — into a simple daily moment, helping me practice it.

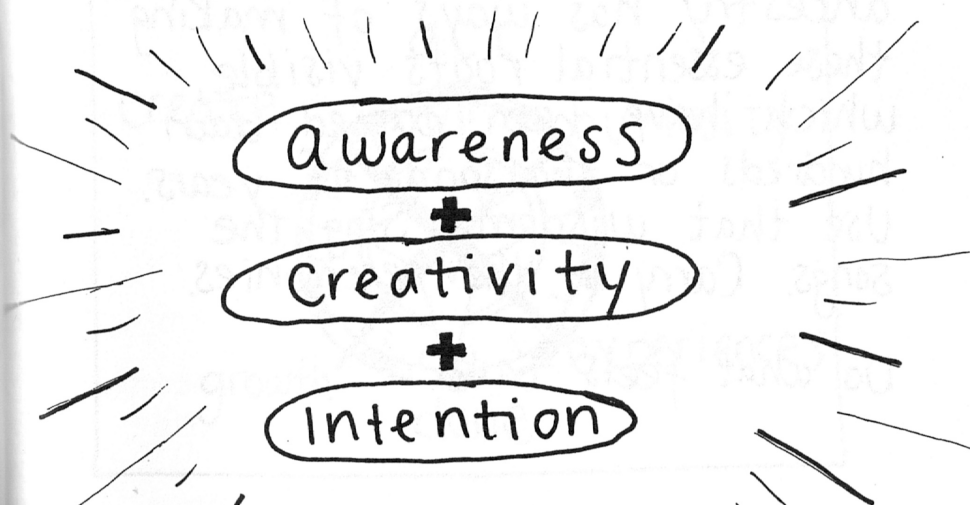
And the blessings were sent out energetically, lifting my spirit as well.

What we give importance/attention to on a single day is what shapes our lives.

On any given day, our society's systems make it easy to track the measurable, but not our nurturing root values.

So we must make our values visible in our own lives.

To do this, first we need **awareness**. Next is **creativity**: making something up from your own inner brilliance. And then we infuse with **intention**.



What follows are more examples from my life of different ways I've made what's important to me visible.

As you read, please keep in mind that our values are different. (Our inclinations and preferences are different!) We are not the same beings, so playing with this in your own life will not look the same. This is wonderful! It will also change over time, as we are dynamic beings.

Perhaps your culture or ancestry has ways of making these essential roots visible, which have been passed down hundreds or thousands of years. Use that wisdom. Sing the songs. Carry on the ceremonies.

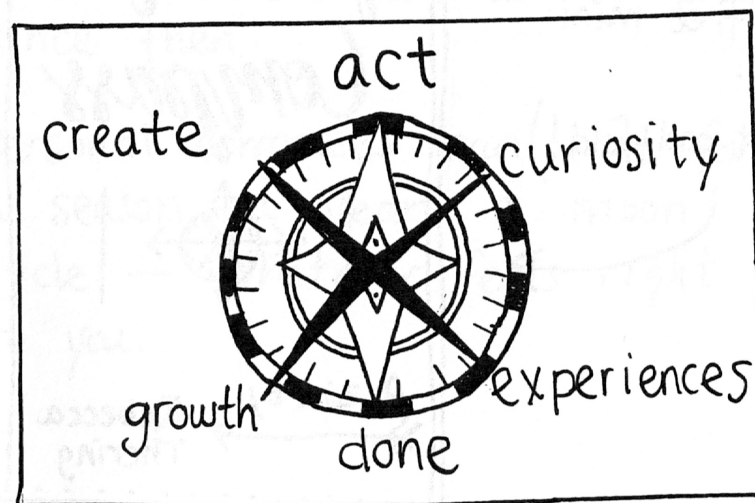
Do what feels true.

Personal Compass

In 2016, before entering a season free from any employment obligations, I made a personal compass to gauge how well I was progressing on my path.

I looked at the themes which kept arising, thought about the kind of person I wanted to become, and considered how I wanted to spend my time during the upcoming year.

Here's what that first compass looked like:



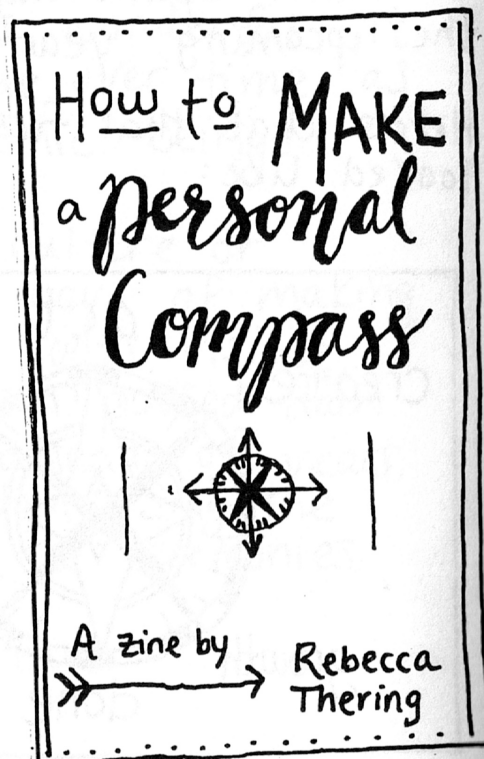
A few years ago I wrote an ebook, "Compass-Directed Moments," about this experience.

It dives deep into what led me to create that compass, how I tracked hard-to-measure traits, and how I used my compass in everyday moments throughout that year.

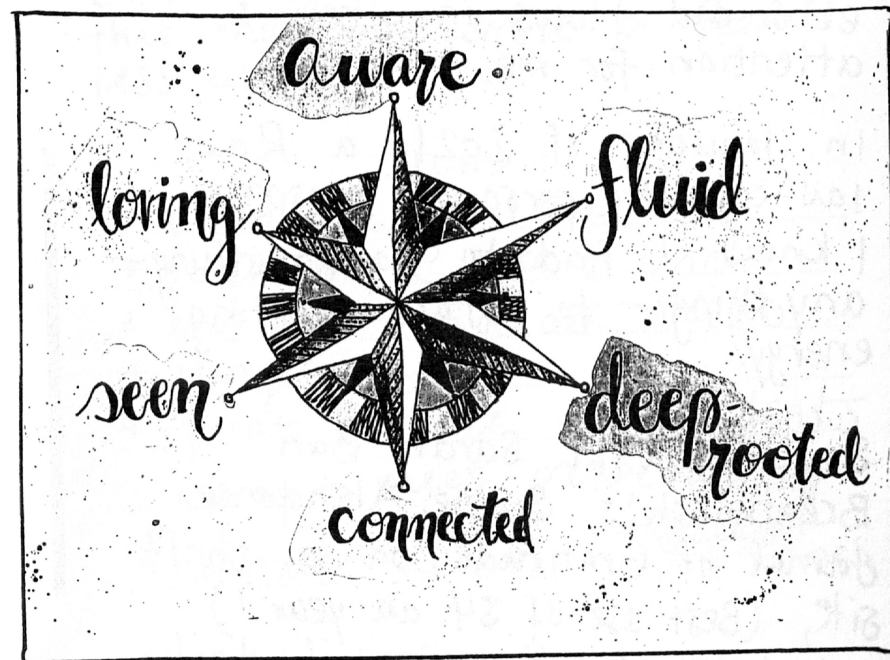
It also shows, step by step, how to make your own personal compass.

(Or, you can also follow the steps in my free mini-zine.

Print and fold!)



I made a new compass in 2020...



... and it's continued to change since then.

Personal compasses can last for a season, a year, a moon cycle — whatever feels right to you.

Gratitude Journal

Gratitude is a practice that ebbs and flows in form & attention for me.

In January of 2021, a Raw, raw-capacity personal season, I knew I had to do something - anything - to start shifting energy.

So I bought Sarah Ban Breathnach's Simple Abundance Journal of Gratitude on a thrift site, (Best use of \$4 all year!) and have been using it daily since.

Lying in bed each night, the last thing I do before going to sleep is pick up The journal, open to that day's entry, and jot down 5 things I'm grateful for.

It's that simple. Can be done in a minute.

But it illuminates the "non-measurable" for me, as I can capture moments from the day that made me smile or feel less alone.

JUNE 2

- + Laughing w/ Camp
 - + recharging C tree & lunch
 - + energy to do all tasks
 - + hunger
 - + great mileage, no accidents
 - + energy to meet archaeologists
- JUNE 3
- + computer access
 - + Jackson cores

Using this journal keeps my thoughts and heart where I'd most like them to be - at least for a few minutes before bed.

You don't need to buy a journal to do this, of course. I prefer to write it down, while others may carry a gratitude stone in their pocket or use the sun's rays as a reminder.

* * *

I live alone right now,
which is why these are all
solo examples.

But you may live with
family or friends who share
some of your values.

When I was a child, at
the dinner table my mom
would often ask us to share
"two good things" from our day.

Some nights we excitedly
shared triumphs from the day,
while other times we groaned
and rolled our eyes. But
essentially, it was a communal
gratitude practice.

If any of your loved ones
share values with you, create
a practice to strengthen roots
together.

Morning & Nightly Devotions

In the basket on my nightstand,
next to my gratitude journal, is
a tiny book called "Celtic
Devotional" by Caitlin Matthews.

It gives a morning and evening
page of blessings, prayers, and
meditations, which vary by
day of the week and season.

Reading the morning and
evening page each day puts
my attention on what's
important to me, and sets
up my subconscious to
continue growing these roots as
I sleep.

Perhaps there's a poem, phrase,
prayer, song, or image that
gets you in touch with your
roots. Try using it as a
touchstone upon waking and before
going to sleep.



Words on Walls

Two summers ago, a friend made a banner for me with the phrase of my choosing. The words "Choose love" have been up on the wall in all the bedrooms I've occupied since.

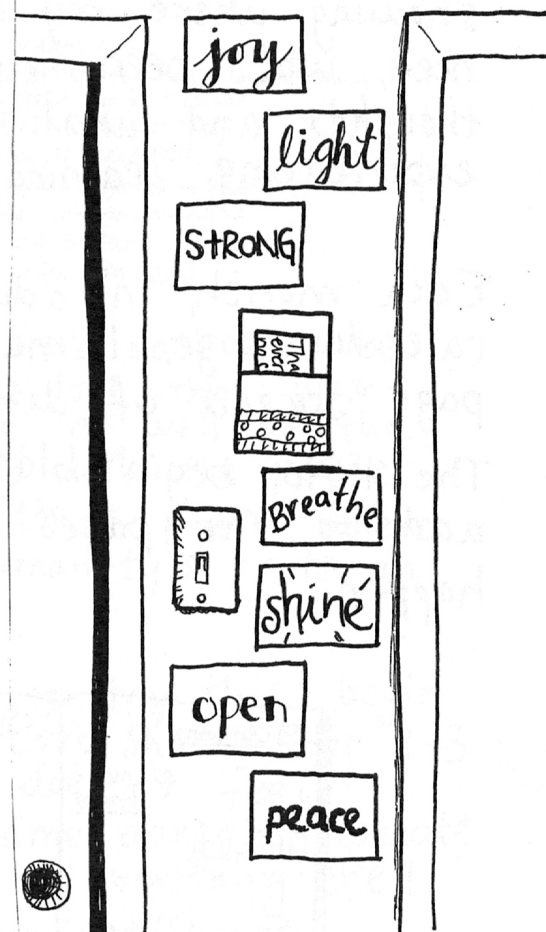


My dresser is home to recent cards and postcards from friends, plus the oracle cards I want to see.

My intention must be visible somewhere for me to be reminded each day. These are changed whenever it feels right.

A few months ago, by the lightswitch in my bedroom, I added a vertical display of words that lift me up, written on soothing teal paper.

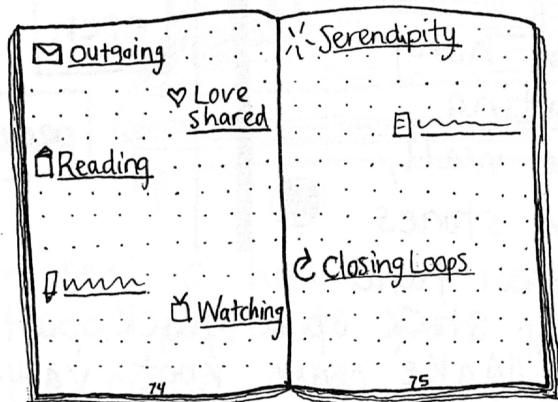
You can hang a painting on the wall, bring in stones or leaves found outside, stick up a quick post-it note. Make your root values visible in your home surroundings.



Love Shared in Journal

I enjoy keeping a journal to reflect seasonally and to gather footprints over time - indents showing where my attention has been; what's been influencing my thoughts; and what I've been experiencing, learning, & celebrating.

Each month, in addition to a calendar page, I make a two-page spread of different topics. The lists begin blank, and I add to the pages as experiences happen.



One of my monthly categories is "Love Shared." This is where I write kind acts done for others and Kind acts received.

Q4 ♥ Shared & Rec'd

- 10/1 - Sent tea to Melanie G.
- 10/2 - Rec'd Anna postcards & letter from mom
- 10/3 - Wrote bday letter for Ky + cookies.
- 10/4 - Warm cookies to Jackson + Ky.
- 10/12 - \$550 Star award received!
- 10/18 - offers from Rocky + James to help w/ car
- 10/20 - cookies + bday note to Jackson
- 10/21 - Muffins + card to Camp
- 10/28 - Rec'd Kind letter from Elias.

It feels good to look back and be reminded of the love that was shared with me, as well as the kindness I shared with the people around me. It's a place where I can see humanity's roots in words.

If you want to try this, begin by recording Love Shared for 1-3 months. How does it feel? And if the name doesn't resonate with you, call it something else!

- Kindness Received/Shared
- Abundance from Universe
- Tiny Acts of Kindness
- People Are Compassionate
- Blessings All Around

Plant a Seed

My friend Emmer recently planted a seed and decorated the cup with a quality she wants to grow. Each time she waters the plant or sees it, she says affirming words and feels the quality growing inside her.

If this feels right, do the same for one of your values. Affirm "I am Kind. I am full of Kindness," for example - in present tense.

As the plant begins to grow, perhaps you'll feel subtle shifts in yourself: more kindness, more rest, whatever it is you're growing.



🎵 Check out the song "Seeds" by Sara Emmitt, from her fantastic album "Mother Medicine" - which I listened to often while making this zine.

There are many ways to make your values visible, for underground root-shifts that will blossom in the world.

Start here, with yourself, today. Just as you are.

Make one trait visible, in a way that feels right to you. Don't overthink it.

Just start with one, notice, and see what unfolds.

* * *

To further awaken your awareness, creativity, and intentions, I'm sharing some additional resources and ideas on the next few pages.

Further Resources

to Cultivate Awareness, Creativity,
and Intention

Awareness

What am I watching for?

Which values do I want to cultivate and nurture? (Not my family/partner/friends/society... what's important to me?)

Which qualities do I want to pass along to the next generation?

Go with your first inclinations; let them arise. Listen to your inner knowing.

And take a deep breath - let this be light and playful!

Nothing is in stone; you can redirect your awareness at any moment. It's all fluid!

Consider: What's easy to see/track in my life right now?

Then ask: What's not here that I'd like to shift my attention towards?

Here are far more places you could look:

- Notice nature.



What's happening among the plants and creatures around you? Where are we in the lunar cycle? Tuning in to nature's rhythms can direct our awareness.

- Notice resistance.



Not wanting to do something can be a helpful indication - like in my story about inflating the sleeping pad. Look for where you feel resistance and see if it sparks curiosity/creativity.

- Notice in the body.



What sensations are you feeling right now? Our society is very mind-focused, so putting attention back towards the body can provide helpful information.

- Notice your thoughts.



Meditation is a common way to practice this. Journaling is also a great way to later view your thoughts from a nonjudgmental 3rd party view. "A Course in Miracles" helps me to notice my thoughts and make small daily shifts.

You have everything you need for awareness. You don't need outer sources, more content, or other voices. Just you and your inner self. Gift yourself space and time to go inwards and listen.



"As the Course defines the word, a miracle is 'a shift in perception from fear to love.' That might not seem like such a big deal, until you consider that thought is the level of cause; everything happening in the world is an effect that was caused by thought."

-Marianne Williamson

Creativity

How can I change it 5%?

How can I weave this value/quality into my days?

Here are some places that could spark new ideas:

- The Fluent Self

This personal blog (www.fluentself.com) written by Havi Brooks offers many fresh perspectives. Havi is very creative in how she frames things, and she's always inventing new names for... everything—like her superpowers, guiding principles, and life experiences.

- Earth-based Spiritualities

I've found that exploring these realms allows my creativity to flow, strengthens my inner knowing, and brings root values into the everyday.

- "The Book of Ceremony"

Written by Shamanic teacher Sandra Ingerman, this is a fantastic intro read which will guide you to create small ceremonies immediately.—a space to incubate conscious intentions.

Keep it light and playful. You don't have to come up with a great idea. Take a walk, see what arises, try things out, rinse and repeat.

Intention

For a book that provides many concrete ways to infuse intention into daily moments, I recommend "Making Magic: Weaving Together the Everyday and the Extraordinary" by Brianna Saussy.

And as you've seen, **visuals** are key for me to illuminate roots.

* * *

Using Awareness + Creativity + Intention, we can make our non-measurables visible for ourselves.

We also have the power to make our values more visible in our communities, offices, homes, families, and friend groups.

MAKING THE "NON-MEASURABLE" VISIBLE TO OTHERS

When I was 23, I taught English for a year in South Korea. In the fall, near the end of that year, I learned that a fellow American teacher, Ashley, was going through a very challenging time.

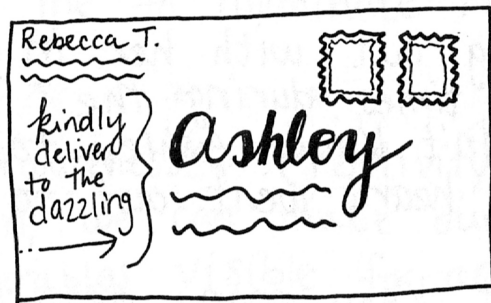
I'd hung out with her in groups several times during the year but didn't know Ashley too well. Yet my heart went out to her.

I didn't know many details of the situation, but I knew she must have been feeling a lot of hard feelings.

So I wrote Ashley a letter.

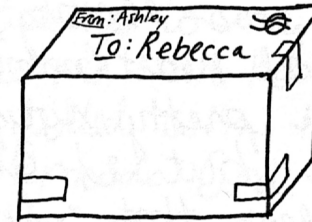
I included some hand-drawn quotes that I thought might be soothing or comforting.

I had some doubts while putting it together — will she think this is cheesy? Is this "too much" for someone I'm not close friends with? — but ultimately it felt right to share these sentiments and send her some pick-me-up mail, so I sent it.

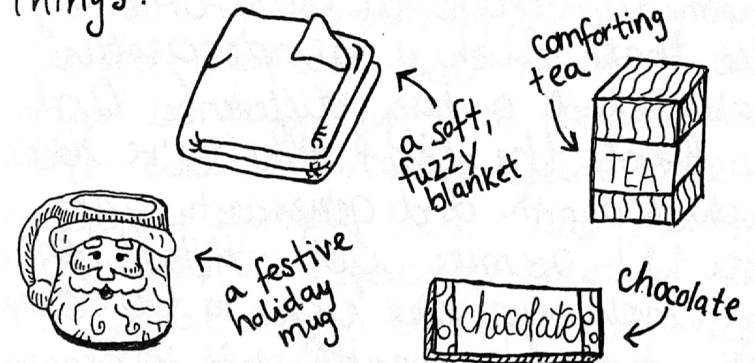


Then on went my days, just as before.

A few months later, back in Wisconsin, a package showed up at my house one day. It was from Ashley.



I had never received a care package like this before. It was filled with cozy wintertime things:



But what I remember most from that package was her letter.

I just want to say thank you so much for your thoughtful messages. It was such a lovely unexpected surprise. Each little step of opening it was exciting and wonderful and heartwarming. I was having a pretty rough time around then, but I got a lot of strength from that - smiling and laughing as my eyes filled with tears. It really was a joyous moment.

You should be exceptionally proud of yourself that you're the kind of person to think to do something like that. Such a simple gesture really made a big difference. And it's not the first time I've received such warmth and generosity from you. I admire you. How genuine and lovely you are right to the core, with such humanity. It makes me want to strive to be a better person too, to express the care and love for all those in my life too - to act outwardly instead of just

assuming those whom I care for know how I inwardly feel. So I thought you should know that you inspired me to do all these other things too. I sent a "pick me up" package to my friend in Milwaukee who's been having a hard time lately, filled with natural things to enhance moods. And today I'm sending a box of various gifts and little notes to Korea for Binae, Brandon, and our friend Maria, who have been there for me so many times. And I'm sending Christmas in a box to An in Germany, knowing he's been alone abroad for most of the holidays of his life, and he could use a little warmth. So, just like that your simple act has multiplied and grown, to cascade around the entire globe even. I can only hope that it'll continue from there, as those who feel more love express more love in turn. It may seem a bit cliché and cheesy, but

it really is a marvelous thing.
So I just wanted to say
thanks for being such an exemplary
human being. It can be pretty
discouraging to live in this
effed up world sometimes...
but know that your goodness
is contagious and impactful.
I don't believe in any spiritual
conception of karma of course, but
in a very real and practical
sense, you often do get back
what you give. So, when good
things happen, you should know
that's a reflection of your own
positive efforts. Well done! haha

I hope your holidays are warm
and happy and bright!

Love
Ashley

I felt tingles while reading
Ashley's letter. There was a
deep reverberating of a special
energy, a new felt knowing,
an increase of aliveness in my
soul.

Ashley could have sent those
care packages to her friends
and never have told me. My
letter would have still
rippled out exponentially, but
I wouldn't have known.

Likewise, my letter gave
Ashley strength — but if she
hadn't told me, I wouldn't
have known.



The fact that Ashley told me was a huge gift.

It multiplied and re-energized my Knowing in love. It encouraged me to keep going on this path of sharing what feels true to me, regardless of doubts. It strengthened and deepened my roots.

What's more, Ashley beautifully made the non-measurable visible for me: strength, smiling, laughing, warmth, generosity, genuineness, humanity, care, love. It's all in this single letter.

I've held onto this letter all these years in a binder of special cards and papers, and I'm writing about it now because of the impact it had on me.

Letters are incredible instruments for making values visible to your friends, family, and community.

That single act is a powerful creative force, bringing exponentially more of the value into the world, simply by highlighting it for the recipient.



* * *

Two summers ago I worked at a park. Personally, it was a time of grieving, low energy, and a raw nervous system.

An hour and a half from the nearest town, I usually spent the weekends in my park having - baking, cooking, and reading.

My work crew rarely interacted with other divisions because of the covid pandemic, so it was me and my five coworkers for most of those six months.

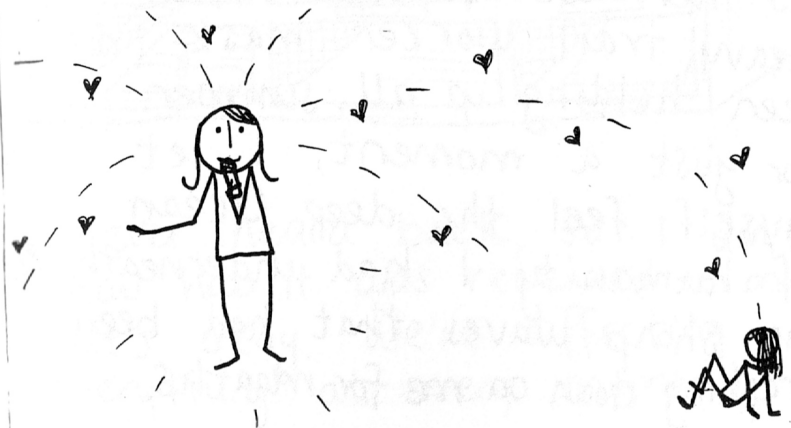
The energies of my male crew lead and male supervisor felt harsh to my tender, deep-sensing self. My body sensed that it wasn't safe to show true emotion or bring my full spirit to work.

The season was dark and hard.

One afternoon, near the end of summer, we had our first in-person all-park meeting. It was outside, socially distanced. Different people spoke about various matters. It felt stiff and business-y.

Partway through, a woman came to the microphone and spoke about mental health. She shared that she'd lost her home in a fire years earlier, and she had trauma around this.

She was true. She spoke from the heart. It was palpable.



The woman then told us about resources that are available to employees, and what has helped her.

She stressed that at the end of the day, we're all humans doing a job. It's our loved ones and our health that's most important, she said.

I was captivated.

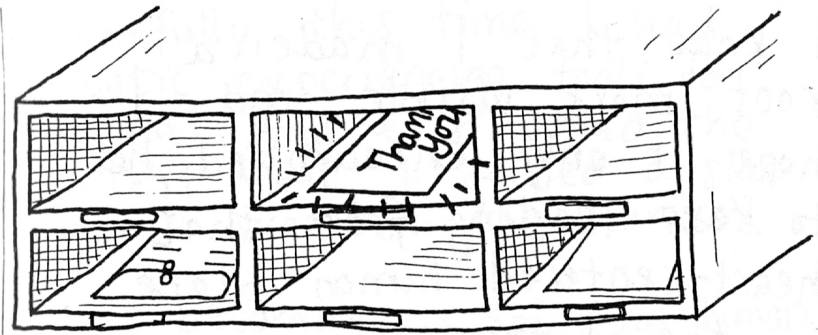
I felt seen. Finally, I felt seen.

A tear rolled down my face as her words lifted the heavy trail worker mask I'd been holding up all summer. For just a moment, I let myself feel the deep Ocean of humanity I had underneath, & the sharp waves that had been crashing down on me for months.

She finished, folks clapped, and then we were on to the next speaker. Just like that, the moment ended.

But the feeling she'd evoked in me remained.

Moved by her words, I found out the speaker's name and wrote her a thank-you note. A friend in another department delivered it to her park mailbox for me.



I never heard back, so I don't know how it was received — and that's okay. We're affecting everything at every moment,

it's an interconnected web.
It's impossible to know even a
fraction of our impact.

What I do know is that
I acted from the heart. My
body knew how I'd felt when
I received Ashley's letter seven
years earlier, and that feeling
continues to propel me to share
my inner truth today.

I know that I made a
root more visible, and I
hope it only encouraged her
to keep leading from that
heart-centered human place
in the future.

* * *

This past summer, I moved
to a new town for a seasonal
job. It was another Raw
Season personally, but different
from the year before.

I had much less capacity and
my nervous system had become
increasingly sensitive, to the
point where a harmless question
from a coworker could trigger
my body into Flight - responding
as if my life were in danger.

Thankfully, this time I had
somatic experiencing tools for
healing.* And even amid the
darkest night, I sensed a slow
rebirth was on the horizon.

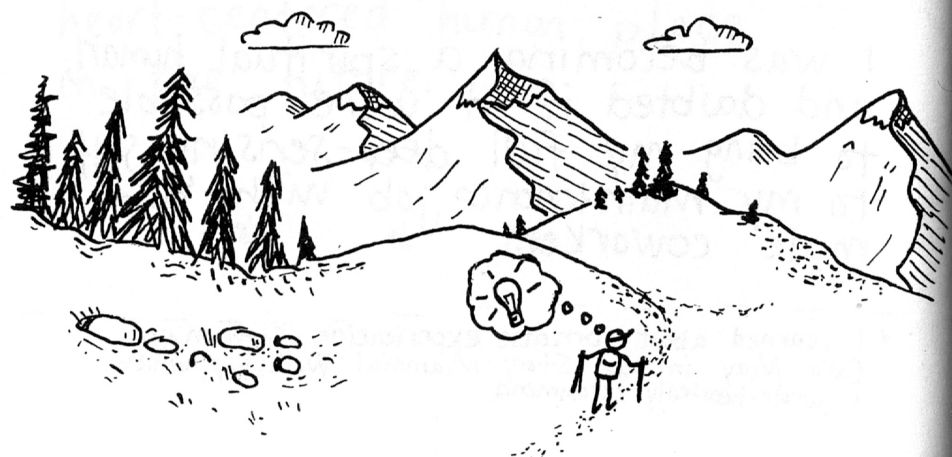
I was becoming a spiritual human,
and doubted if it were possible
to bring my full deep-sensing self
to my maintenance job with all-
male coworkers.

* I learned about somatic experiencing from Molly
Caro May in her Story Mammal Workshop, which
I whole-heartedly recommend.

A few weeks in, I was scheduled to lead the weekly safety talk. I could choose any topic and give an informal chat about it.

At first I was going to cover heat, since my body was struggling with Arizona's glorious sun.

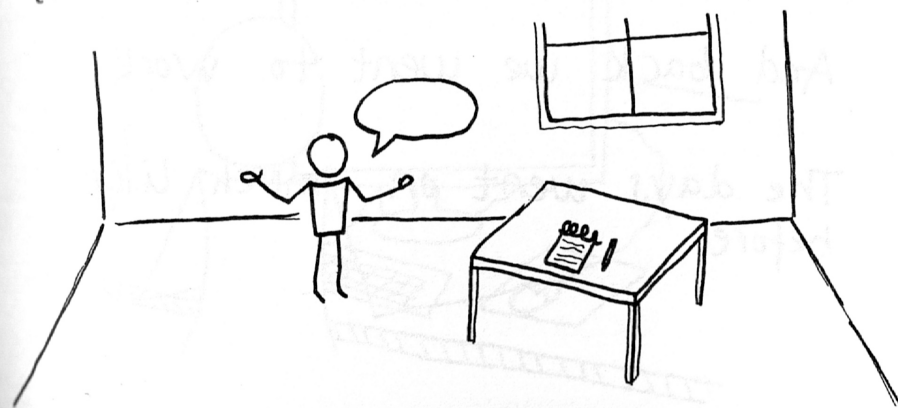
Then one weekend, while on a hike, I had a flash of a new idea: I could teach some of the somatic experiencing I'd learned that winter, as a way to stay calm and patient. I would show how to make a safer work space with more communication, presence, and kindness.



I stopped at the top of that mountain and wrote a page of ideas. I felt a deep knowing that I had to present this topic.

Although I had some fear that these men might view me as "too sensitive" or laugh at my teachings (an attitude reflected in our culture, but certainly not in all), I had to honor the person I was becoming and the type of world I wanted to live in.

I spent more time organizing ideas over the weekend, and practiced the whole talk several times at home.



When my day came, I took a deep breath and began.

I shared my information, holding my notes in my hands. It felt vulnerable and important—a step into my new skin. The gentlest, right push into my tender edges.

Everyone did the exercises along with me as I taught, seemingly receptive.

After the meeting was over, a coworker I admire—a man of fewer words—came up to me, looked me in the eyes, and said "Nice topic," with a nod of affirmation.

And back we went to work.

The days went on, much like before.

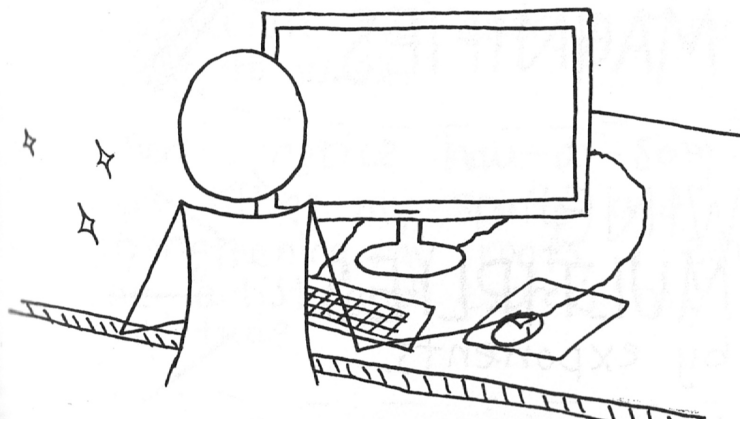
Two weeks later, when we seasonals finally got computer access, I logged into my work email for the first time.

I was surprised to see an email from my supervisor's supervisor. It was dated from the week I'd given my safety talk.

She thanked me for what I'd shared, and said that she'd already used one of the techniques that I'd taught.

Wow.

I felt the tingles again.



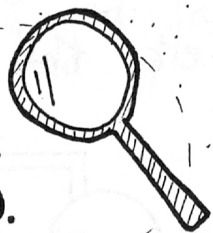
This was affirmation — a life-giving force — energizing me to continue on this path.

If she hadn't sent that email, she'd still have used the technique and appreciated my talk. It would keep influencing her life (and all those she comes into contact with — it all ripples out), but I wouldn't have known.

KNOWING
PROPELS.



KNOWING
MAGNIFIES.



KNOWING
MULTIPLIES
by exponents.



It actually births more creative energy into the world, into my being.

Each time that I'm blessed to experience this — to hear someone share with me the impact of my words, actions, or presence — it inspires me to make the "non-measurable" more visible for others.

- * When I notice someone bringing their humanity into their business, I send a quick email to thank them.
- * When I notice how a coworker spreads good vibes to all and makes me feel more peaceful and safe, I tell them that I appreciate the energy they bring to work.
- * When I notice how a song has been lifting my spirits and strengthening my roots, I email the artist and express my gratitude.

Because at the very end, I'd rather this person knew what I see and how it's affected me (and beyond).

And each time I express what's true to me, the doubts get a little quieter.

The roots grow deeper and reach more neighboring trees, certain that love is the way.

If I can magnify and put spotlights on the love I see so brightly all around me, it will grow exponentially.

And that path feels most in alignment with my true essence. Win-win-win.

Snail Mail Magic

The most natural way for me to do this is to write thank you notes.

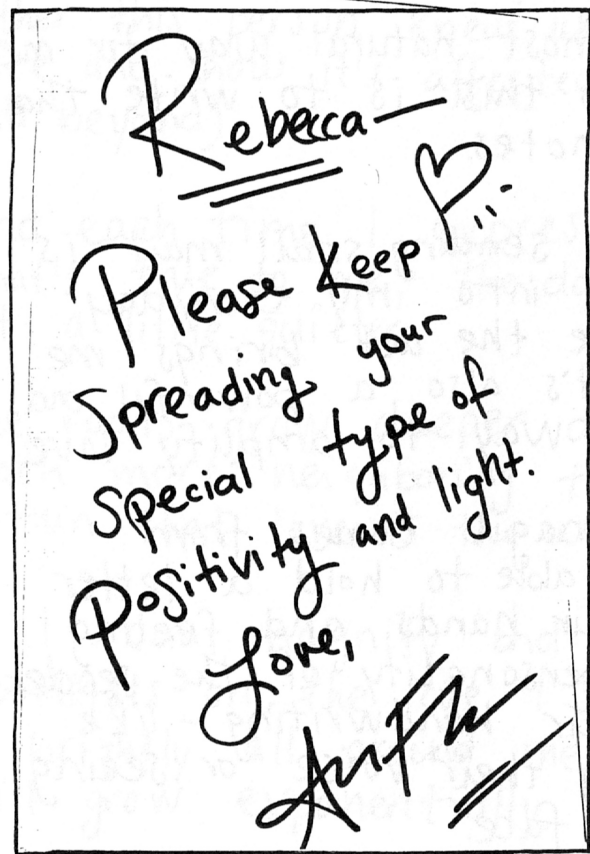
While sending snail mail is woven into my everyday because the act brings me joy, it's also a powerful and simple way to amplify love.

The magic comes from being able to hold a letter in your hands and feeling the personality of the sender in their handwriting - like hearing their voice or seeing their face.

* * *

Two years ago, deep in grief, I won some books from my lighthouse Alex Franzen.

On a postcard inside, she wrote the following message:



I held onto this card and kept it in a safe place. A year and a half later, I took a picture of the postcard and ordered a 5"x7" print.

It now hangs on my bedroom wall, where I can see it each day to be reminded of words—and an energy—that lift me up.

Alex's handwriting carries the encouragement and love of her spirit.

* * *

When I was in college, my coworker and friend Cathleen wrote me a thoughtful birthday card, which went into my collection of special papers.

Over a decade later, no longer coworkers but instead treasured friends, Cathleen died of cancer.

I immediately dug up that birthday card and found comfort in her words, which couldn't have been more fitting:

Dearest Rebecca,

Although this is a sappy card, it is a true sentiment.

I see in you such a spirit of curiosity and desire to experience life, I want for you to savor all of life's wonders and delights, but avoid its pitfalls and darkness. Unfortunately (or perhaps fortunately), the true richness and beauty of life can't be had without the full spectrum. What I feel about you is that you will face (and embrace) what your life brings with compassion for not only others, but yourself as well, a discerning intellect, a true and open heart, and with joy. I wish you all the best,

Rebecca, and await with interest the developments in your future.

Love Cathleen

... enough
to make
your every wish
come true.

Happy Birthday

I made a photocopy of the card and brought Cathleen's wisdom with me on the 2-month hike I was about to begin.

You never know how your written words can impact someone, or how they'll return.

Is there any treasured letter, card, or email that you hold on to?

Take a moment to breathe in gratitude for those words.

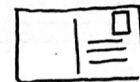
Does the sender know what their words mean to you?

Expressing Gratitude

While I clearly favor letters, there are many formats you could use to express appreciation:



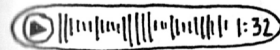
letters in the mail



postcards



texts



voice recordings sent as texts



emails



Monopoly



comments left online



book/podcast reviews



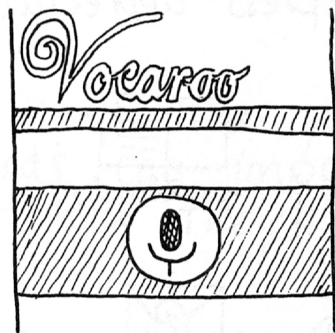
a verbal "nice topic" to your coworker

etc.

Throughout the pandemic and a personal season of grief, I haven't had energy to compose thoughtful words in writing.

During these times, I've really

enjoyed sending voice recordings
by email, using vocaroo.com.



It's a free website where you simply hit the red record button, start talking, and when you hit stop, it lets you "Save and share >>." Saving gives you a URL to send to your recipient. When they click the URL, they can play your audio message.

Use whatever format feels right for you.

Notes might say:

Thank you for having us over for dinner last week. I really felt connected and especially appreciated the intention you put into the meal + the gorgeous banquet!

Your podcast makes me laugh and feel less alone - thank you so much for sharing it with the world!

I admire how you greet everyone at breakfast by name. It makes me feel seen, which makes me feel safe.

Thank you for speaking in that meeting yesterday. You were an example of the courage I'm growing in myself.

Your music makes me feel peaceful, clear, and connected. It helps me create sacred space for reflection.

I feel so warm and safe in your house. The decorating you've done is stellar and really affects my energy.

Try it. The next time you notice yourself admiring someone's parenting, articulateness, patience, kindness, blue hair, garden - whatever, let them know!

Think of someone you've admired this week.

What qualities do they show?

How does this person make you feel?

Let them know this week, in whatever way feels true. And then... celebrate!

You just altered the entire Earth, the story of humankind. You strengthened our interconnected roots.

"... it's important to remember our feelings are not as obvious to the outside world as we might assume. There's a whole gap of awareness and understanding that can sometimes only be traversed with words - whether voiced, typed, or handwritten. Our feelings seem so obvious to us that we often assume they must be apparent to others as well. But there's real value in expressing our emotions more explicitly, especially positive emotions such as love, appreciation, and gratitude. Words are free after all. And postage for a letter is cheap. The result, though, really can be priceless."

- Ashley

(Yes Ashley who sent me the letter was beautiful on this topic in 2017)

in blog post
"The warmth of words" on
cottonkitty.wordpress.com

Amplify Your Values

You can continue on this thanking path, using your values as a compass.

Do you value creativity? Notice someone who is being creative and thank them for it.

Do you value Kindness? Look for someone who's being kind and thank them for what they're bringing into the world.

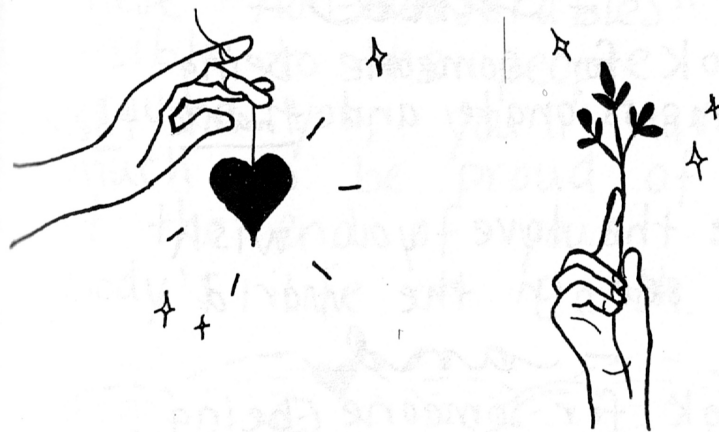
What about vulnerability? Love? Honesty? Beauty? Strength? Intuition? Connection with Mother Earth? Fluidity? Courage? Rest?

Bring one of your values into your awareness this month, and look for one person each week who exemplifies that quality. Then: thank the person.

In the thanking, you're growing this quality for yourself, the recipient, and for *all* the beings who interact with each of you (and each of them, and on and on...) It's a very strong ripple.

You are an active molder/creator on this Earth.

In simply sending a text, speaking a few true words, or writing a postcard, you magnify/grow the forces you wish to see more of in the world.



This is an incredible power that we each possess.

So yes,

be the peace you wish
to see in the world.

- and -

Look for someone bringing
peace to the world
and thank them.

Be the compassion you
wish to see in the world

- and -

look for someone being
compassionate and thank them.

Be the love you wish
to see in the world

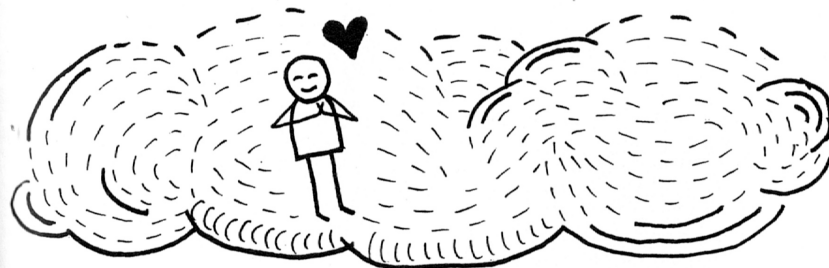
- and -

look for someone being
loving and thank them.

Trust with your deep
inner knowing that this
act is powerful and potent.

Trust that by expressing
gratitude, you are growing
essential roots for your
community — now and for
generations beyond.

Trust that by making
these "non-measurables"
visible to the people
around you, you'll have
much to be proud of
at the end of your
body's life on Earth.



Trust with your deep
inner knowing that this
act is powerful and potent

Trust that you are expressing
gratitude. You are drawing
essential roots for your
community - how and how
generations beyond.

Be the compassion you
deserve that is your
true "non-possessive self".
Visible to the microscope of
our world, you are weaving
much to be proud of
at the very heart of your
body, a life of growth.



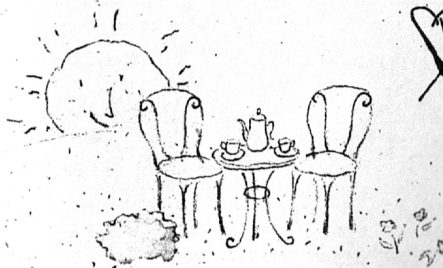
Jan. 21,
2022

Thank you for
being with me as you
read this zine.

I wish for you the joy
of seeing your light and
roots reflected back to
you, as well as the joy
of gifting this visibility
to others.

May your roots grow
deep and strong.

Love and light,
Rebecca



✉ rebeccarose
thering.com/say-
hello