



# The Heroine's Journey

The Modern Creative Woman

So many women having taken the  
hero's journey, only to find it  
personally empty and dangerous  
for humanity.

Women emulated the male heroic  
journey because there were no  
other images to emulate.

— Maureen Murdock

Maureen Murdock is a Jungian therapist and author of [The Heroine's Journey: Woman's Quest for Wholeness.](#)

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# Presence - Mindset - Purpose

1

## **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.

2

## **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.

# 3

## **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.

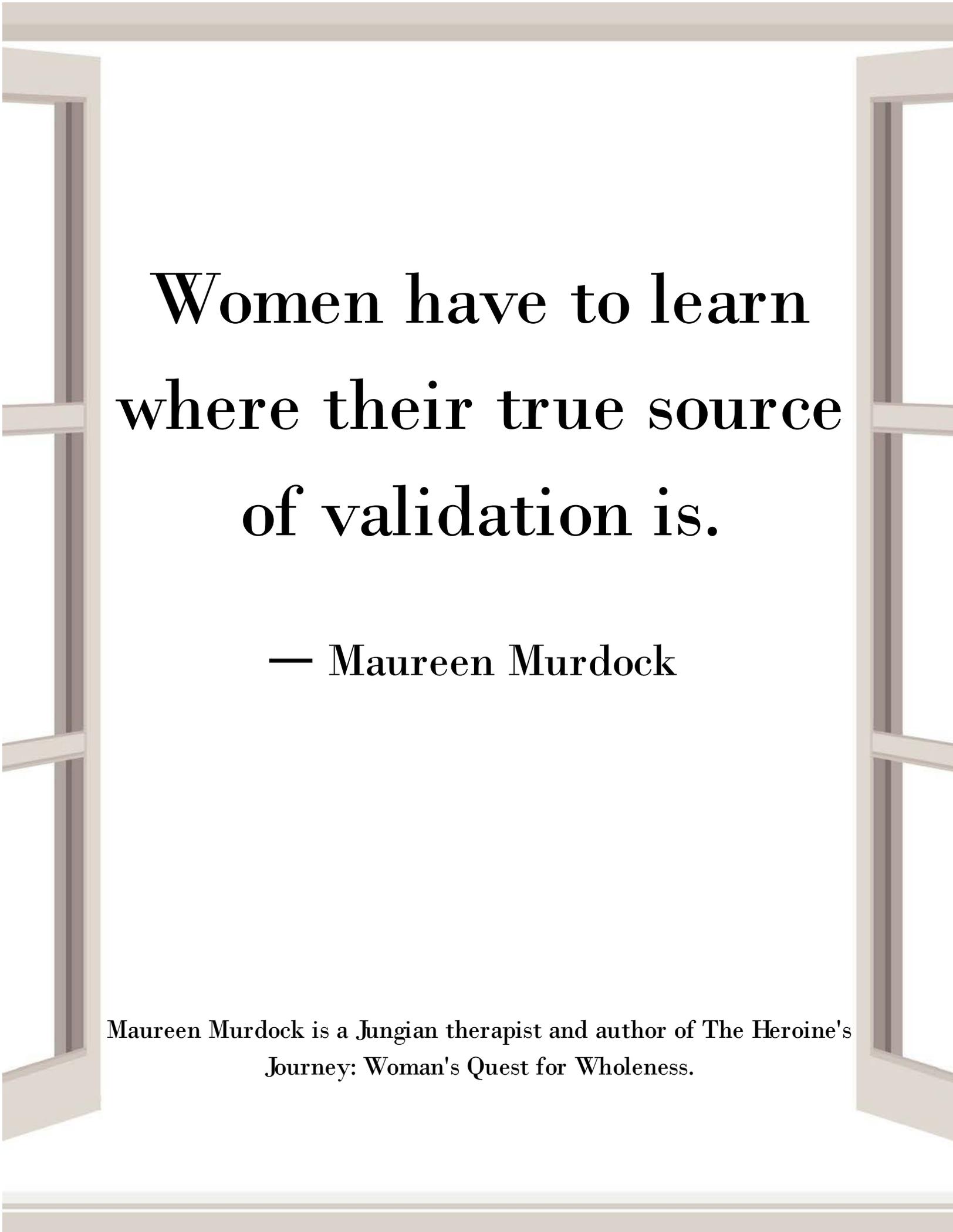
# PRESENCE

## **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.



**Women have to learn  
where their true source  
of validation is.**

**— Maureen Murdock**

Maureen Murdock is a Jungian therapist and author of *The Heroine's Journey: Woman's Quest for Wholeness*.

# INTENTIONS

Are you ready to take the heroine's journey? What are you hoping to get out of this class? What would you like more of in your life? What would you like less of in your life?

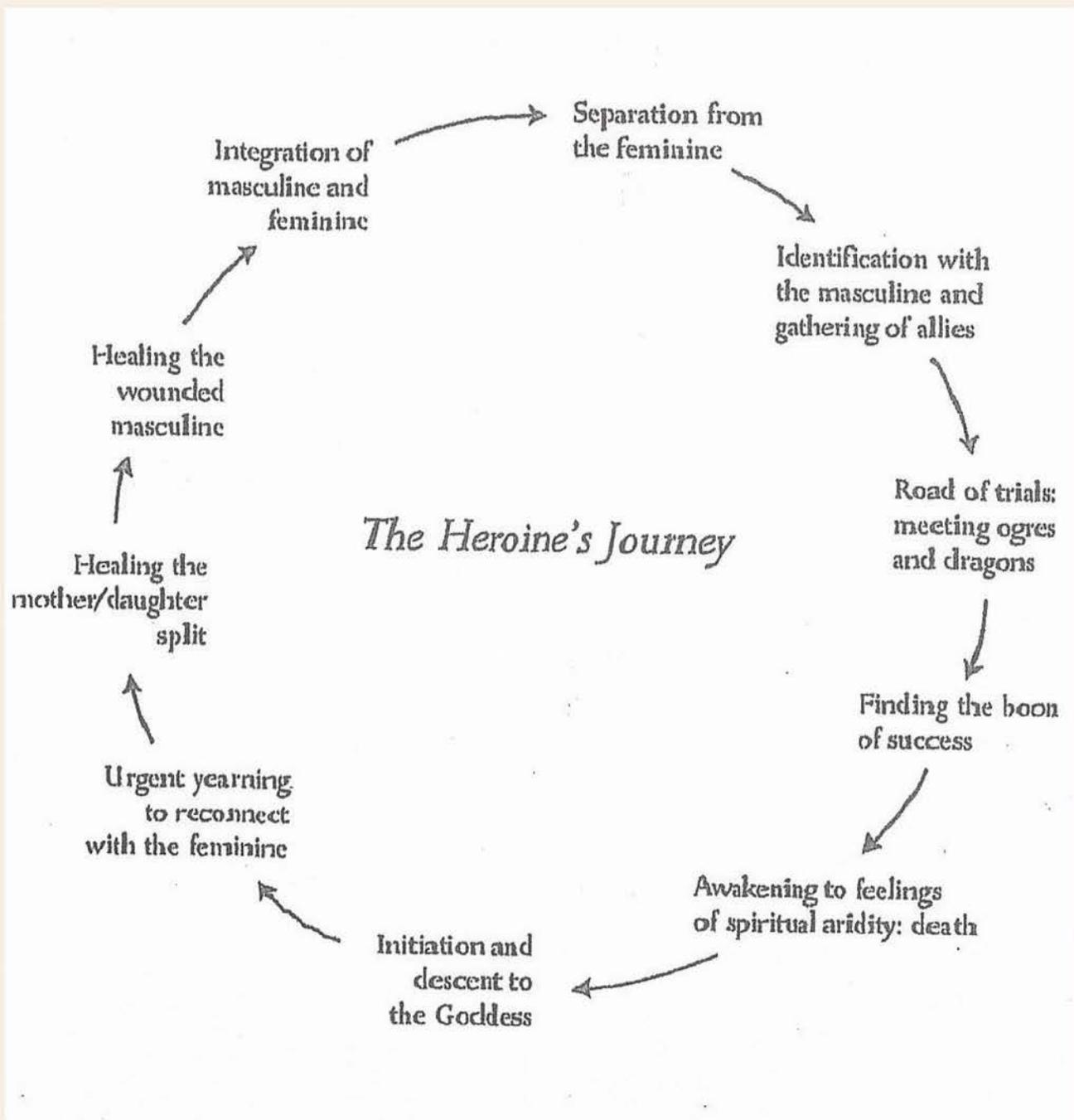
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# The Heroine's Journey

<https://heroinejourneys.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/heroine-journey-arc-1a-crop-e1426605586958.jpg>

The journey begins at the top right with the "separation from the feminine" and moves clockwise. There can be variations on how the journey transpires and there can be many trials and crises, successes, and frustrations. The heroine faces two important challenges - the first is external striving and the second is an inner healing to become balanced and authentic.



# The Heroine's Journey

Here are the phases of the heroine's journey. Don't worry if your story is in a different order, includes more moments of crisis, or simply unfolds differently. The main point is that the heroine rejects the feminine, faces trials that are external as well as internal. The resolution phase begins when she has a desire to heal herself and become her authentic self.

- 1. Heroine separates from the feminine.** The “feminine” is often a mother/mentor figure or a societally prescribed feminine/marginalized/outsider.
- 2. Identification with the masculine and gathering of allies.** The heroine embraces a new way of life. This often involves choosing a path that is different than the heroine’s prescribed societal role, gearing up to “fight” an organization/role/group that is limiting the heroine’s life options, or entering some masculine/dominant-identity defined sphere.
- 3. Road/trials and meeting ogres & dragons.** The heroine encounters trials and meets people who try to dissuade the heroine from pursuing their chosen path, or who try to destroy the heroine.
- 4. Experiencing the boon of success.** The heroine overcomes the obstacles in their way. (This is typically where the hero’s journey ends.)
- 5. Heroine awakens to feelings of spiritual aridity/death.** The heroine’s new way of life (attempting the masculine/dominant identity) is too limited. Their success in this new way of life is either temporary, illusory, shallow, or requires a betrayal of self over time.
- 6. Initiation & discount to the goddess.** The heroine faces a crisis of some sort in which the new way of life is insufficient, and the heroine falls into despair. All of the masculine/dominant-group strategies have failed them.
- 7. Heroine urgently yearns to reconnect with the feminine.** The heroine wants to, but is unable to return to their initial limited state/position.
- 8. Heroine heals the mother/daughter split.** The heroine reclaims some of their initial values, skills, or attributes (or those of others like them) but now views these traits from a new perspective.
- 9. Heroine heals the wounded masculine within.** The heroine makes peace with the “masculine” approach to the world as it applies to them.
- 10. Heroine integrates the masculine & feminine.** In order to face the world/future with a new understanding of themselves and the world/life, the heroine integrates the “masculine” and “feminine” qualities/perspectives. This permits the heroine to see through binaries and to interact with a complex world that includes the heroine but is also larger than their personal lifetime or their geographical/cultural milieu.

<https://heroinejourneys.com/heroines-journey/>

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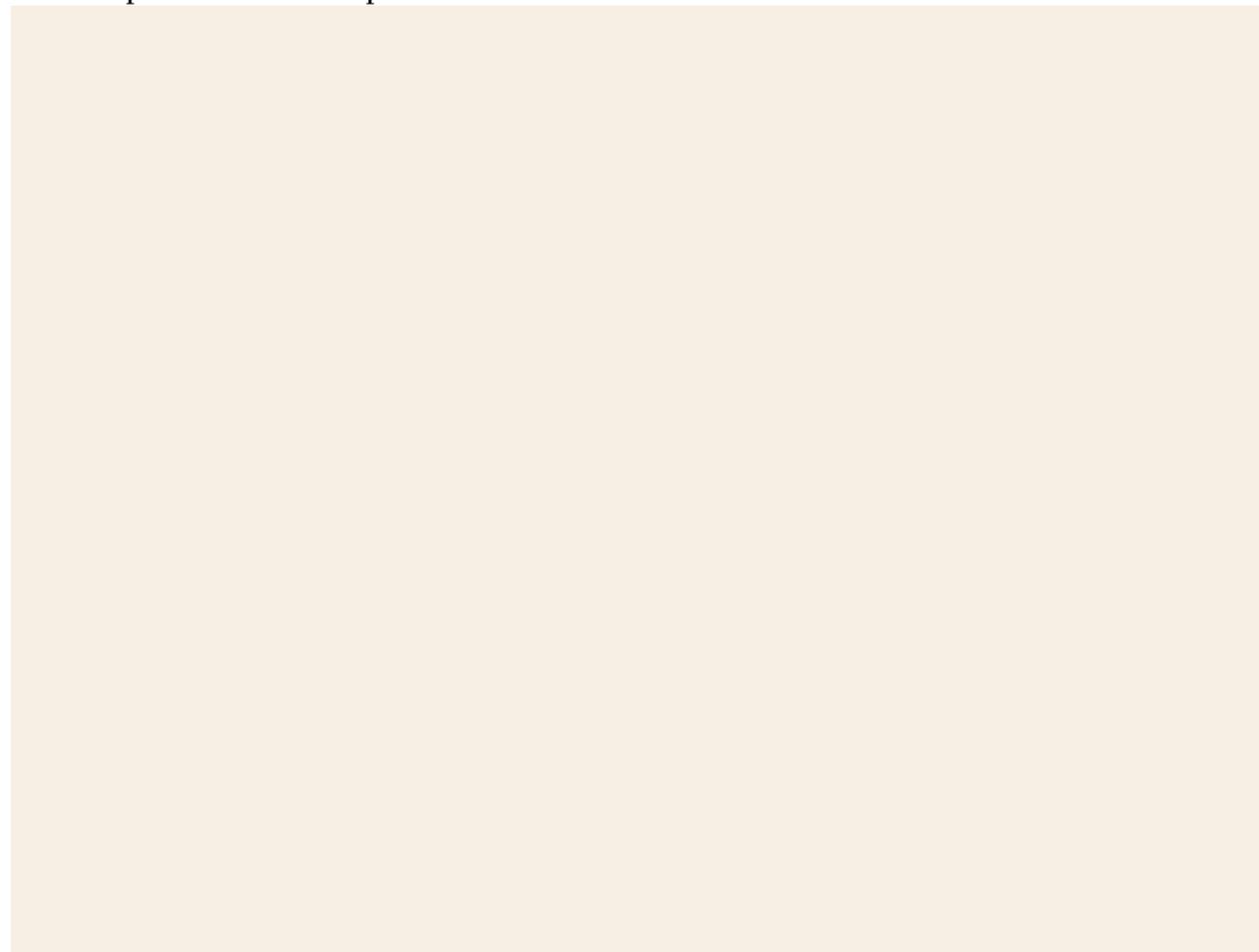
# Telling Your Story

Going on the Heroine's Journey is a powerful way to balance your personal power and authority (masculine traits) with your intuition and emotions (feminine traits). This journey requires your willingness to see your story from the perspective of a heroine. Remember, the Modern Creative Woman is not therapy, but designed for you to learn about positive psychology and creative thinking. If you are struggling with past traumas, please work with a therapist. This workshop is not designed to have you relive the past, but rather to create a true adventure story.

What is the name of your heroine? It can be your name, a nickname, or any name you like that gives you the feeling of strength and purpose.



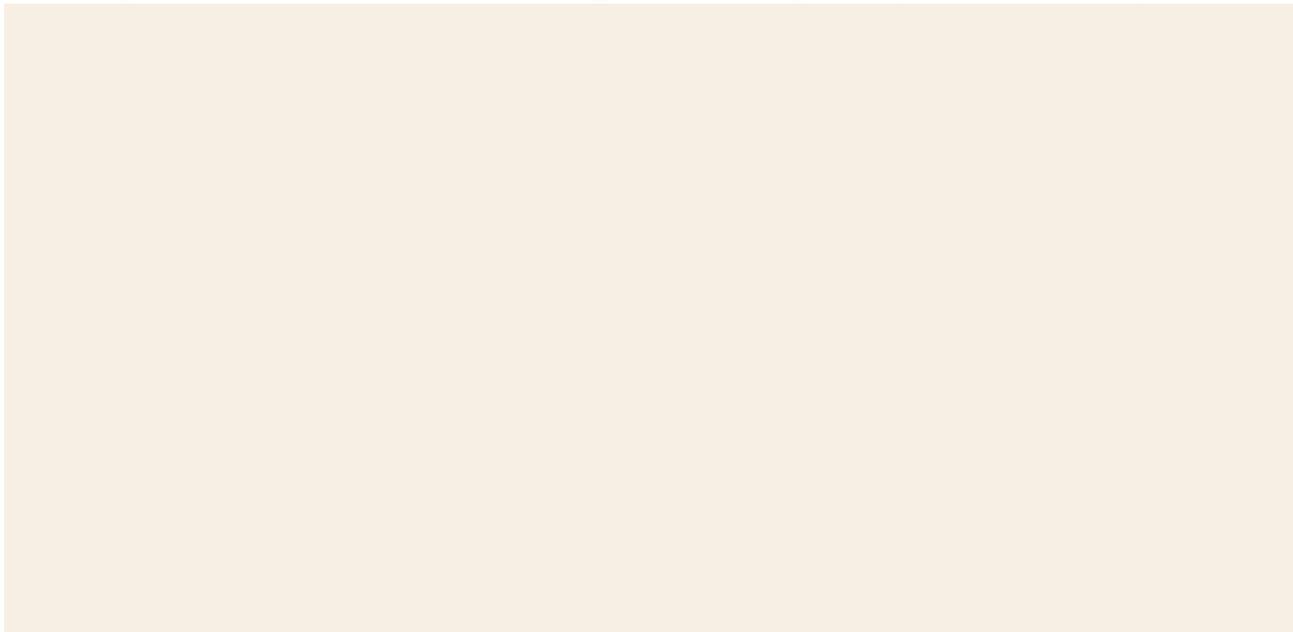
Describe your heroine. What makes her happy, what pisses her off? What does she love to do? Describe her personality. What are her best character strengths? How is she brave? Who does she dream of becoming? Does she have a loyal pet? How does she behave when she is at her best? What inspires her? Who helps her?



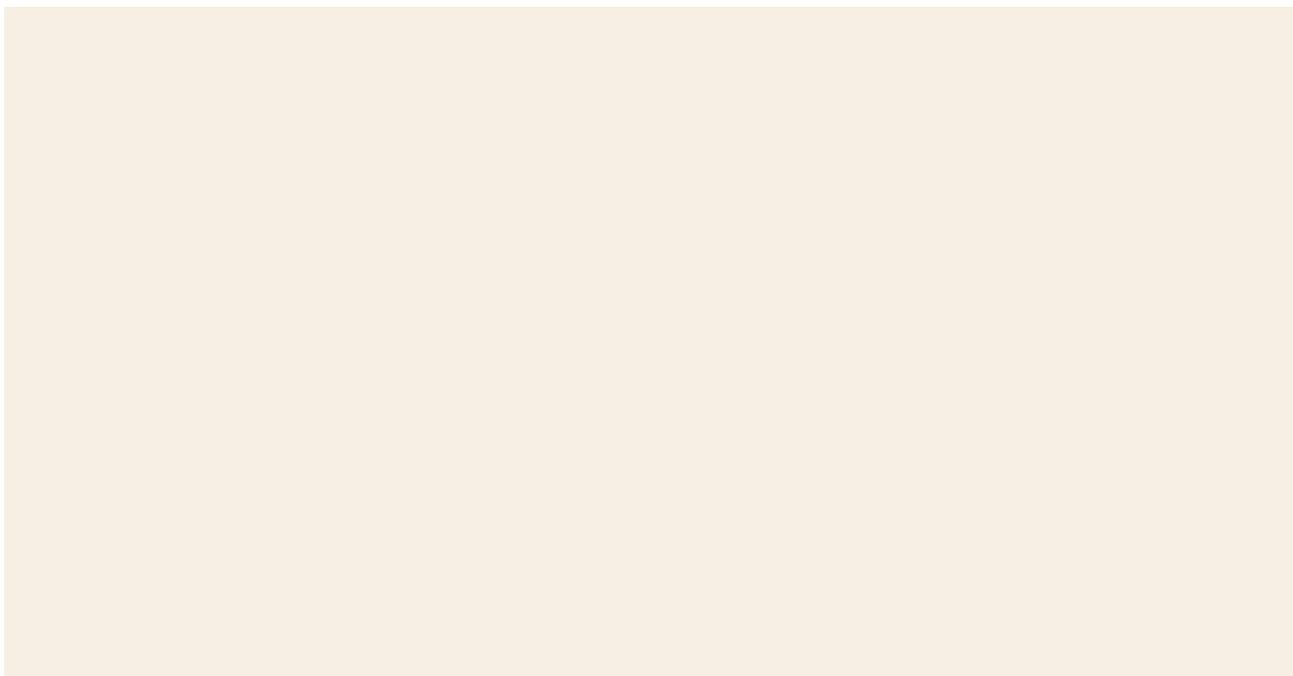
Your story will take place over a specific period of time. How old is your heroine at the beginning and end of the story? Will anything in particular happen on the outside during these years? Will she leave home, become a mother, face a challenge or loss? Something else?

**1. Heroine separates from the feminine.** The Heroine's Journey begins with an external shift from feminine to masculine. This psychological leaving and rejection her feminine often relates to the heroine's feminine qualities, efforts, strategies, or even a rejection/judgement of her mother. It could be a literal move away from her mother, leaving, death, or even just disliking parts of her mother. Many classic stories and fairy tales have mothers who die or are dead (Snow White, Wizard of Oz, Cinderella, etc.) because it is deemed "too complex" to portray the mother/daughter relationship and feminine qualities. What is this part of your heroine's story? How did she separate from her family, her mother/female parental figure or home? What is this part of your heroine's story?

**2. Identification with the masculine and gathering of allies.** The next phase of the Heroine's Journey is internal rejection - rejecting her own feminine qualities or qualities deemed feminine by society. This can be rejecting dependence and instead, striving for external goals to the exclusion of other experiences. It might mean detaching from intuition, feminine receptivity, emotions, or female relationships. This often involves approval from society for being successful or accomplished in whatever task she is doing. What is this part of your heroine's story?



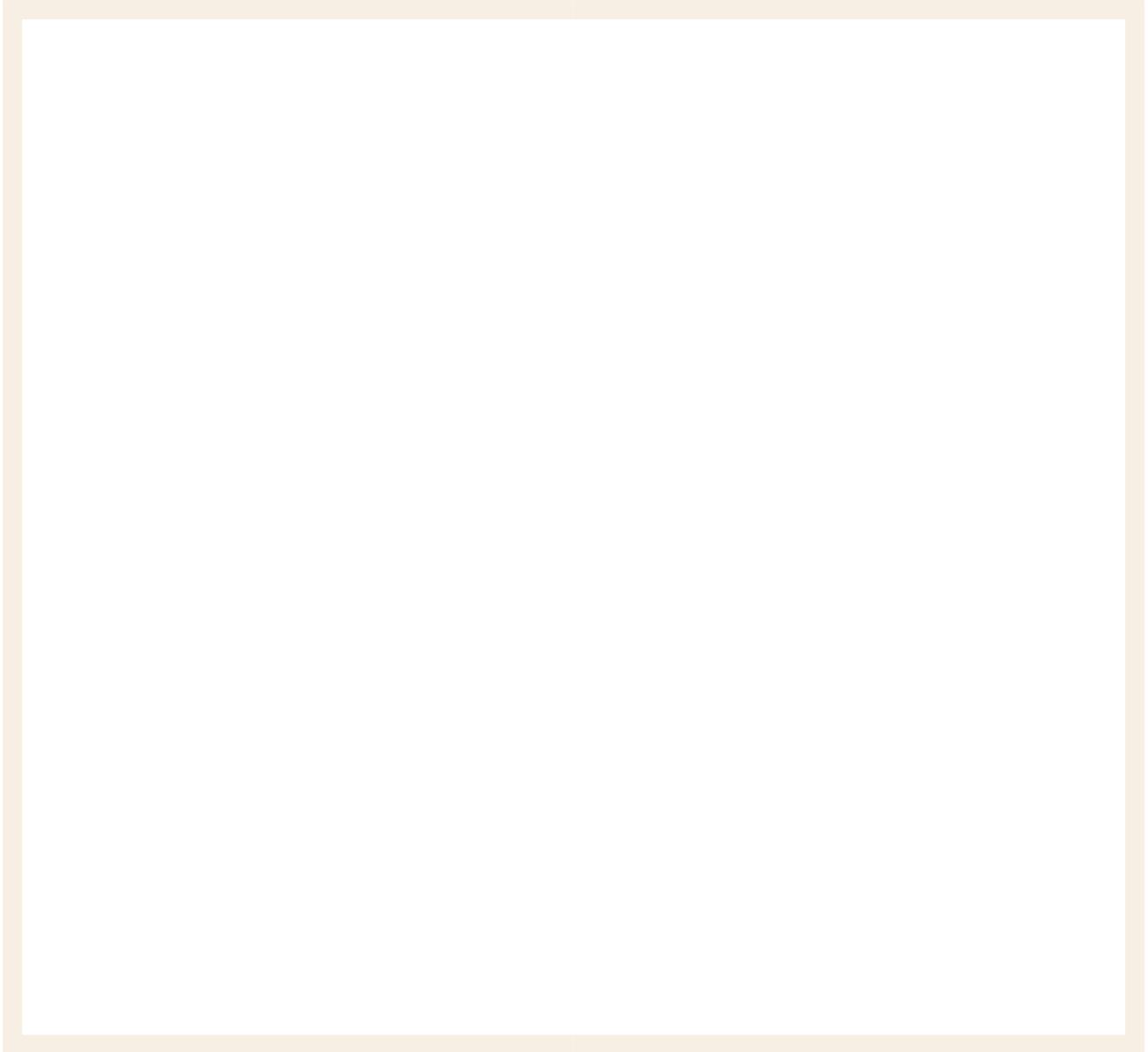
**T. Road/trials and meeting ogres & dragons.** The next phase in the Heroine's Journey is a road with many trials, which ultimately lead to her character development. These trials might be about success, status, and empowerment. Unlike the male hero journey, the heroine also must



deal with significant inner conflict. She must face her old masculine notions about the negative nature of dependency, love, and inferiority. What is this part of your heroine's story?

# Visual Expression

Using lines shapes and colors, depict the character, energy and vitality of your heroine. This can be a portrait, or just colors. Enjoy the feel of the materials. You might like to try using oil pastels or crey-pas if you want to focus on your heroine's energy. You could use colored pencils or magazine pictures if you want to depict your heroine as character. Answer the questions below.



Title:

Three words or phrases to describe your art.

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How do you feel?

However you do it will be great!

# REFLECTION

Reflect on what you have learned about your heroine's journey. Avoid judging yourself for what you did or did not do this week.

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# 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.

**During this part of the journey, the woman begins her descent. It may involve a seemingly endless period of wandering, grief, and rage; of**

dethroning kings; of looking for the lost pieces of herself and meeting the dark feminine. It may take weeks, months, or years, and for many it may involve a time of voluntary isolation—a period of darkness and silence and of learning the art of deeply listening once again to self: of being instead of doing. The outer world may see this as a depression and a period of stasis. Family, friends, and work associates implore our heroine to “get on with it.”

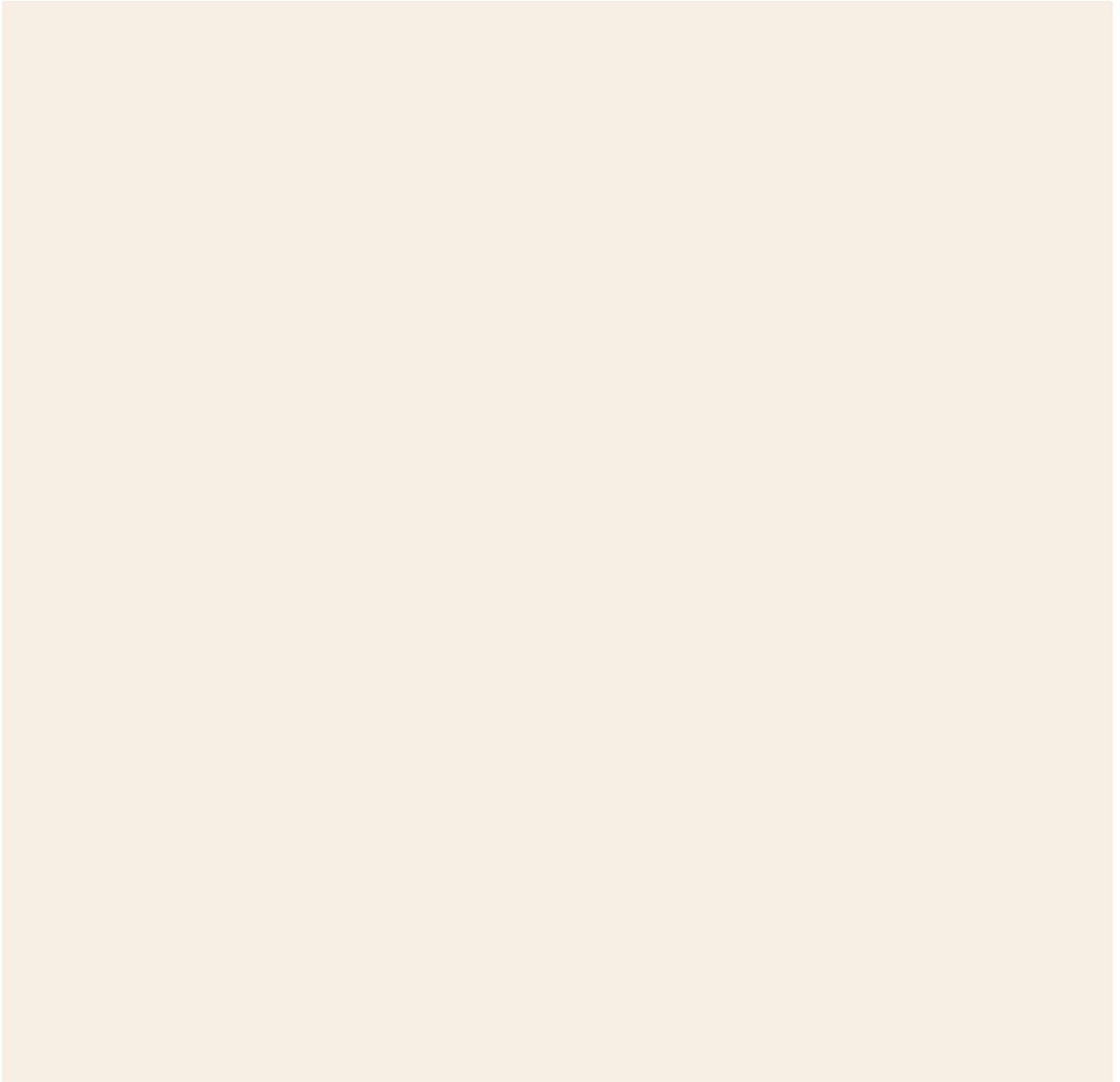
— Maureen Murdock

Maureen Murdock, *The Heroine's Journey: Woman's Quest for Wholeness*

## Telling Your Story

Review what you wrote last week in your heroine's journey. Pick up from where you left off in the journey. Remember to craft this as an adventure story of survival. All trials are framed as a test that makes your heroine stronger and smarter.

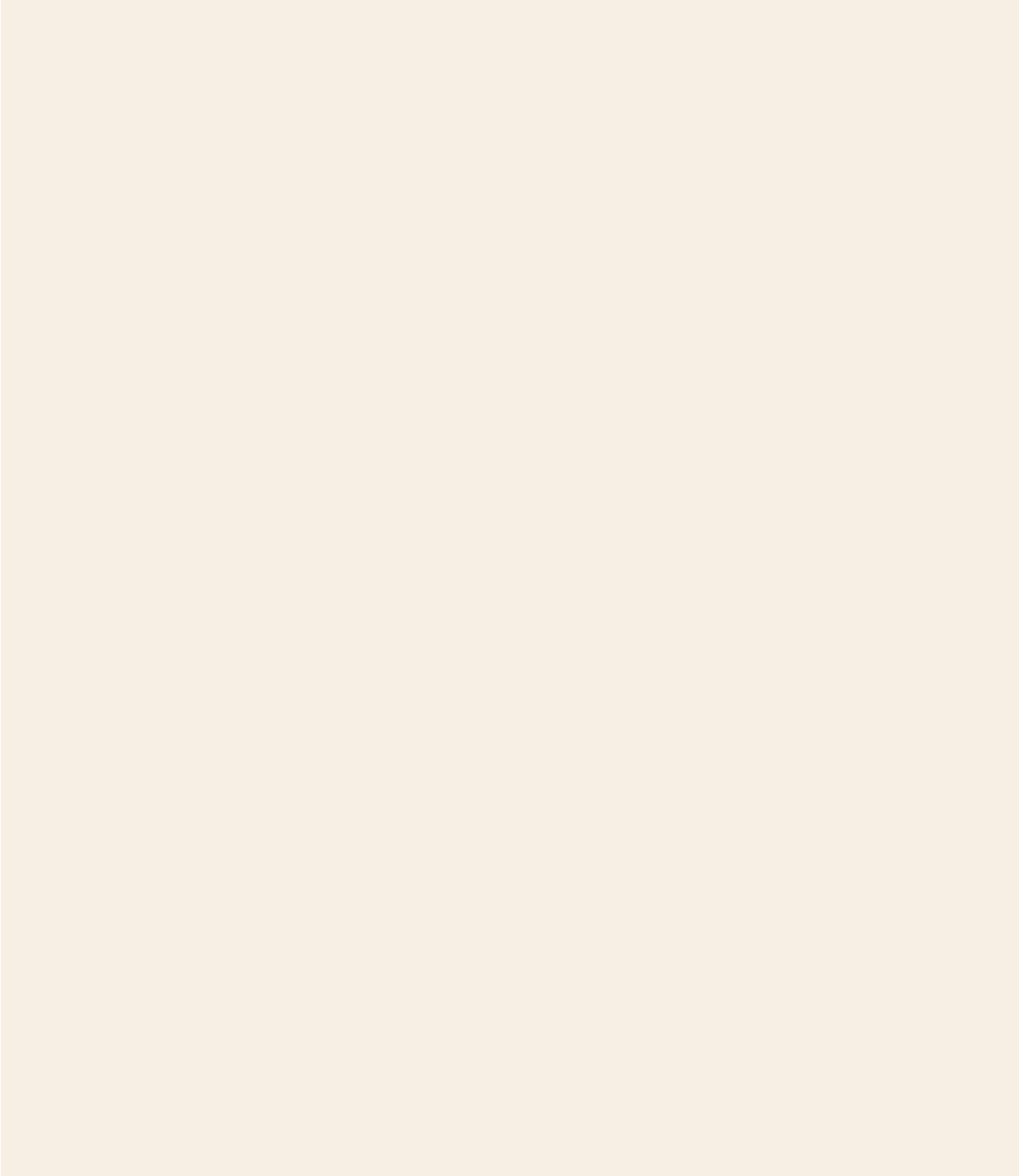
**5. Heroine awakens to feelings of spiritual aridity/death.** The heroine ultimately overcomes the obstacles that she faced. With success, she realizes she strayed from her values to achieve the goal. She feels limited or disappointed in this life and feels estranged from herself. She perhaps feels oppressed, even if she does not yet see the source of her victimization. What is this part of your heroine's story?



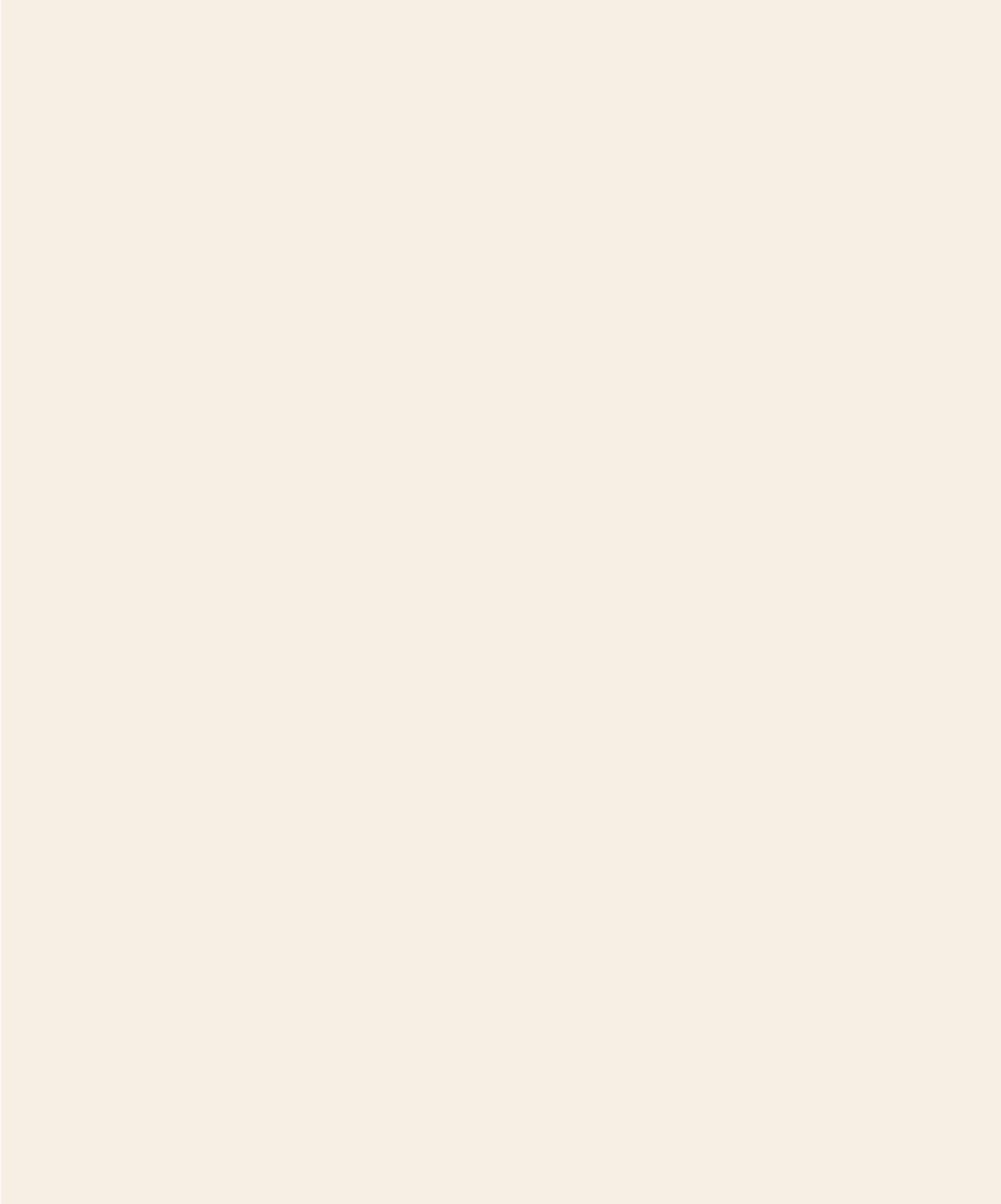
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**6. Initiation & discount to the goddess.** The next phase of the Heroine's Journey includes another crisis. The masculine ways she has learned fail her. The crisis might be a death in the family, a mental or physical disability, or a loss of identity. In the crisis, the heroine begins to seek balance and reconcile with her feminine side. She might meet a woman who represents positive values of being feminine. Inspired, the heroine seeks her own balance between her masculine and feminine traits and the inner and outer world. What is this part of your heroine's story?

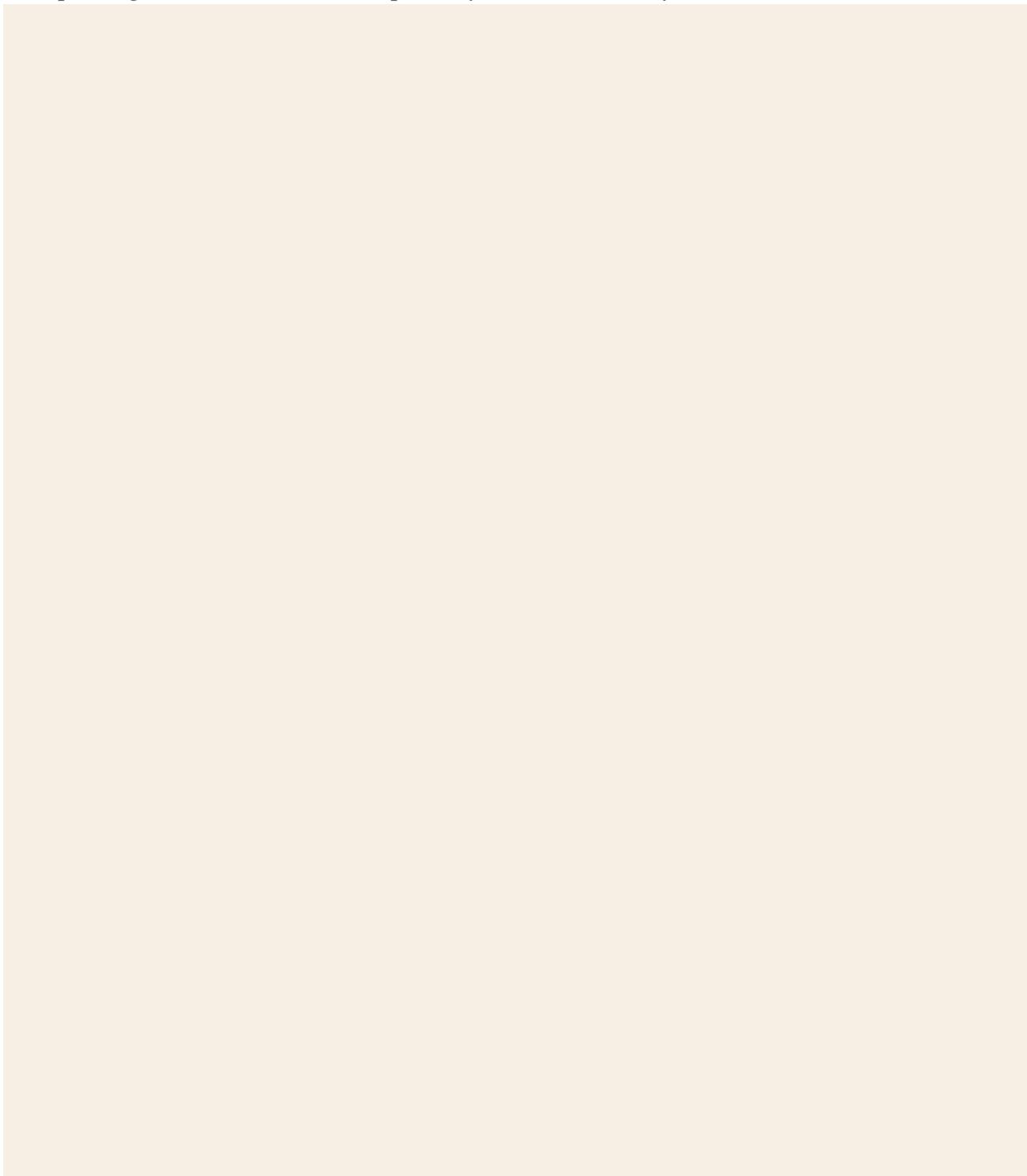


**7. Heroine urgently yearns to reconnect with the feminine.** The next phase of the Heroine's Journey is about a wish to reconnect. She may want to rekindle her relationship with her mother or mother figures. She may want to revert to her old way of being feminine. She discovers there is no way to return to an old way of living. She becomes curious and begins to see her old values and traits in new ways. What is this part of your heroine's story?



**8. Heroine heals the mother/daughter split.** She finally recognizes positives and negatives to her masculinity. This stage includes healing the wounded parts of her masculine self, and rethinking the negative projections onto the men in her life. This part of the journey includes coming to terms with the times she ignored her health and feelings, failed to rest, "powered

through," or refused to accept her limits. Here, the heroine begins to appreciate the positive aspects of her masculine nature - chasing her desires, bringing her ideas to life, claiming authority and speaking her truth. What is this part of your heroine's story?



# Reflections on Your New Thoughts

Remember thoughts are just one neuron firing to another neuron. Thoughts are not true - they are neurotransmitters engaged in a biological process in your brain. Research shows we need positive thoughts about ourselves, others, our circumstances and the future. Write a reflection about what you are learning from writing your heroine's journey. Focus on your person growth from writing the story. What is most inspiring to you? What meaning can you make of your past struggles? How can you embody the heroine's success and bravery today?

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# Visual Expression

Find three images on Pinterest or in magazines that show some of your favorite heroine qualities. Avoid thinking too long about it and just be spontaneous. It's ok if you are unable to explain in words why the images "work" for you. After all, a picture is worth a thousand words! Paste the three pictures here, in your journal, or on another piece of paper. Be sure to answer the questions below when you have finished. However you do it will be great!



Title:

Three words or phrases to describe your art.

- 
- 
- 

How do you feel?

Perhaps you can hang the images where you can see them and be inspired.

# REFLECTION

Reflect on what you have learned about your your heroine overcoming her trials and crisis. Why do you think this new way of looking at the heroine's accomplishments and transformation is important? Avoid judging yourself for what you did or did not do this week.

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# PURPOSE

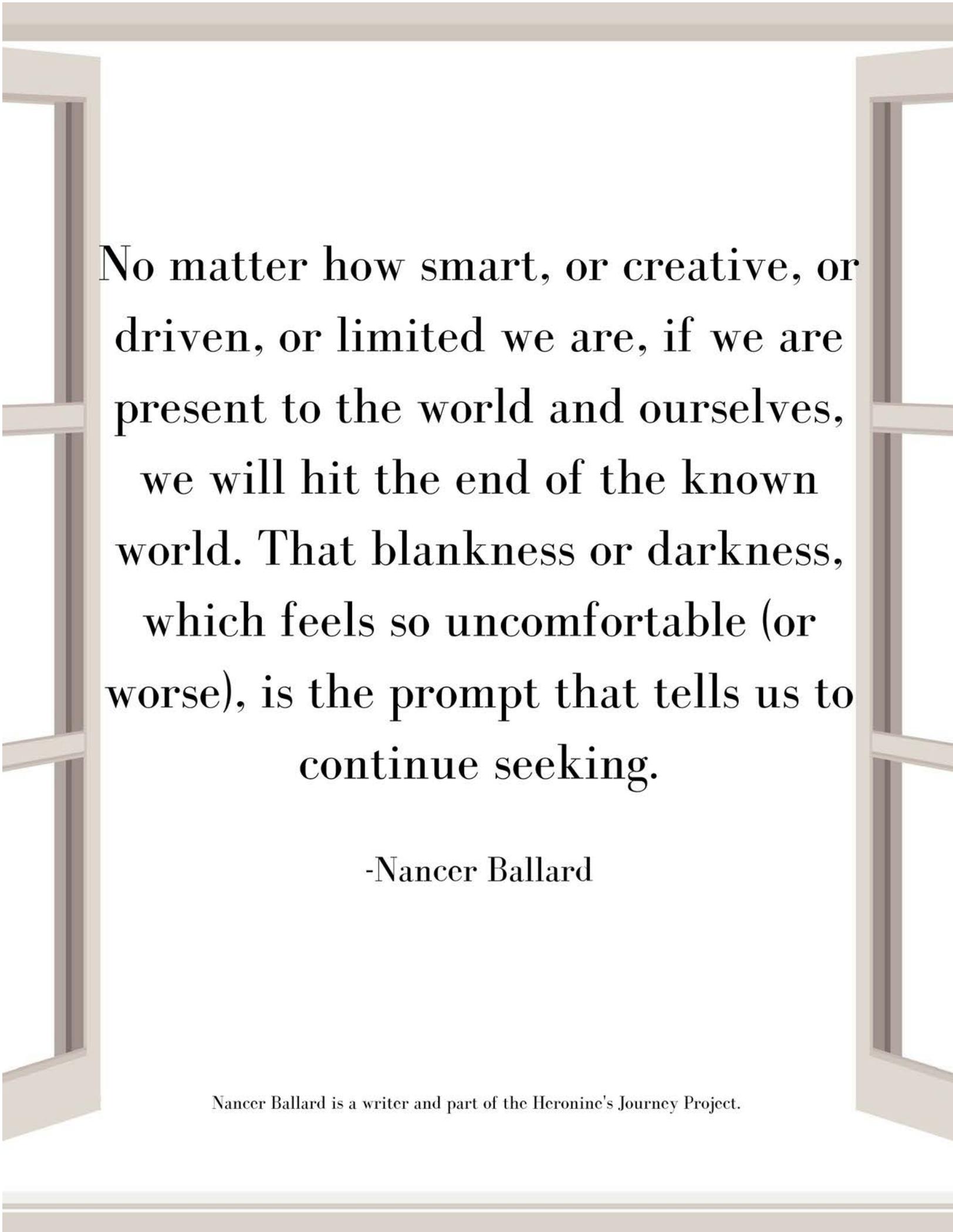
## Your Values & Committed Actions

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 live your values, they will show in your behavior. For example, if you truly believe in your health, then your behavior will show it through 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.



No matter how smart, or creative, or driven, or limited we are, if we are present to the world and ourselves, we will hit the end of the known world. That blankness or darkness, which feels so uncomfortable (or worse), is the prompt that tells us to continue seeking.

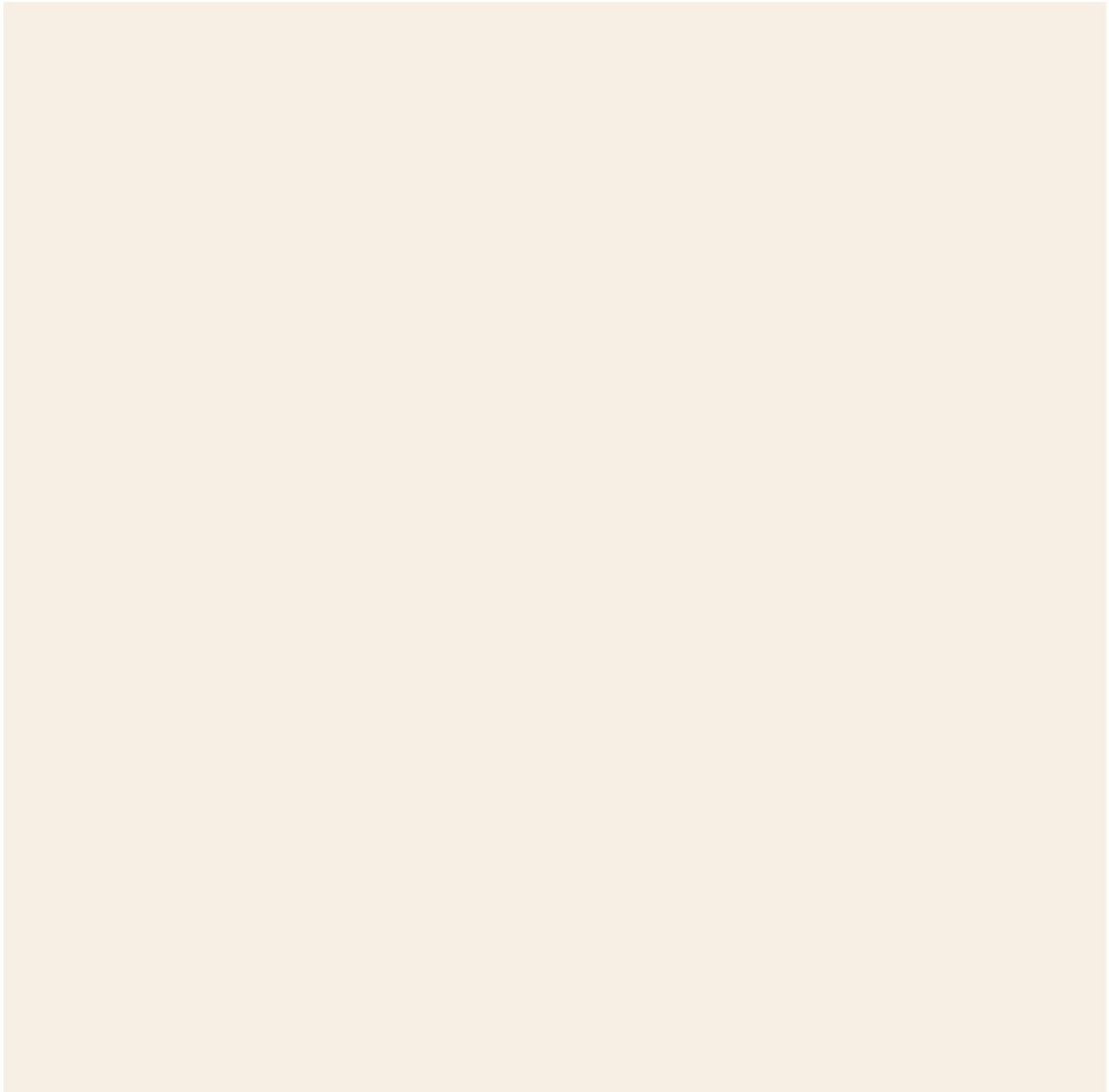
-Nancer Ballard

Nancer Ballard is a writer and part of the Heronine's Journey Project.

# Telling Your Story

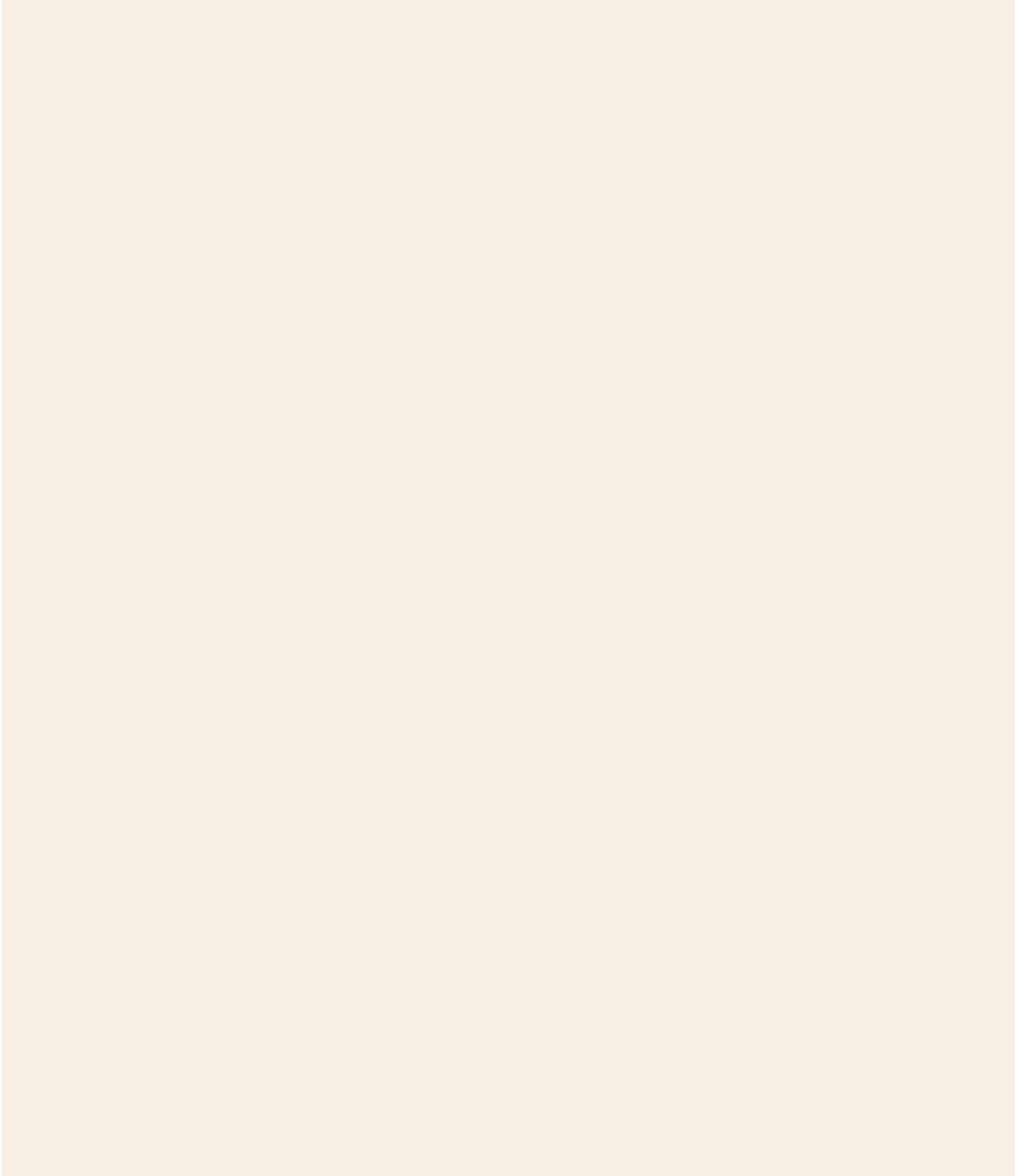
Review what you wrote last week in your heroine's journey. Pick up from where you left off in the journey.

**9. Heroine heals the wounded masculine within.** In this part of the journey, the heroine makes peace with the “masculine” approach to the world as it applies to her. She comes to see how the masculine approach to the world can be helpful for her at times and she becomes more settled with her own way of being. How does your heroine come to heal herself and the masculine ways of being, achieving and knowing? Are there events to inner transformations that help her heal? What is this part of your heroine's story?



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**10. Heroine integrates the masculine & feminine.** In the final stage of the Heroine's Journey, the heroine understands and accepts all sides of her true nature. She discovers balance between both her masculine and feminine aspects and begins to actively work to keep the balance. In this stage, the heroine becomes a "spiritual warrior" in a delicate balancing act. This stage demands patience for the subtle and slow integration of the feminine and masculine aspects of her nature. What is this part of your heroine's story?



Describe the heroine's sense of self and her purpose as she moves forward in her life after this long journey. What will happen next for her?

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# Haiku

A Haiku is a Japanese style of poetry with just three lines. The title tells you the subject and the lines of poetry describe the subject. Write a haiku about your heroine. The title of your poem is some variation on "The Heroine's Journey." You can add to the title with the name of your heroine or whatever else is important to you. Next, use the three lines of poetry to describe the character strengths and important qualities of your heroine.

Here is the formula for your poem.

Line 1: 5 syllables

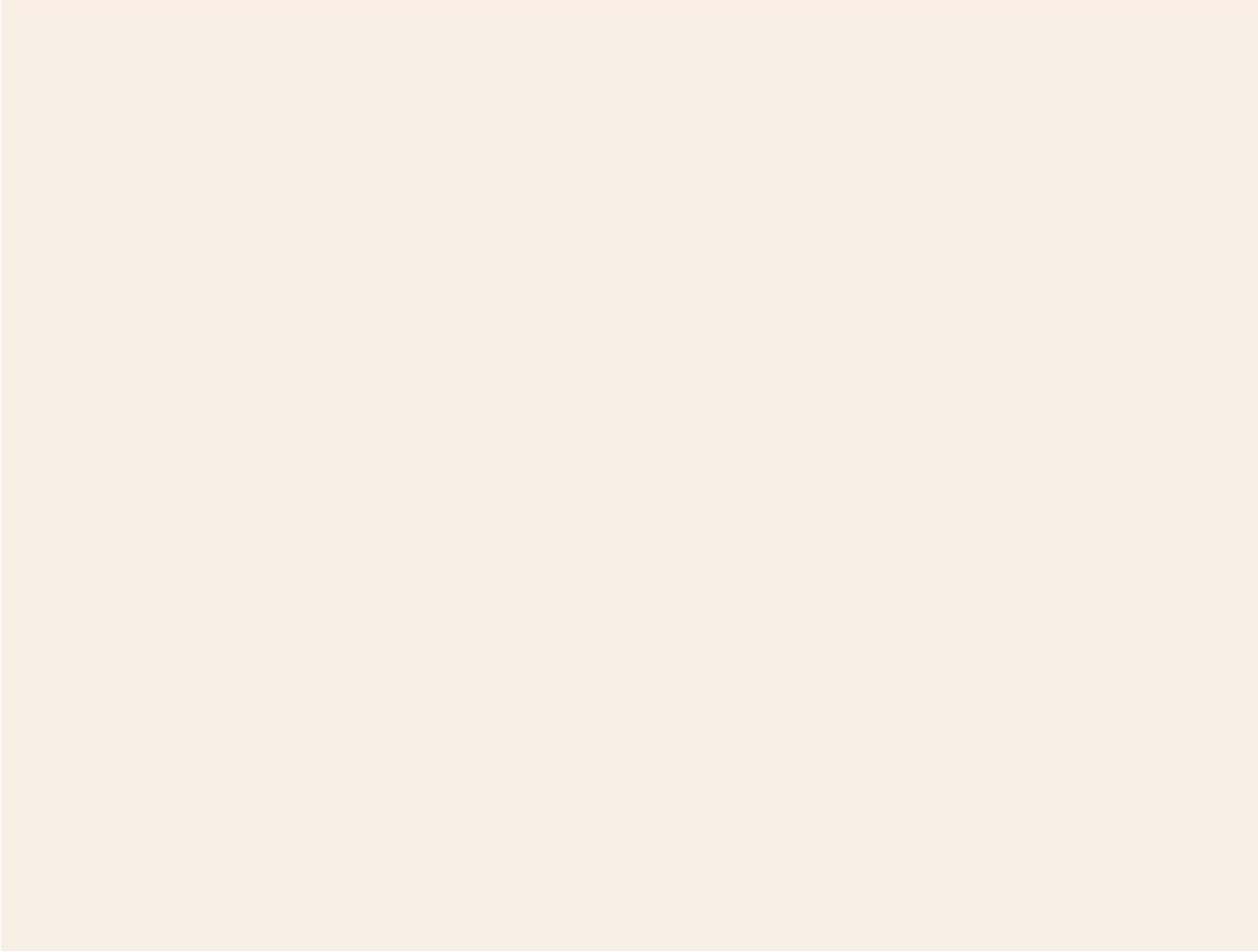
Line 2: 7 syllables

Line 3: 5 syllables

Here is my haiku.

*My Heroine's Journey*  
Curiosity.

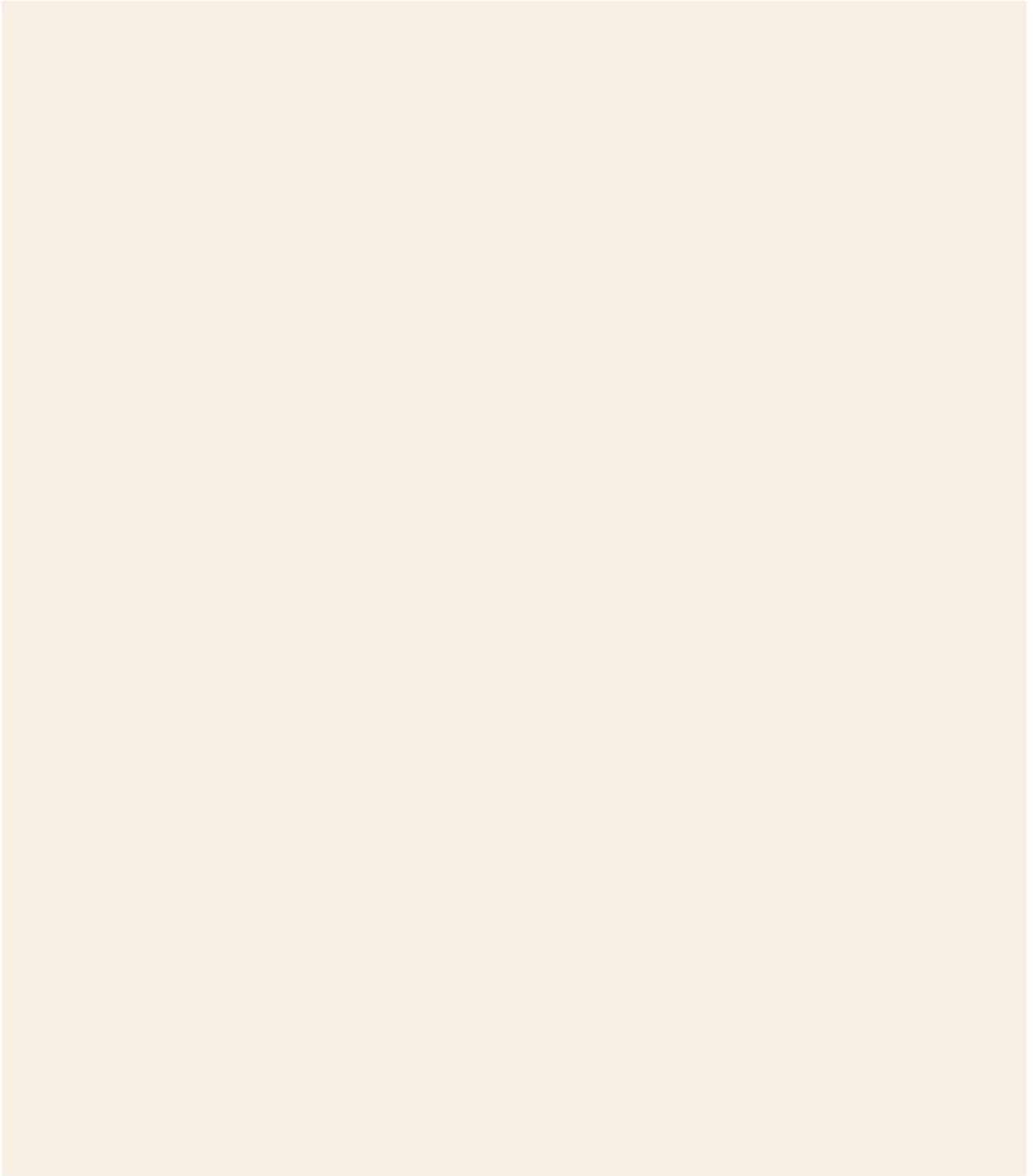
Creating something brand new.  
Freedom. Abundance.



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# REFLECTION

What was it like to write your heroine's journey? Can you see yourself in her? What actions will you take to be in alignment with her best qualities? How do you feel seeing that you have overcome 100% of your worst days and survived all of the crises in your life? What is amazing about you now that could have only happened because of the trials and troubles you faced in your past?



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# Visual Expression

Return to Pinterest or your stack of magazines. Choose one or several images that reflect your heroine's strengths that you want to carry forward in your life. You do not need to have a verbal reason for choosing your images - use your intuition to find pictures that reflect your heroine. You might want to search for archetypes of women, heroine art, or female characters. Arrange them artfully below, on a separate piece of paper or in your journal. Answer the questions below.



Title:

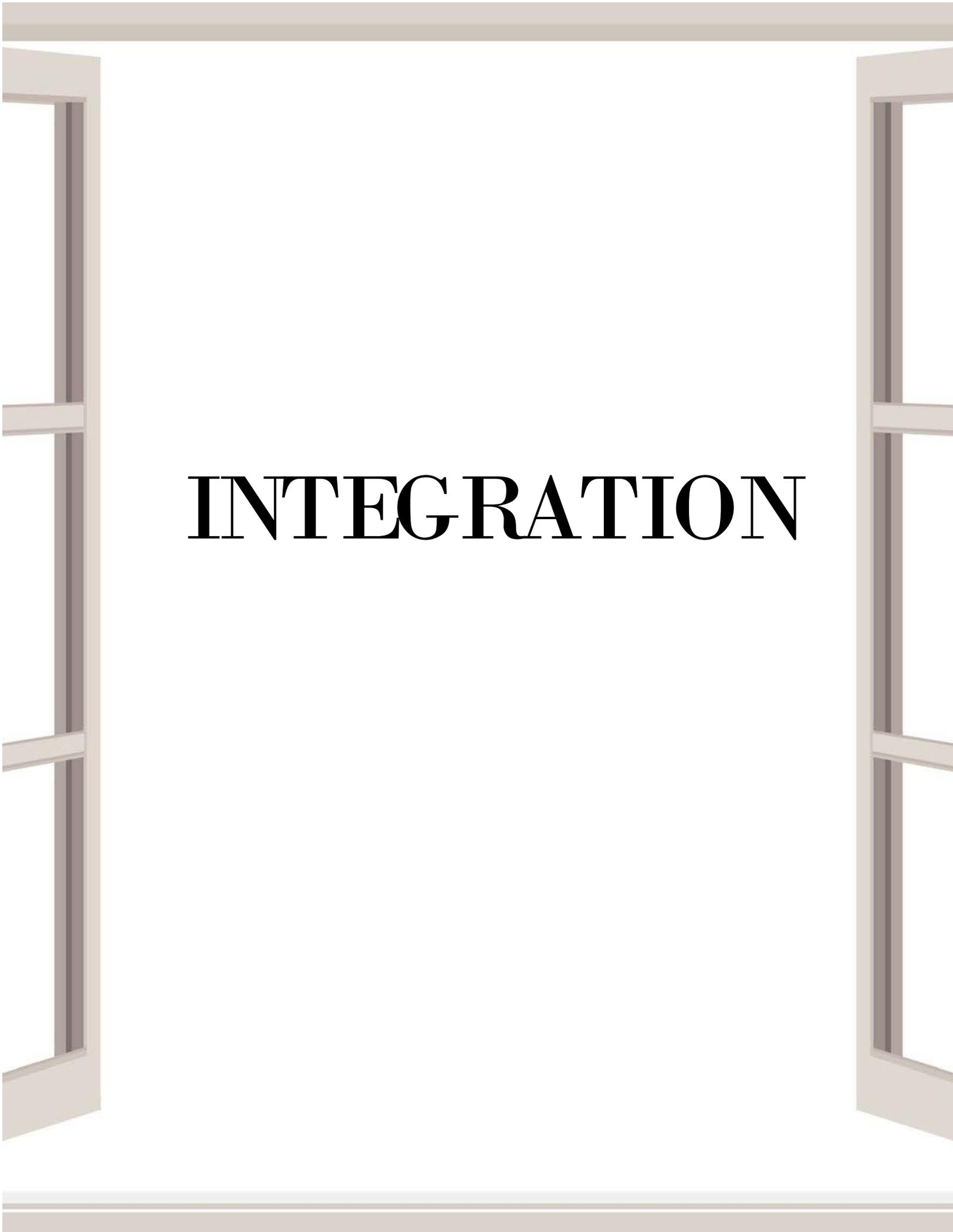
Three words or phrases to describe your art.

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How do you feel?







# INTEGRATION

# 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 should be celebrated!

1

**My increased presence I am celebrating this month...**

2

**My intentional mindset I am celebrating this month...**

3

**My purpose (values and committed action) that I am celebrating this month...**

4

**What external celebration I will have this month...**

(flowers, book on aesthetics, manicure, etc.)

## Heroine's Journey

You have completed a journey of survival and thriving. This work connects closely with post-traumatic growth. This is a concept in positive psychology that brings attention to our qualities and character strengths that could have only emerged *because* of our struggles and strive.

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 living their values...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 in San Francisco or Paris, or the Women's Search for Meaning individual program.

It is 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 workbook. Please send me a testimonial that I may share with others so they know the benefits of being a Modern Creative Woman.



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



# RESOURCES

Art Therapy Center of San Francisco

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1

wellness, positive psychology and value-based living. Center

for creative expression, psychological

Email for complementary 20 minute consultation.

[Amy@amybackos.com](mailto:Amy@amybackos.com)

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2

Instagram: [@dramybackos](https://www.instagram.com/dramybackos)

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

**Book: PTSD and Art Therapy By Dr. Amy Backos**

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3

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.

**Book: ACT Art Therapy By Dr. Amy Backos**

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

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