



Aligning Your Goals & Passions

The Modern Creative Woman

Presence - Mindset - Purpose

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Presence

Your presence includes getting out of your mind and getting into your life, making contact with the present moment and seeing yourself as the "context" for your life experiences. Your internal presence can be whatever you decide it to be in each moment of your life.

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Mindset

Your mindset includes acceptance of what you are currently thinking and feeling as well as the circumstances you are facing. Acceptance of what currently exists is necessary before attempting to make any changes. Mindset also includes forging a new working relationship with your thoughts and practicing conscious & creative thinking.

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Purpose

Your purpose includes both your personal values and the action steps you take in alignment with your values. It is through your purpose that you engage with your life, choose what is most important, and make committed actions to demonstrate your values to yourself and others.

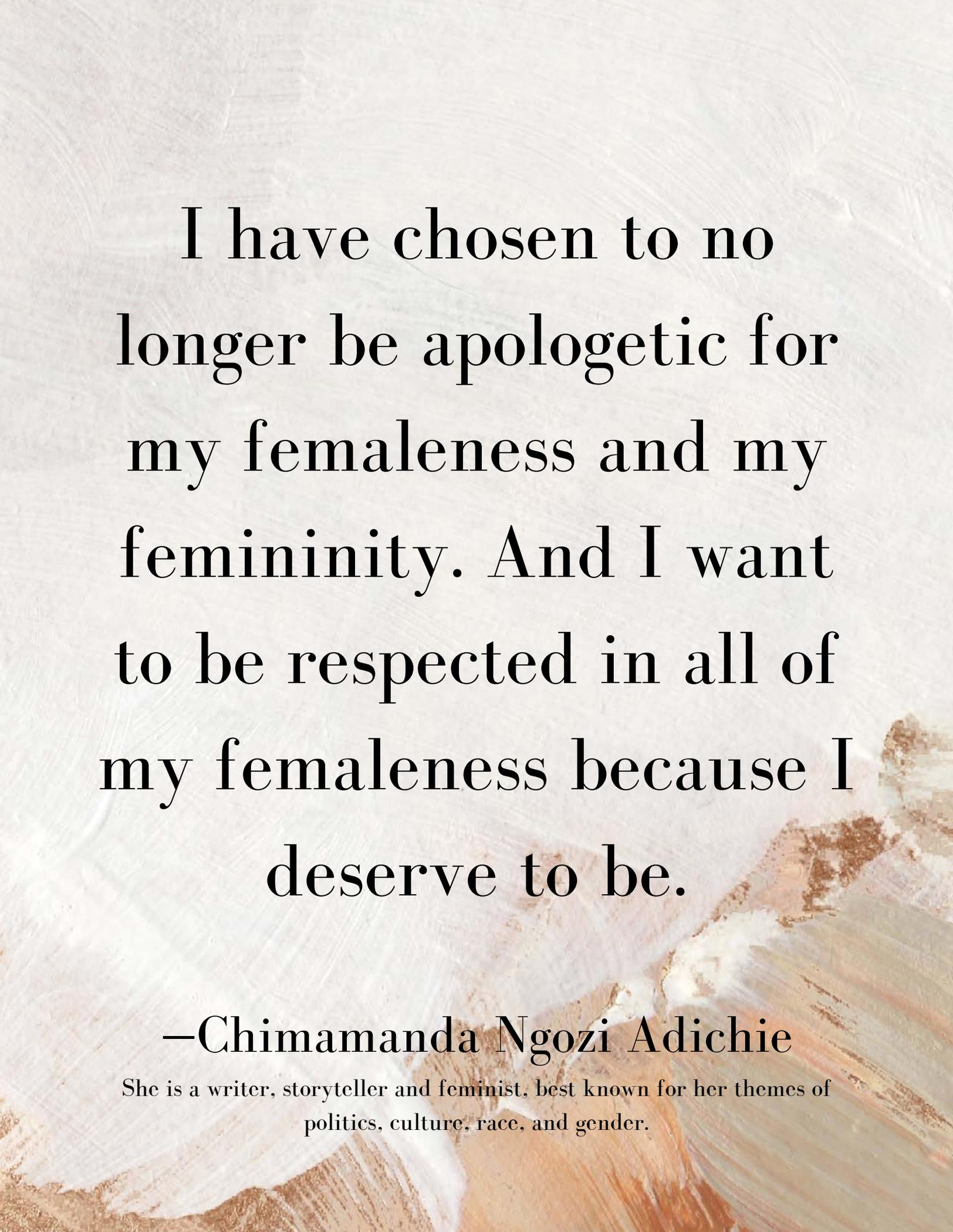
PRESENCE

Present Moment Awareness & Yourself as Context

Presence - your ability to make contact with the present moment, separate from your thoughts and feelings about it. This means observing what is happening outside of you as well as observing your thoughts and feelings in the present moment.

Self as Context - Seeing yourself as the context for your life means you are the anchor. Whatever happens inside of you (thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations) as well as whatever happens outside of you (people, places, circumstances) is separate from your experience as a human being. You might think of your "context" as your spirit, your core self, your essence. In other words, you as the context is the view of yourself as the person experiencing your life. For example: you are the journal on which your story is written. Rather than being the story itself, you are able to truthfully see yourself as the journal on which the story is written. Another example: You are the canvas on which you create the painting of your life. Instead of being the paint, you accurately see yourself as the canvas.

Remember, your presence includes getting out of your mind and getting into your life, making contact with the present moment and seeing yourself as the context for your life experiences. Your internal presence can be whatever you decide it to be in each moment of your life.



I have chosen to no longer be apologetic for my femaleness and my femininity. And I want to be respected in all of my femaleness because I deserve to be.

–Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

She is a writer, storyteller and feminist, best known for her themes of politics, culture, race, and gender.

INTENTIONS

What are you hoping to get out of this class? What are your goals and passions?

What do you hope to get out of your membership in the areas of presence, mindset and purpose?

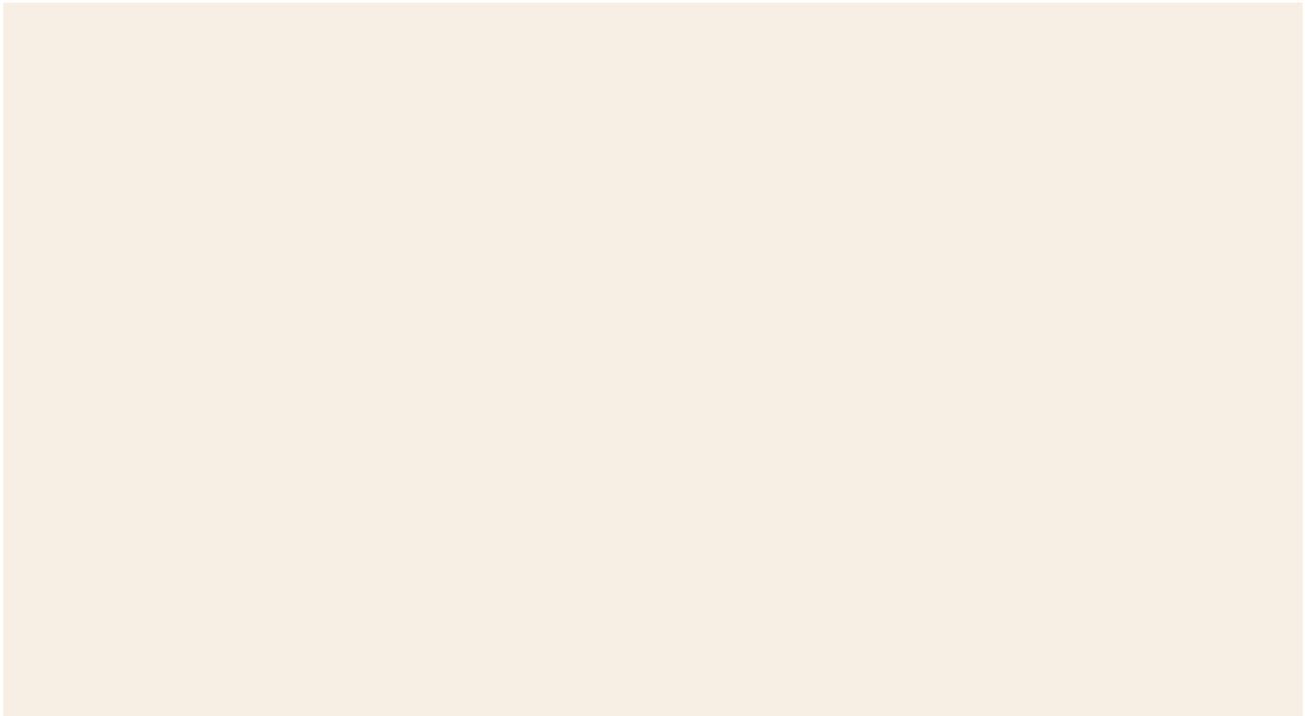
Your answers here are a draft - just get started thinking about your intentions for the month.

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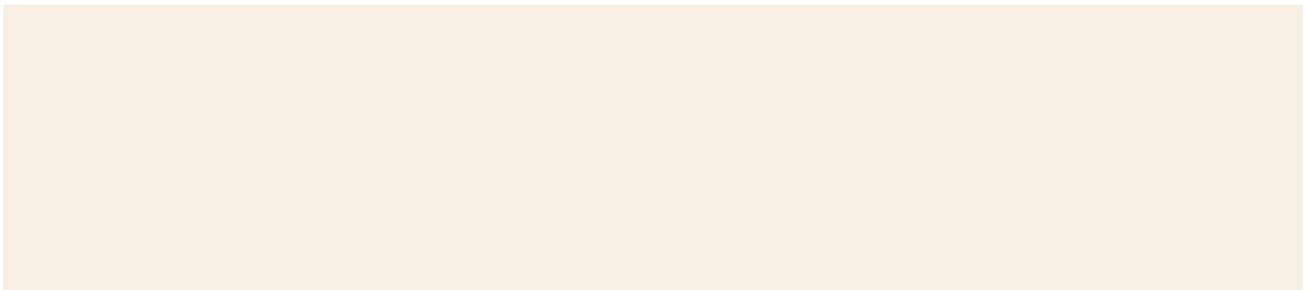
Getting Present in Your Life

Have you ever felt like you were running on "auto-pilot" just trying to get through the day, only to wake up and do it all again? Have you ever said you are "so busy" in your life? These are symptoms of a loss of presence. There are simple ways to focus on presence in your life - in fact they are so simple, you might be tempted to think these little changes will not make a difference. You might even be tempted to skip these steps. However, these little steps are necessary for you to feel your best, get control of your time, and make full emotional contact with your passions.

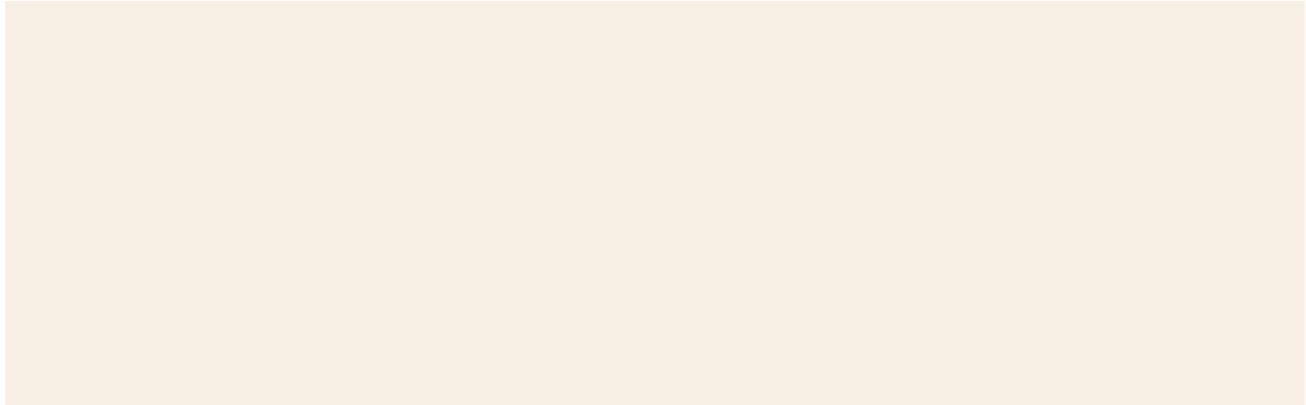
Take a breath. When you breath in, create half of a circle using a pen in the box below. When you breath out, finish the circle. Do this three times. Make each circle bigger as you extend the length of your inhale and exhale. When you are done, observe your circles for a moment and write three words to describe it.



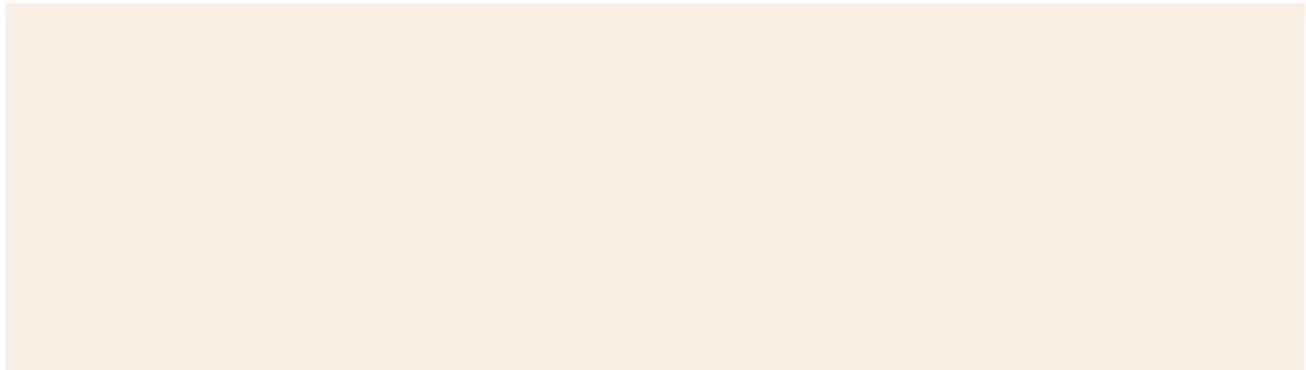
How did you experience your three breaths? Did you feel focused and relaxed? Perhaps you felt a little anxious or worried you were doing it wrong. Maybe you thought about something else you should be doing. There is no right or wrong, so you can be free of self judgements - just write down what you noticed. Making contact with these thoughts and feelings enhances your presence.



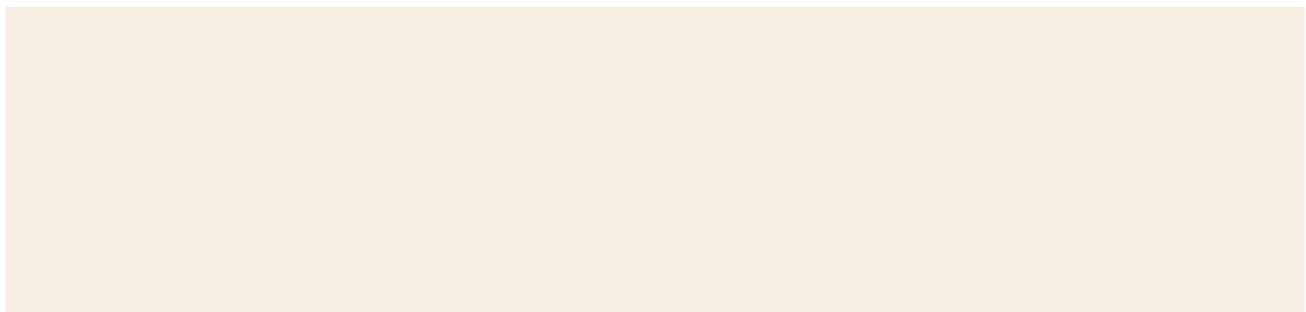
Set your timer for 2 minutes. Take a walk around the room you are in or look around the room. Just notice what you see without judgement. When you are done, make note of what you saw in the room. Use zero judgements. For example, instead of writing "I see a mess on the table," write "I see the breakfast dishes on the table." Instead of writing, "I see my dog needs a bath," write "I see my dog and there is dirt on her." Do you see the difference? If you find you have written a judgement, cross it off and write only what you see. Observing what exists in reality will help you be more present in your life and see things for what they are instead of what you "think" they are. Remember, the goal is to be present in the moment instead of "in your head."



What is your reaction to the exercise of observing without judgement? How do you imagine this can help you?



Pick one place and time you will try this exercise again - at work, with family, while driving, when walking etc. The more you practice observing without judgement, the more contact you will have with the present moment. When you can see objectively what exists, you will be better able to observe your passions without judging them or putting limits on yourself. Be patient - this kind of present moment awareness takes practice. Pick your time now - avoid delaying or putting this off. Write down where will you use this exercise this week. Try it once a day for the week.



Observing Yourself

How do you describe yourself? What are the roles you most identify with? What are your external and internal features? Circle the ones you like most or that you feel are most important to your identity.

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Seeing Yourself as the Context

You as the context for your life is different from the roles you play (worker, parent, friend, significant other, volunteer, community member). Yourself as the context also differs from the ways you describe yourself on the outside (gender, race, sexual orientation, age, ability, etc.). It is not what has happened to you (went to school, remained single/got married/got divorced, experienced trauma, etc.) Yourself as the context even differs from how you describe yourself on the inside (introvert/extrovert, kind, anxious, loving, perfectionist, procrastinator, etc.). Now create a list of what you are if you are not your roles, your attributes, personality or experiences. For example - you are a human being. What else are you?

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Your Passions

What are your passions? Make a list of things you enjoy, get your excited, or hold your attention. We often judge our passions, thinking they are frivolous or unproductive. We might feel guilty about engaging in hobbies or enjoying things which lack financial gain or are outside of the values we were taught as children. Does any passion come to mind which you have let go of or feel guilty about? If you let them go while ago, it might require personal reflection to reacquaint yourself with your passions. Create a list of things you find exciting or interesting. Take your time and write what makes your essence/spirit or core self happy. For example: dancing, writing, reading, swimming, baking, hiking, painting, watching people, participating in fashion, talking to strangers, brushing your hair, singing, etc.

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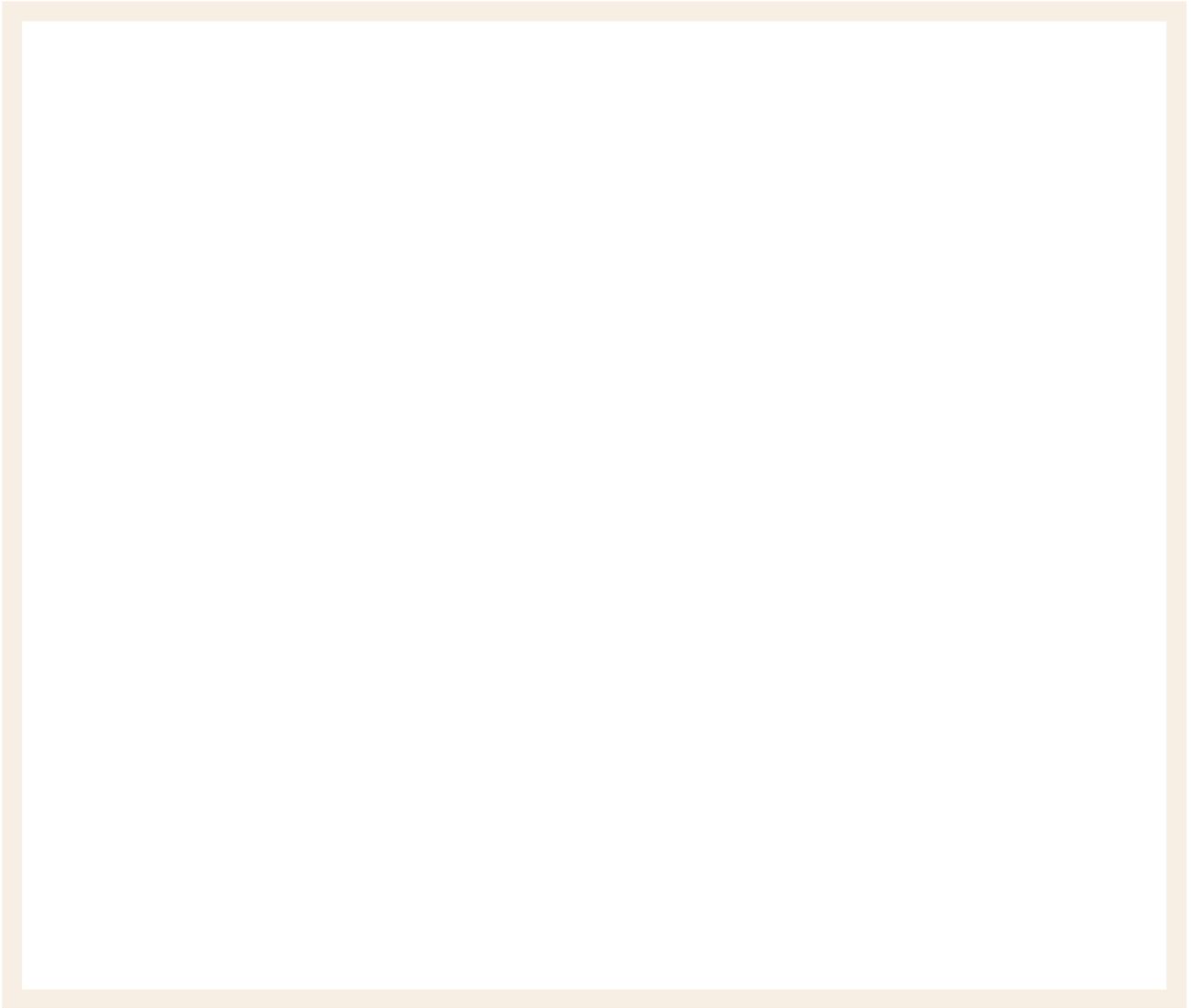
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Visual Expression

Take a few moments to imagine your self as context: essence, spirit, or core self engaging in her passions. Imagine what your essence looks like using lines, shapes and colors. It could range from just one line to a fully fleshed-out, abstract or representational picture. Avoid thinking too long about it and just be spontaneous. Enjoy the process of creating and don't worry about the finished product. You can work in the space below or on separate paper.

Take as much time as you need. However you do it will be great!



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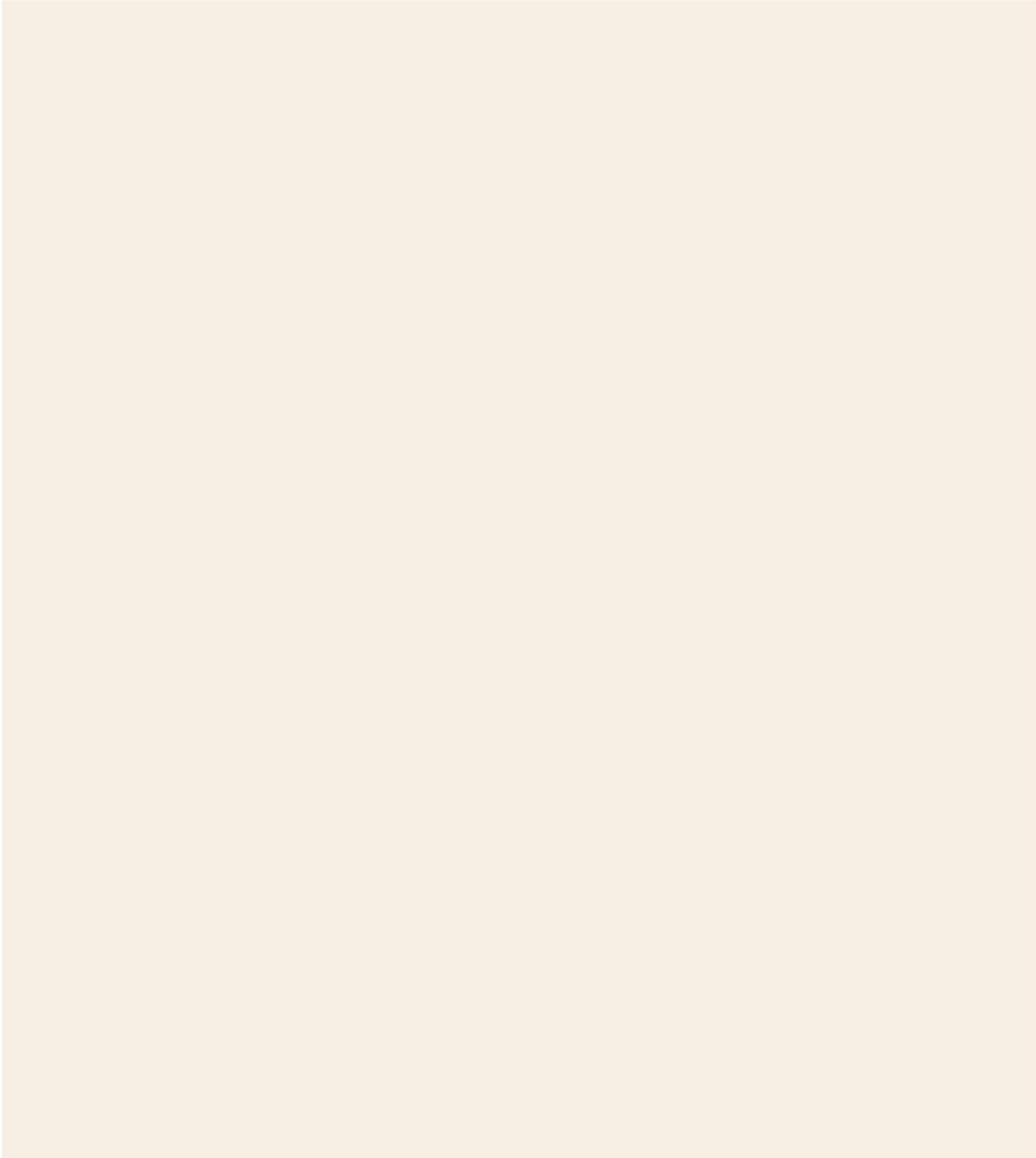
Three words or phrases to describe your art.

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How do you feel?

REFLECTION

Reflect on what you have learned about your presence and self as context. What did you discover about your passions? How will you apply present moment awareness to your life? What is your understanding of yourself as the context of your life? How can thinking this way help you? Appreciate your strengths and celebrate your insights. Avoid worrying about how much more you want to learn or how far you have to go.



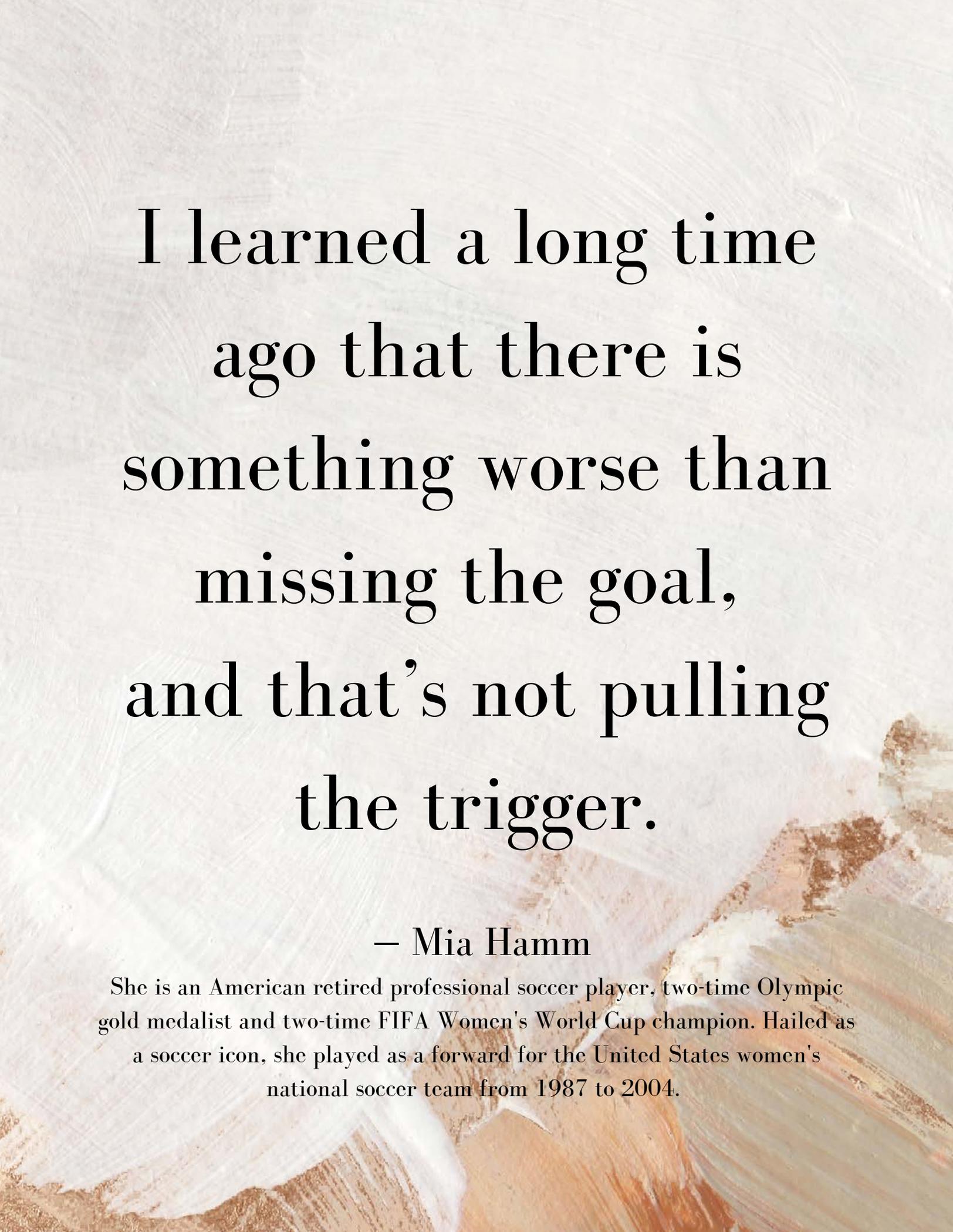
MINDSET

Acceptance & Relationship to Your Thoughts

Acceptance -Acceptance is your ability to see things for what they are. You understand your thoughts as "just thoughts" instead of perceiving your thoughts as "true" or facts. Acceptance is a core concept in changing your self-talk and beliefs about yourself. For example, if you have a negative thought about yourself, it is only a thought. You might be able to find piles of evidence to support your thought, yet a thought is just a thought. It is your brain firing - that is all. Acceptance also helps us be better in relationships by not taking things personally. For example, if someone says something to us, we can allow it to be what it is - just a comment. Acceptance means we avoid distorting the comment into something negative or personal. This one change in your life can completely transform your relationship with your significant other, friends, family and coworkers.

Relationship to your Thoughts - Changing your relationship to thoughts frees you from negative self-talk and low self-esteem. Then you can transform your behaviors for health, recovery, and happiness. Your thoughts stem from your brain - not from your essence, spirit or core self. Thoughts are merely a product of your brain. Make your thoughts work for you instead of being swayed by negative thoughts. Start by observing: say "That is just a thought" each time you notice a thought.

Remember, your mindset includes acceptance of what you are currently thinking and feeling as well as the circumstances you are facing. Acceptance is necessary before attempting to make any changes. Mindset also includes forging a new working relationship with your thoughts and practicing conscious & creative thinking.



I learned a long time
ago that there is
something worse than
missing the goal,
and that's not pulling
the trigger.

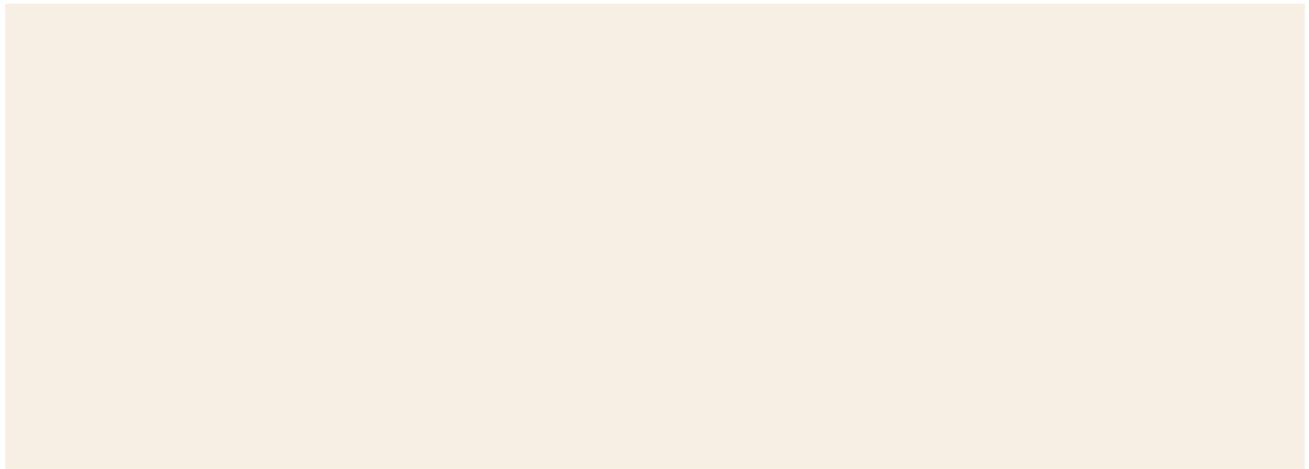
– Mia Hamm

She is an American retired professional soccer player, two-time Olympic gold medalist and two-time FIFA Women's World Cup champion. Hailed as a soccer icon, she played as a forward for the United States women's national soccer team from 1987 to 2004.

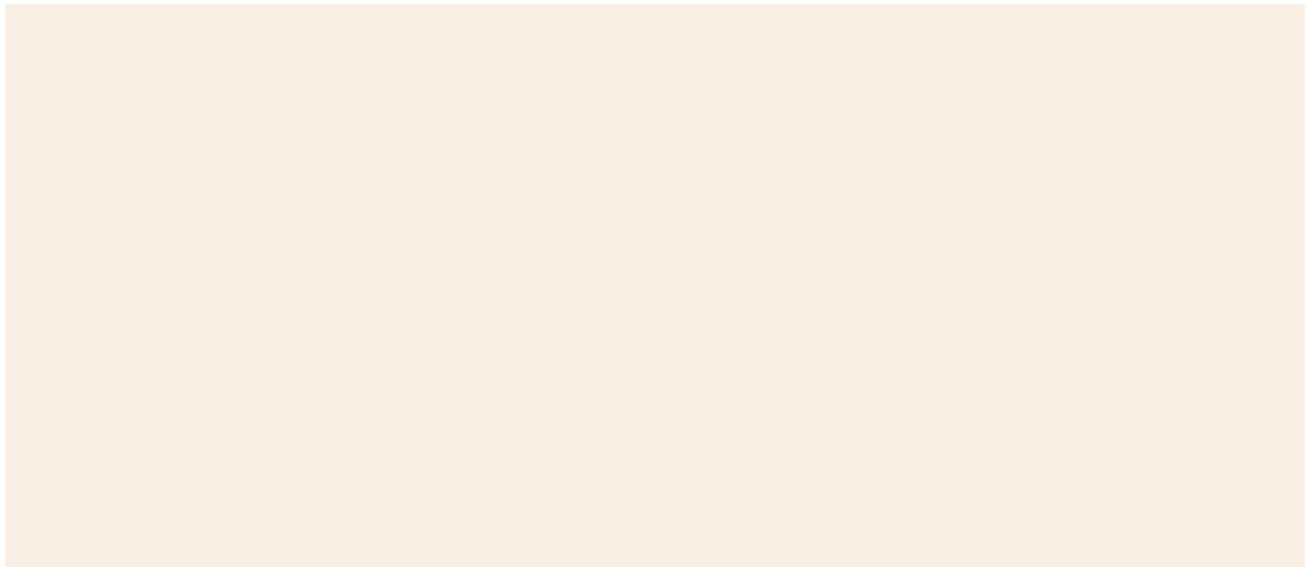
Mindset

Have you ever felt like you think the same thoughts everyday? If so, you are right! According to Dr. Fred Luskin of Stanford University, we have approximately 60,000 thoughts per day—and 90% of these are repetitive! Ready to expand your conscious and creative thoughts?

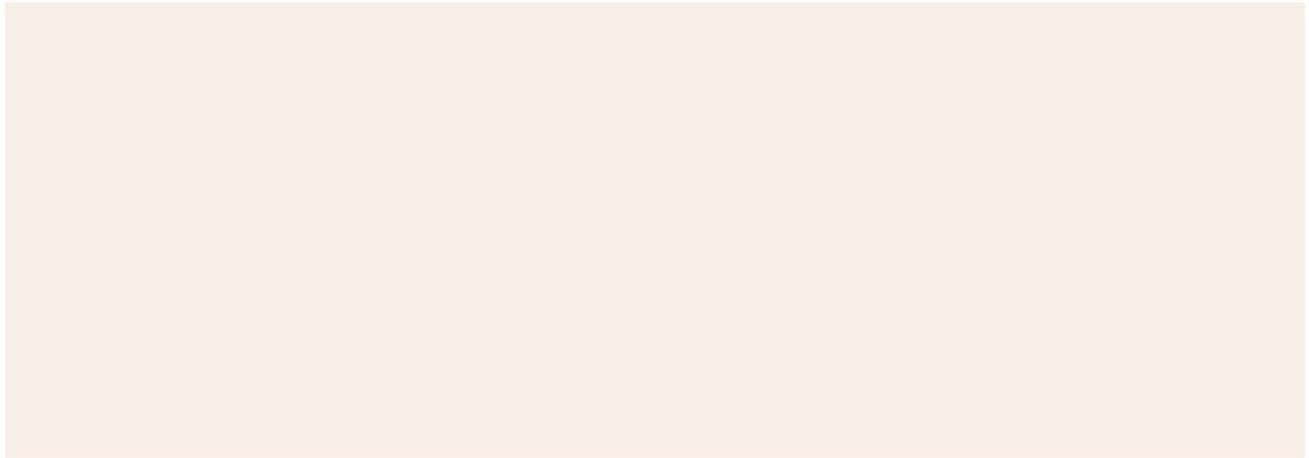
Write down your usual thoughts - the things you think everyday. For example you might notice you have a lot of negative thoughts that you are "busy, bored, anxious, late, undeserving, stupid, ugly or lazy". None of these things are true - they are just your brain firing. You might also have less outwardly negative thoughts, which are just as damaging. These kinds of thoughts maintain negative or stagnant thinking. For example: "I am confused. I don't know enough. That is for other people, not me". These thoughts try to keep things the "same" in your brain and stop you from taking action to link your passion and your goals. Be honest and write your negative, unwanted thoughts as well as the ones that try to "protect" you by keeping you from changing.



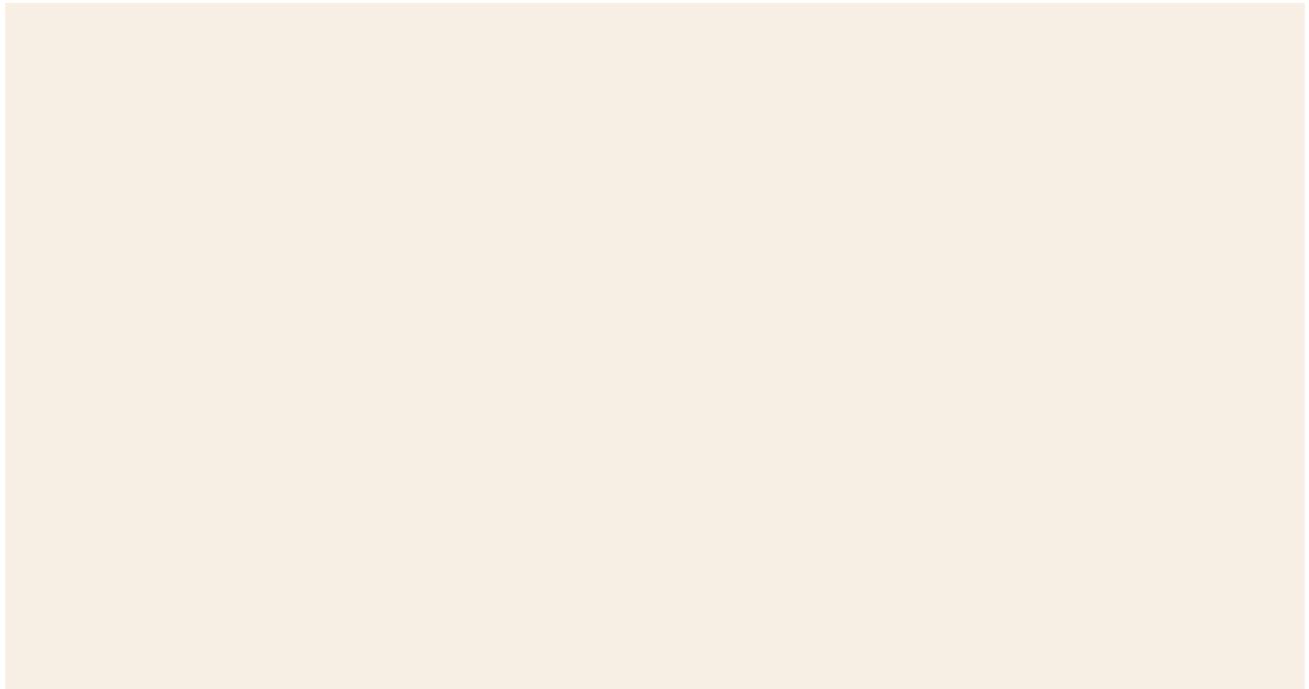
Now write down the positive thoughts you think everyday. Be honest here - these are not the thoughts you *wish* you were thinking - write the positive thoughts you actually think repetitively. This might be thoughts of gratitude, joy, happiness, appreciation, loyalty, pride, abundance, etc.



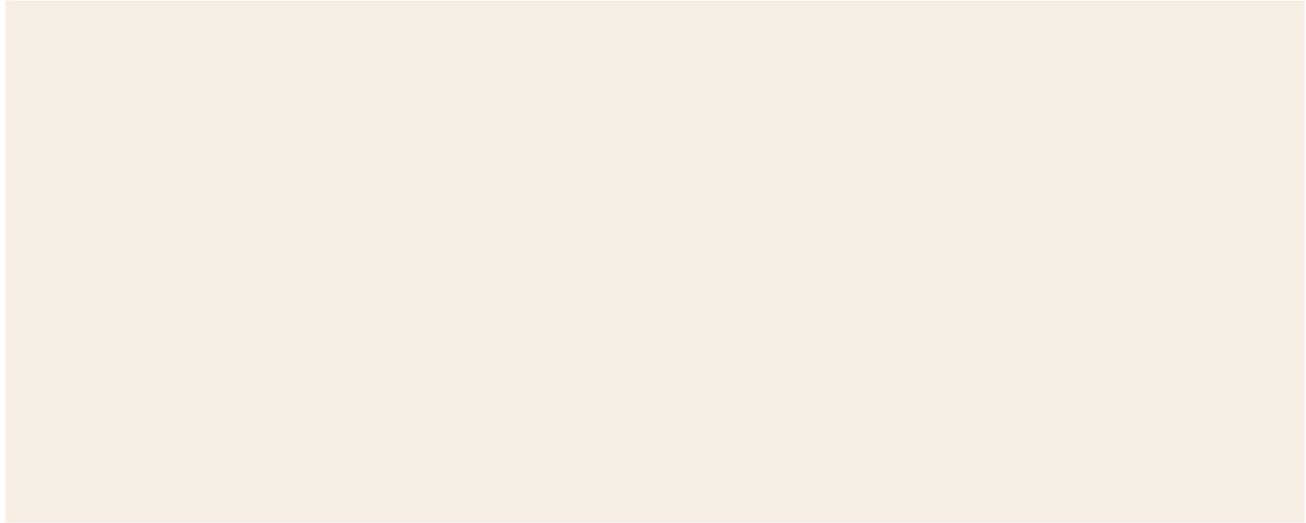
Are you *willing* to deal with your usual thoughts? Willingness means you are able to see your thoughts for what they are, without struggling against them. Accepting your thoughts means you observe your thoughts and agree to work with whatever your brain is giving you. It does *not* mean you like having these thoughts. It does *not* mean you are complacent or quit working to change them. Willingness is part of acceptance - it means you are willing to look realistically at the thoughts your brain is generating. Once you accept what your brain is doing, then you can change your brain. This also means you will have to give up some of your thoughts and ways of interacting. For example, thoughts of "being right" or being a "victim" of circumstance, or not being able to engage in your passions, will have to be challenged and let go. What will you have to give up to take charge of your mindset? List your beliefs, attitudes, and stories you are willing to let go of so you can start linking your goals and your passions.



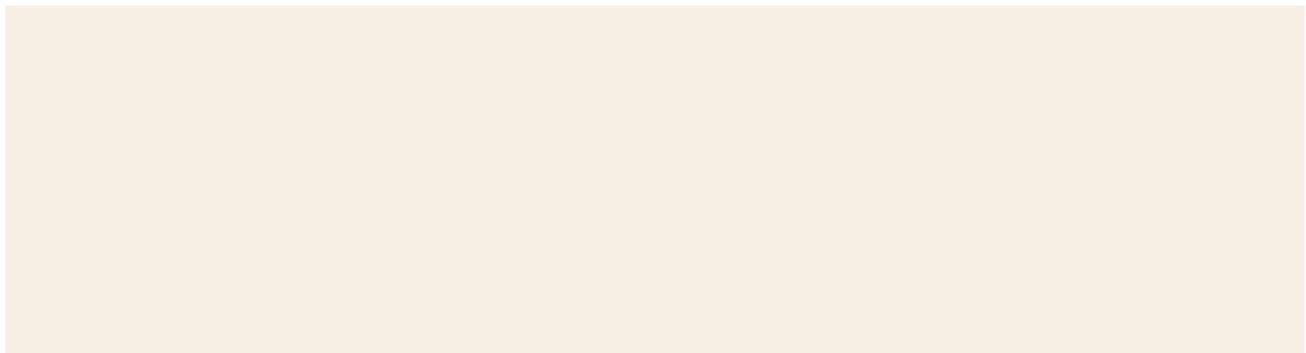
You can slowly add positive thoughts to your mind and that will help you balance the negative feeling left by your unwanted thoughts. List three positive thoughts about your passions that you would like to think and eventually believe each day. For example, you might write "I deserve to spend money on my hobbies" or "I make time for things I love" or "I like what I like and that is ok."



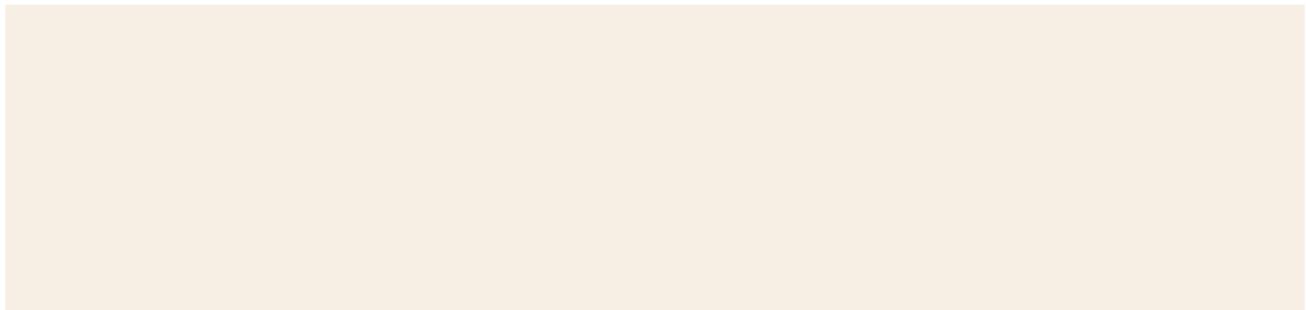
Look at the three thoughts you wrote in the previous question. Now, it's time to elevate these thoughts to make them truly meaningful. For example if you wrote, "I deserve to spend money on my hobbies" you can elevate it to "I value my passion projects and I invest in my passions." If you wrote "I make time for things I love" you can elevate it to "I make and schedule time each week for one thing I love." If you wrote "I like what I like and that is ok" you can elevate that to "I celebrate my authentic passions."



Imagine your highest self, of you living your passions everyday... list 10 or more things you are doing in your ideal, passion-filled day. Put a star next to the ones that you are already doing. If you did not list anything that you are already doing, go back and add an equal number of things that you are already doing that reflect your passions.



Choose or create a statement that will serve as your mantra for connecting your passions with your goals. For example, here is a mantra I use to remind myself of how my goals and passions are intertwined: "I am a woman who gives value to the world by helping women build conscious, creative lives."



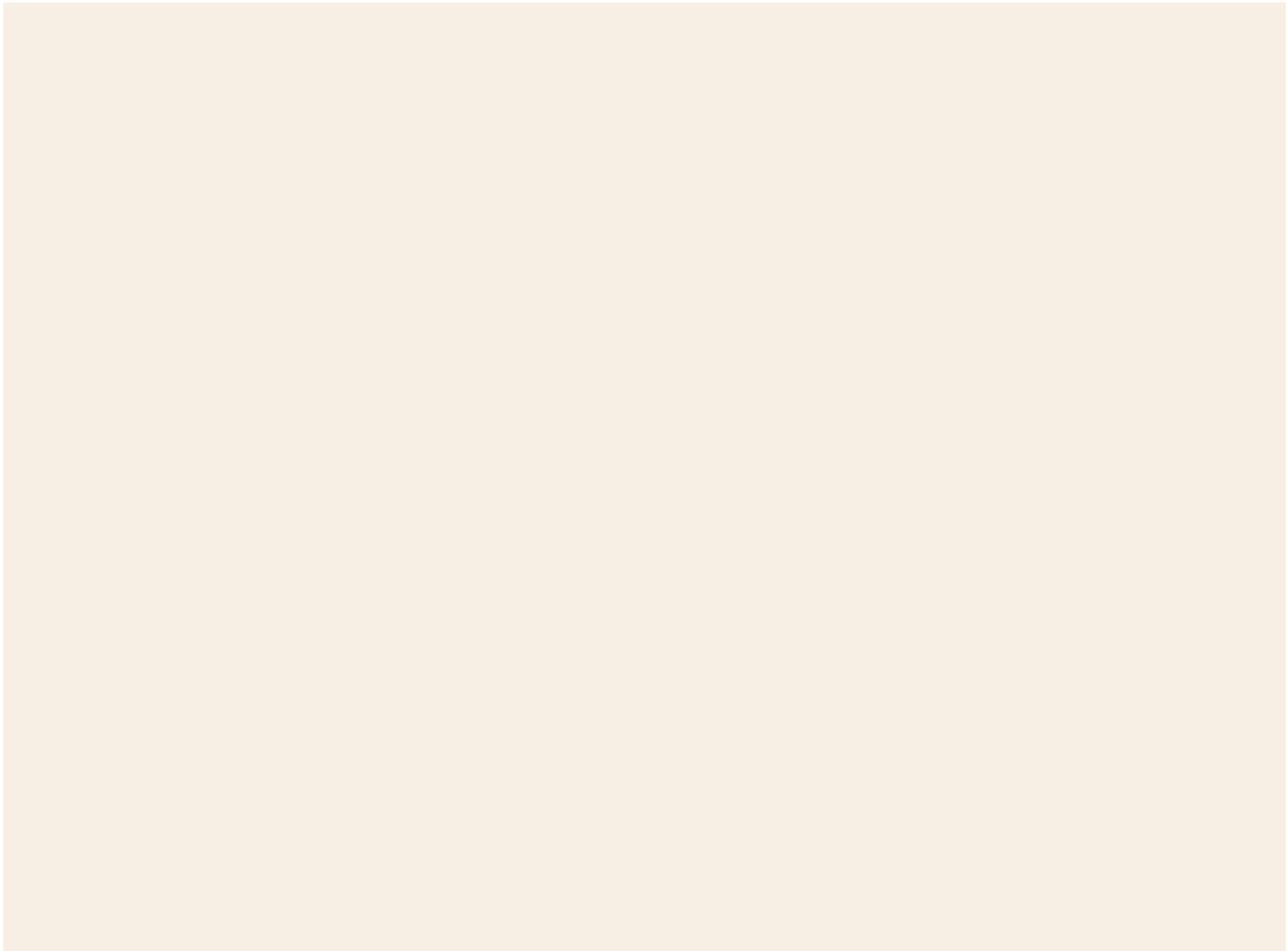
A Positive Relationship with Your Mind

Ever feel like you are fighting with your brain? You might want to accomplish a goal, but your brain seems to stop you. You have probably made a new year's resolution in the past that seemed impossible to keep. Your brain wants things to stay the same and it generates 100 reasons why you don't need to work on your goal. This is normal and nothing has gone wrong when this happens. By changing your relationship to your thoughts, you will realize these thoughts are not true - they are just your brain doing its job - making thoughts. Remember, thoughts are merely a product of your brain. Your brain is doing what it is supposed to do - generate thoughts to keep things predictable and safe.

Start by treating your thoughts as guests in your home. You may like some of them and dislike others, yet all are welcome. Remember, none of these thoughts are "truth". They are merely thoughts and you can start relating to them that way, instead of believing them as facts.

Ready to make your thoughts work for you instead of being at the mercy of the negative thoughts your brain naturally makes?

Exercise: In this exercise, you will be observing your thoughts. Set your timer for three minutes and just write whatever thoughts come into your mind as you relax and focus on your breathing. Sit back and observe your mind doing its job. Each time you write a thought, say out loud or in your mind, "That is a thought." Savor any moments when you are unaware of any thoughts. Do this task with an open and observing mind. Avoid lingering or pushing away any thoughts - just let them ebb and flow.

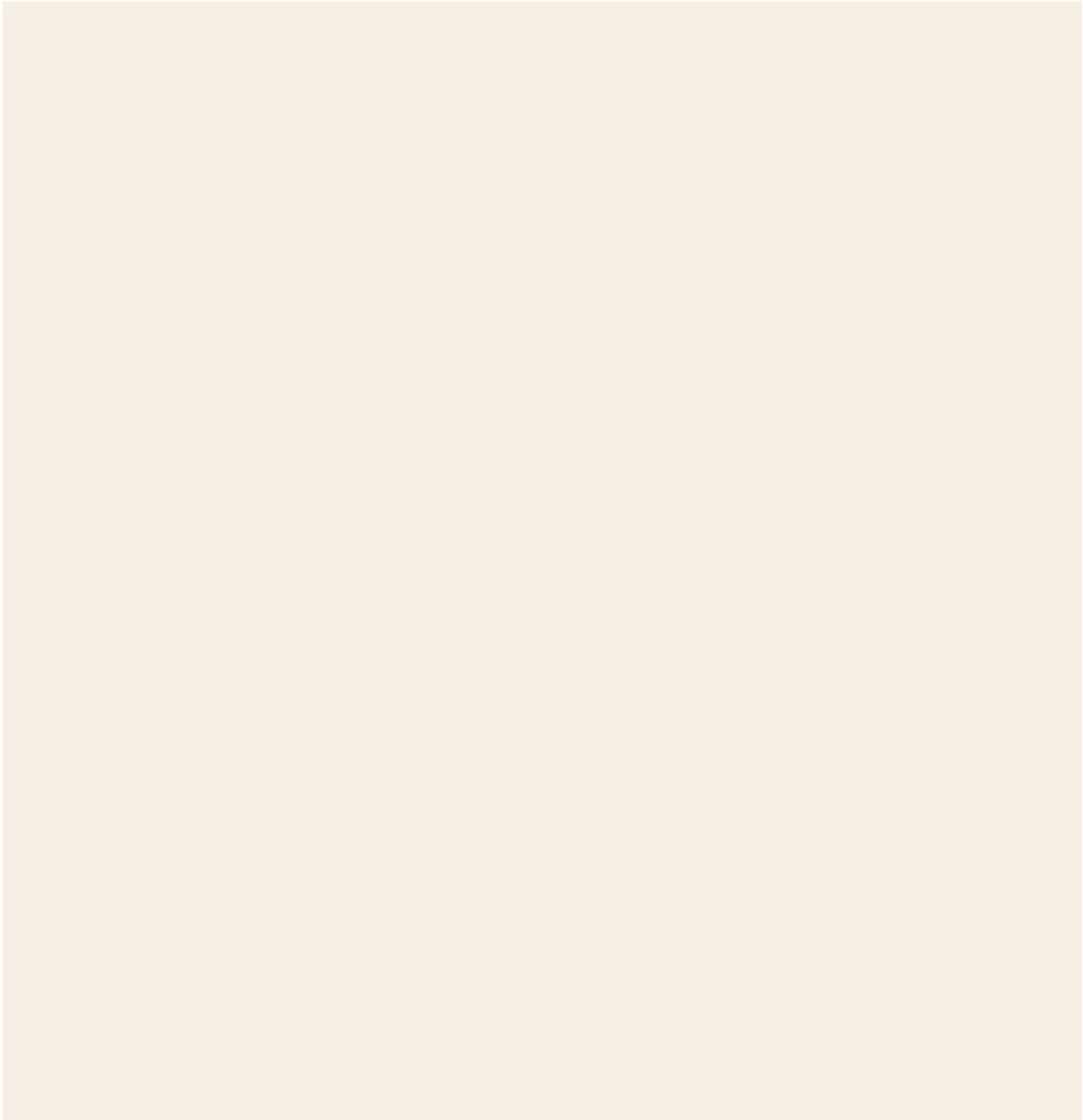


Observing your Thoughts

What did you notice as you observed your mind? Were you able to observe your thoughts or did you get wrapped up in thinking about the content of your thoughts? Were you able to remain accepting or did you have judgmental thoughts such as "I am doing this wrong" or "This is difficult"?

There is no right or wrong way to observe your thoughts and it will take practice to change your relationship to your thoughts. Write your observations of what it was like to observe your thoughts.

Keep practicing the exercise of observing your thoughts any time you have a free minute or two when you are waiting in line, before sleep or in the morning.



Visual Expression

Create an image of your mind. Use lines, shapes and colors to reflect and observe what your mind tends to do. It could range from just one line to a fully fleshed-out, abstract or representational picture. Avoid thinking too long about it and just be spontaneous. Enjoy the process of creating and don't worry about the finished product. Add in words as necessary to show your usual thoughts.

However you do it will be great!



Title:

Three words or phrases to describe your art.

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How do you feel?

REFLECTION

Reflect on what you have learned about your mindset and how you changed your relationship with your thoughts. Notice your thoughts, feelings and actions when they are in or out of alignment. Avoid judging yourself for what you did or did not do this week. How did you feel observing your mind? Did any pleasure or discomfort arise? How can you be compassionate towards yourself when judgments or unwanted thoughts emerge?

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PURPOSE

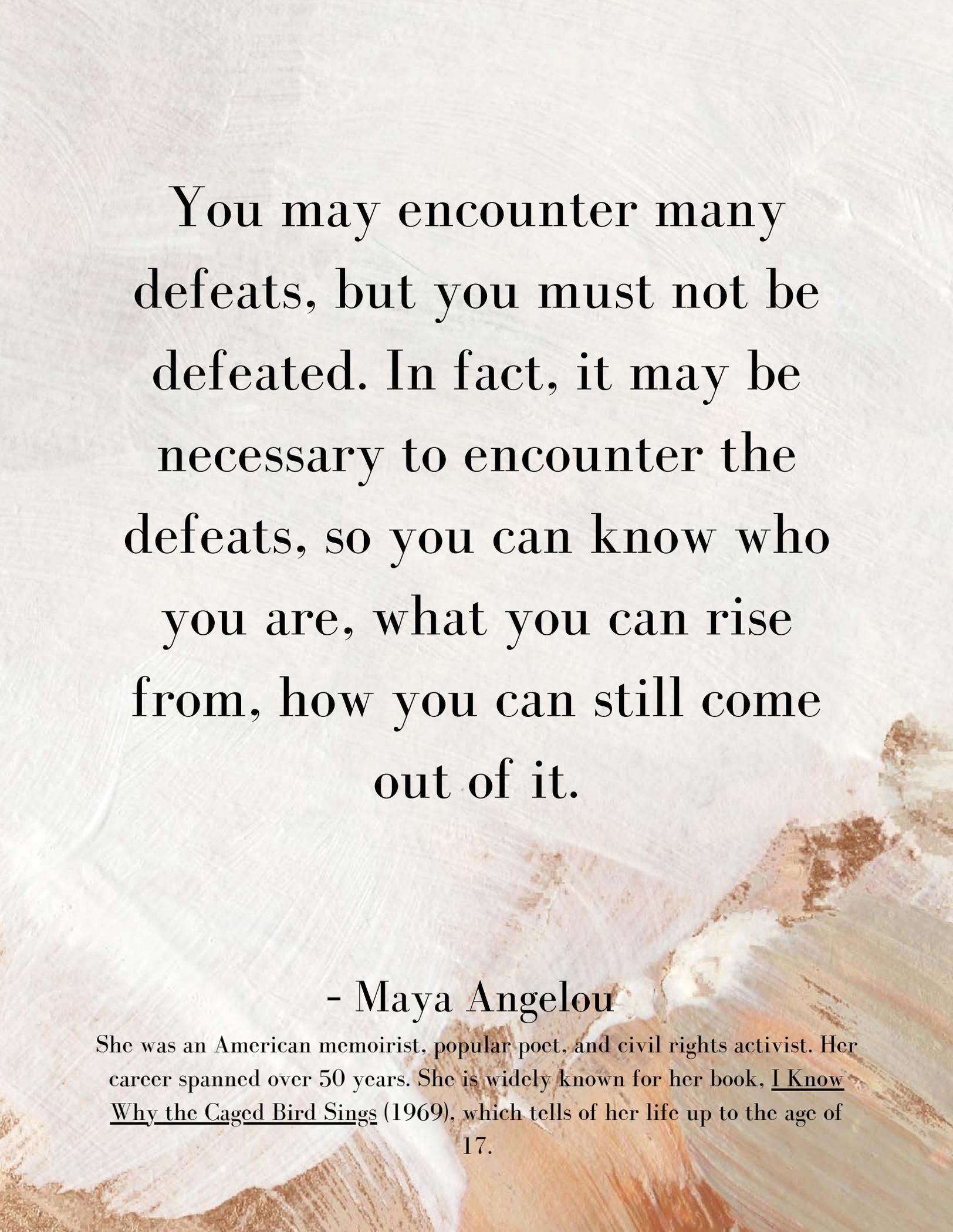
Your Values & Committed Actions

Your purpose includes both your personal values and the action steps you take in alignment with your values. It is through your purpose that you engage with your life, choose what is most important, and make committed actions to demonstrate your values to yourself and others.

Purpose - your chosen presence and actions in the world. Your purpose is something you decide based on what you enjoy, have an interest in pursuing, and have an ability/aptitude for doing.

Values - what you decide is most important to you, You have values in many areas such as, health, intimate partner relationship, education, family, friendship, parenting, sports, spirituality, work/vocation, community, creativity, service, school, personal development, hobbies, etc. Your values are what YOU want to bring to each area and has nothing to do with what others are doing or even if they like what you are doing. For example you might value honesty in work. When you come across someone being dishonest at work, your values help you commit to acting honestly, even if you feel resentful, angry or tempted to become dishonest when you work with a dishonest person.

Committed Actions - how you demonstrate your values through your actions. Your actions directly reflect your values. Committed action is how you show your values to yourself and the world. Notice this is action, not thoughts or beliefs. If you truly believe in your values, they will show in your behavior. For example, if you truly believe in your health, then your behavior will show it though healthy food choices, exercise, managing your mind, learning what you need to know, practicing body care, and investing time and money in your health. If you only think or talk about your health, then it is a wish, instead of a value and committed action.



You may encounter many
defeats, but you must not be
defeated. In fact, it may be
necessary to encounter the
defeats, so you can know who
you are, what you can rise
from, how you can still come
out of it.

- Maya Angelou

She was an American memoirist, popular poet, and civil rights activist. Her career spanned over 50 years. She is widely known for her book, I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings (1969), which tells of her life up to the age of

Your Values

What is most important to you right now? Avoid answers that reflect what was important in the past or what you think you should value. List nine of your top values and write how YOU want to be in each area.

Remember, your values have nothing to do with anyone else or wanting them to act a certain way. For example, you might value parenting and desire to be compassionate. That means you let compassion guide your behavior choices, even when your child or co-parent lacks compassion. You are not asking your child or partner be compassionate - values are only about you and the way you want to act. Here are some value ideas: health, intimate partner relationship, education, family, friendship, parenting, sports, spirituality, work/vocation, community, creativity, service, school, personal development, hobbies, etc.

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Values and Passions

It is time to dig deep into your passions and link them to your values. Refer back to your list of passions from the section on Presence and compare them to your values on the previous page. Create six areas where you link one of your values with one or more of your passions. For example, the value domain of creativity, you can list your passions in the area of creativity such as writing, sewing and drawing. There can be many overlapping categories. You can include areas where you are already combining your values and passions. When you are done, pick three that are most interesting to you. After that, narrow it down to one value you want to focus on. Obviously, you will work on other values throughout the year, but pick only one combination to focus on for the next exercise.

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GOALS

You probably already know your goals need to be SMART.

Specific - aim for precision.

Measurable - how you will know you have accomplished the goal.

Achievable - the goal is within the realm of possibility.

Relevant - the goal must relate to what is important to you.

Timely - there is a specific time by which you will have achieved your goal.

Did you know that to succeed and make your goals more fun and engaging, you need passion and creativity as well? Goals need to be creative, clever, and persistent like EDISON.

Emotional - goals need to link to your emotions and get you excited.

Decisive - commitment to your goal is necessary. Practice clarity and decisiveness. No confusion or indecision.

Integrated - integrate a new goal with your other goals and values.

Sensory - use all your senses to visualize achieving your goal.

Optimistic - use positive thoughts to get excited about your goal.

Now - begin now! Act as if you already accomplished the goal and get the good feelings now.

SMART Committed Action

It is time to put your value-passion combination into action. What do you want to accomplish this year in your value-passion area? It is time to make a goal. Observe your mind: it might want you to be confused, think you still need more information, or be unsure if you made the right choice.

Time to create your extraordinary committed action this year that reflects your one combined value-passion. Write about each area to show how you will achieve your goal using the SMART strategy.

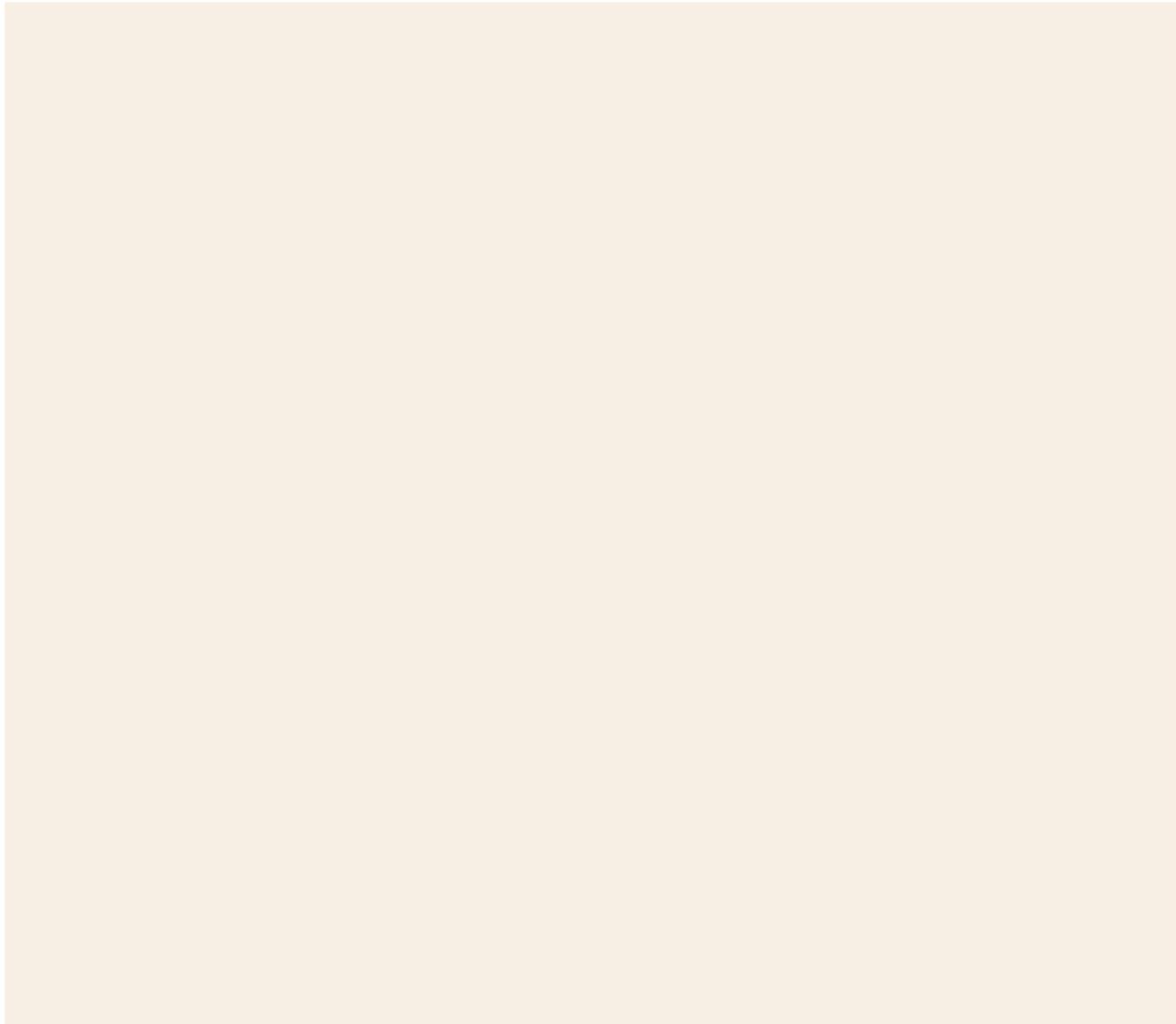
Specific - aim for precision.

Measurable - how you know you have accomplished the goal.

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Relevant -the goal must relate to what is important to you.

Timely - there is a specific time by which you will have achieved your goal.



EDISON Committed Action

Here is where the creative magic happens! Use the EDISON strategy to describe your emotional connection to your goal. This additional step will allow you to make an emotional connection to your committed actions. It's ok if you after doing this, you modify your goal to get it truly aligned with your passions.

Emotional - goals need to link to your emotions and get you excited.

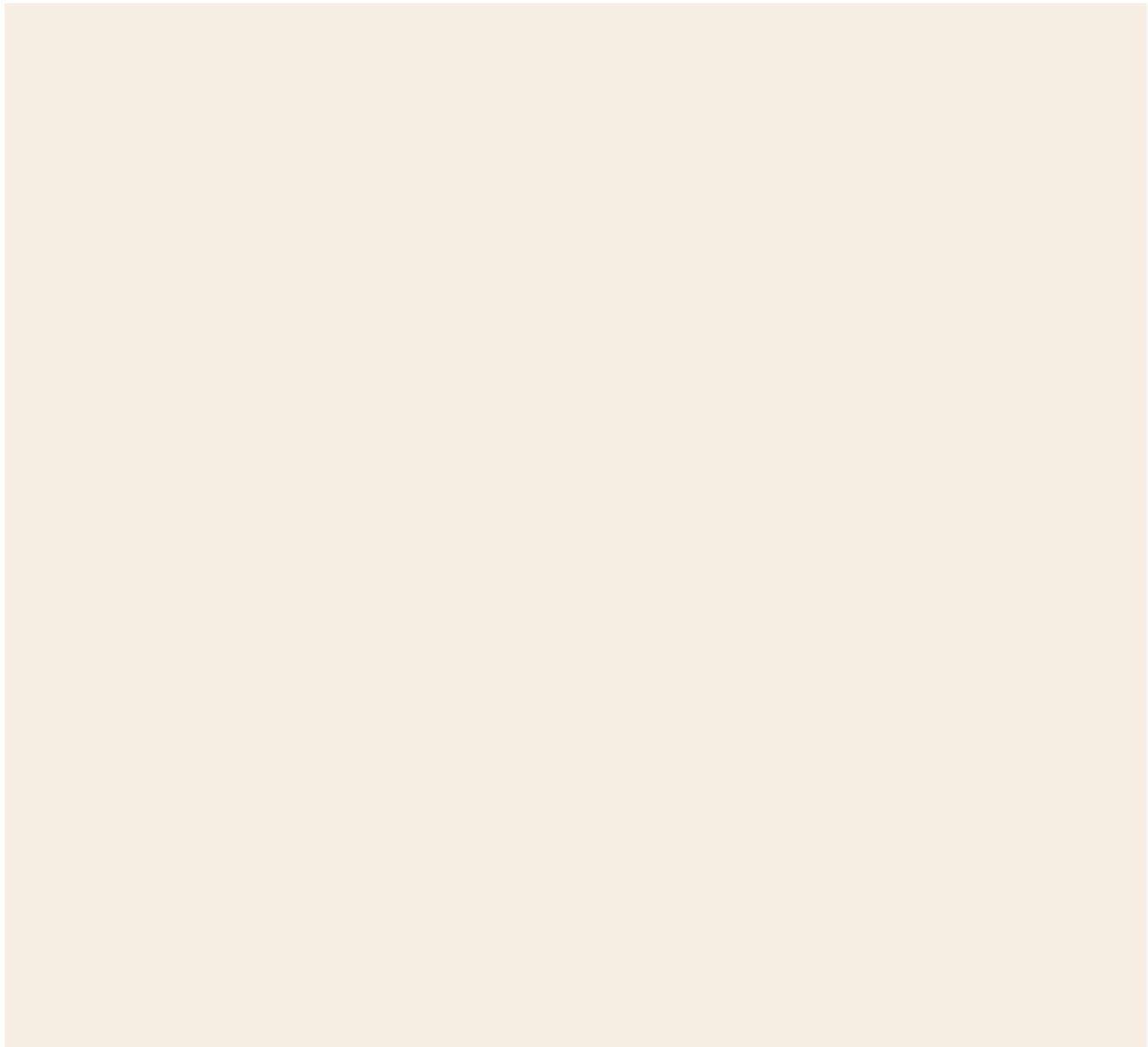
Decisive - commitment to your goal is necessary. Practice clarity and decisiveness. No confusion or indecision.

Integrated - integrate a new goal with your other goals, habits and values.

Sensory - use all your senses to visualize achieving your goal. How can you see, taste, hear, smell and touch the goal in your mind?

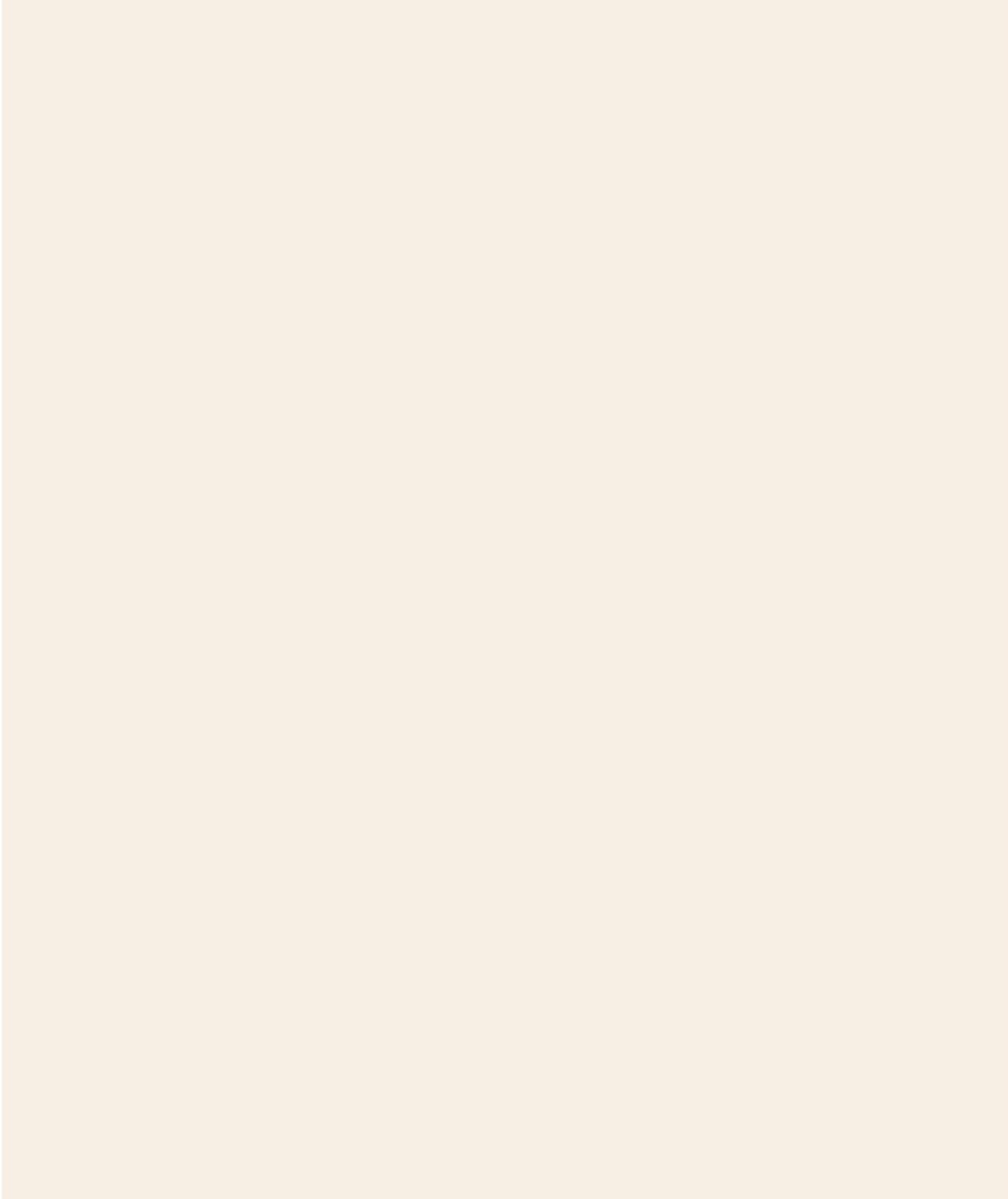
Optimistic - use positive thoughts to get excited about your goal. Use your mantras.

Now - begin now! Act as if you already accomplished the goal and get the good feelings now.



Making Committed Action

It is time to put your value-passion combination into action. Review the SMART and EDISON strategies you just wrote about and condense your one value-passion goal for the year. Narrow it down to one sentence and write it here.

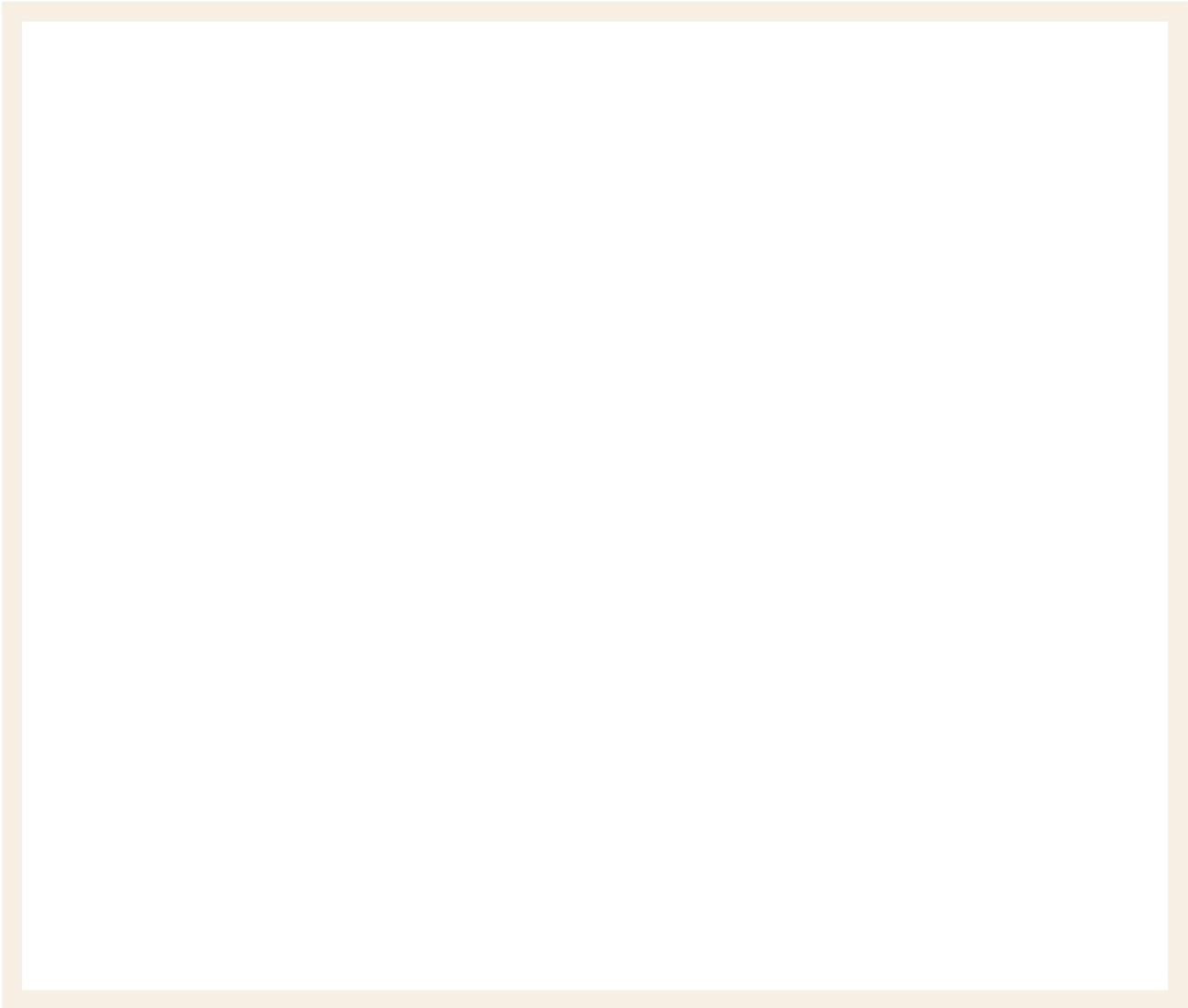


Visual Expression

Take a few moments to reflect on what it was like practice your goal setting strategy to link your passion and your value. Use lines, shapes and colors to show what accomplishing this goal will feel

like one year from now. You could also make a collage to integrate more sensory images and experiences. It could range from just one line to a fully fleshed-out, abstract or representational picture. Avoid thinking too long and be spontaneous. This visual expression will help you access the Emotional and Sensory aspects of the EDISON model.

Enjoy the process and don't worry about the finished product. However you do it will be great!



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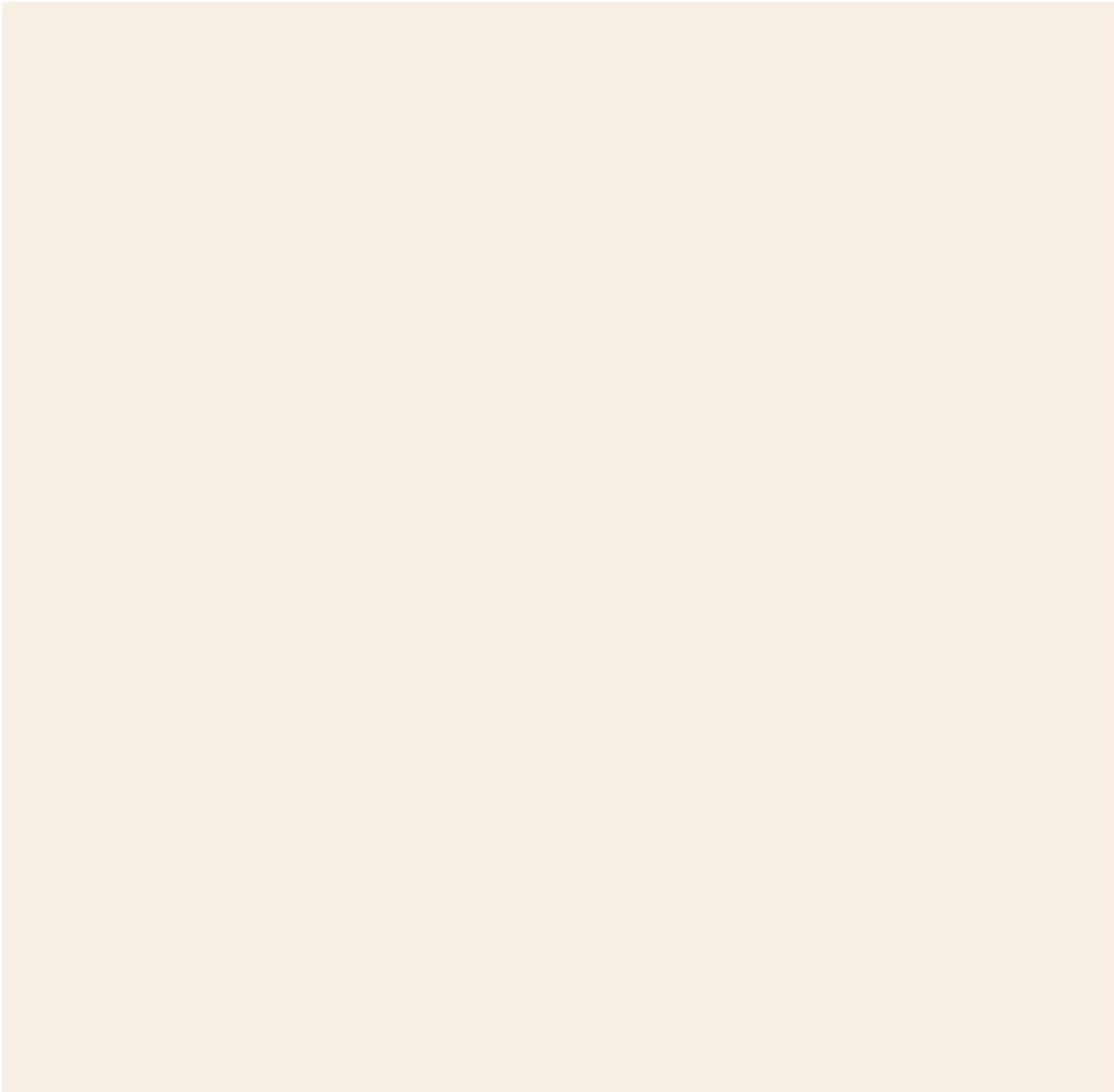
Three words or phrases to describe your art.

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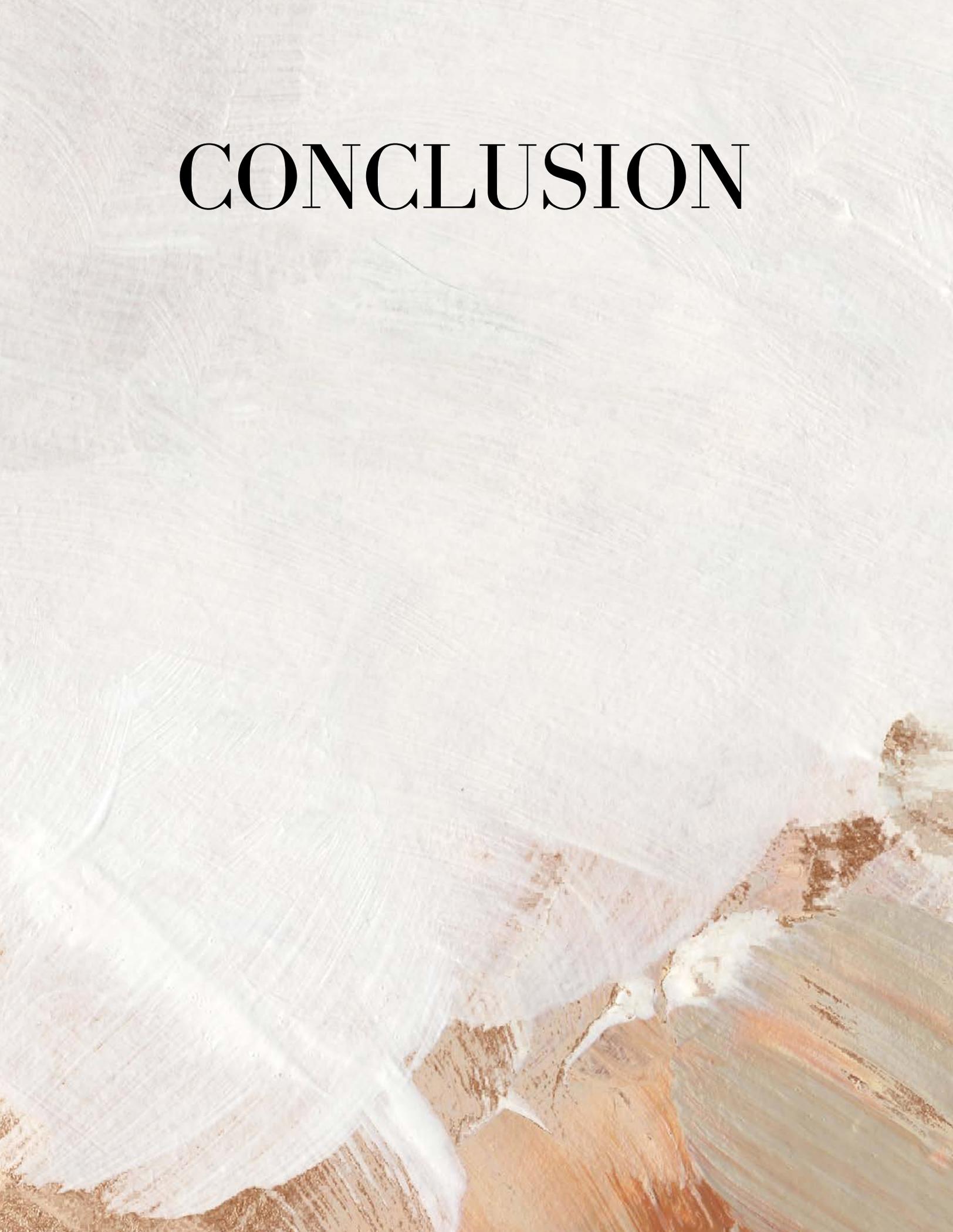
How do you feel?

REFLECTION

Reflect on what you have learned from this month about changing your relationship to your thoughts, your passions, your values and your goals. Notice your thoughts, feelings and actions in alignment with your values. How did you feel paying such close attention to your thoughts and your values? Are you getting excited to implement your goal? Are you feeling doubt? Both are normal - nothing has gone wrong. Keep moving forward and persist even when you feel "unmotivated" or uninspired. You can count on your plan and the daily discipline of your committed actions.



CONCLUSION

The background of the page is an abstract, textured composition. The upper portion is dominated by a light, off-white color with fine, horizontal, brush-like strokes that create a sense of movement and depth. Below this, the texture transitions into a more complex, layered appearance. The lower half features a mix of warm, earthy tones including shades of beige, tan, and brown, interspersed with streaks of a muted, dusty green. The overall effect is that of a layered, possibly painted or marbled surface, with the white area appearing to peel or separate from the darker, more textured base.

Celebrate!

Recognize and celebrate your presence, mindset and purpose this month. Celebration creates motivation for your next level of growth and change. You can celebrate anything you accomplished, a time you remained calm under stress, your self care, a new way of relating to your thoughts, your increased time in the present moment, your creative expressions, your actions in line with your values - anything you like can be celebrated!



1

I am celebrating my presence...



2

I am celebrating my mindset...



3

I am celebrating my purpose...



4

How I am celebrating this month...

PASSIONS & GOALS

You have completed a month of aligning your passion and your goals! Congratulations on all your progress! What new thoughts will you keep? What new actions will you take to accomplish your goals?

I am delighted you joined this community of Modern Creative Women who are living more compassionately and making the world a better place. Living your values and passions is part of creating a better world. Imagine if everyone focused on this...the world would be a happier place indeed!

If you are excited about continuing this work, reach out to The Art Therapy Center of San Francisco for more workshops. Consider the VIP package, the Women's Search for Meaning signature packages, or individual psychotherapy and mentoring.

It was my pleasure to share the evidence-based information which has helped people all around the world. I look forward to hearing from you about what you learned in this workshop. It is my wish that you continue to engage in the process of self-discovery with curiosity and compassion!



Amy Backos, PhD, ATR-BC
Licensed Psychologist & Board Certified Art Therapist



RESOURCES

01

Art Therapy Center of San Francisco

Center for creative expression, psychological wellness, positive psychology and value-based living. Email for complementary 20 minute consultation. Amy@amybackos.com

02

Instagram: @dramybackos

Join me each Friday at noon PST while I gently guide you to strategies to live a meaningful and joyful life.

03

Book: PTSD and Art Therapy

By Dr. Amy Backos

A book about using creative process and thinking to overcome traumas. Includes a history of trauma therapy and approaches to trauma treatment as well as art interventions and personal reflections.

04

Book: ACT Art Therapy

By Dr. Amy Backos

A book about how to live a value-based life using mindfulness, creativity, and connecting to your highest self.

