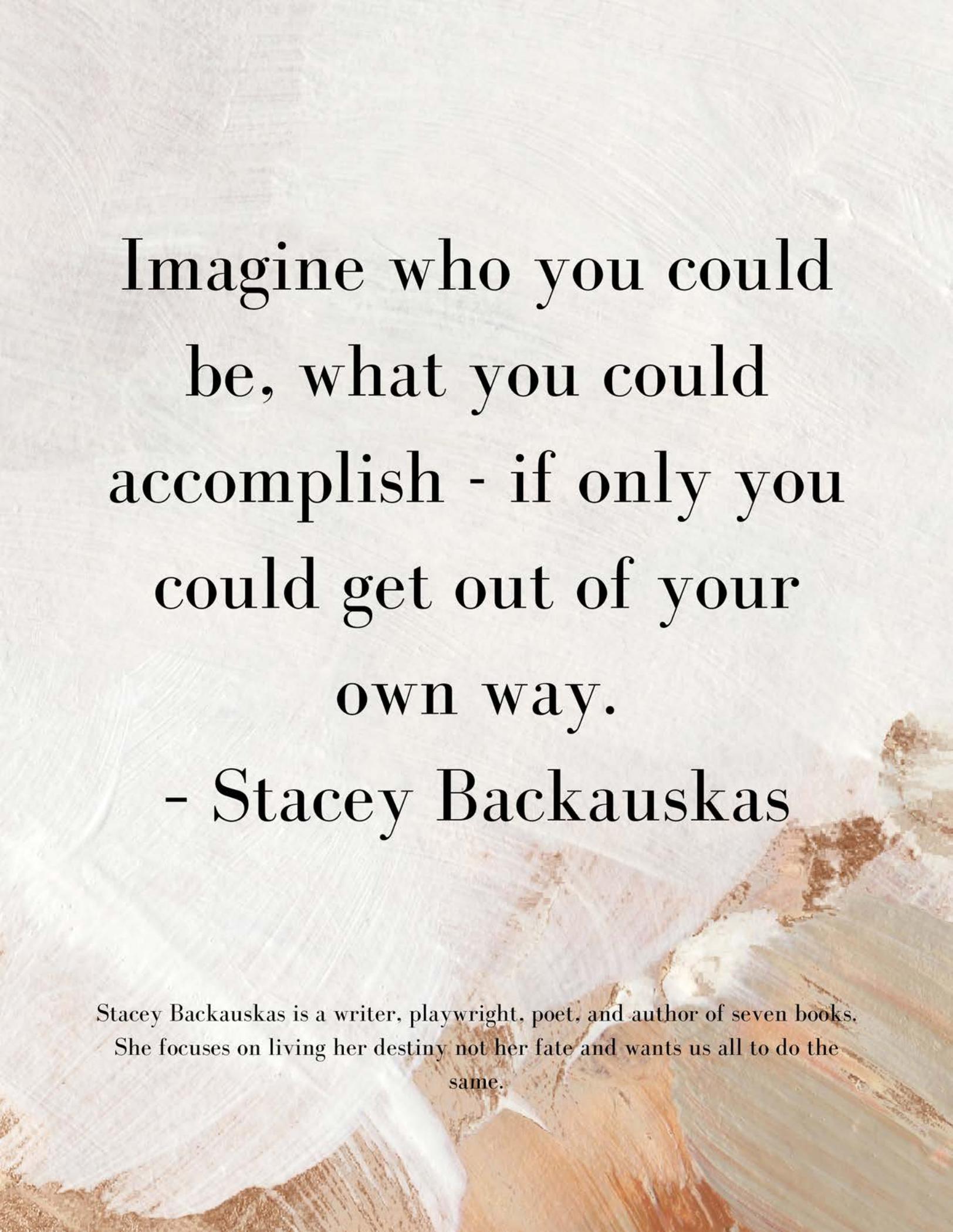




How to Get Out of
Your Own Way
The Modern Creative Woman



Imagine who you could
be, what you could
accomplish - if only you
could get out of your
own way.

- Stacey Backauskas

Stacey Backauskas is a writer, playwright, poet, and author of seven books.
She focuses on living her destiny not her fate and wants us all to do the
same.

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.

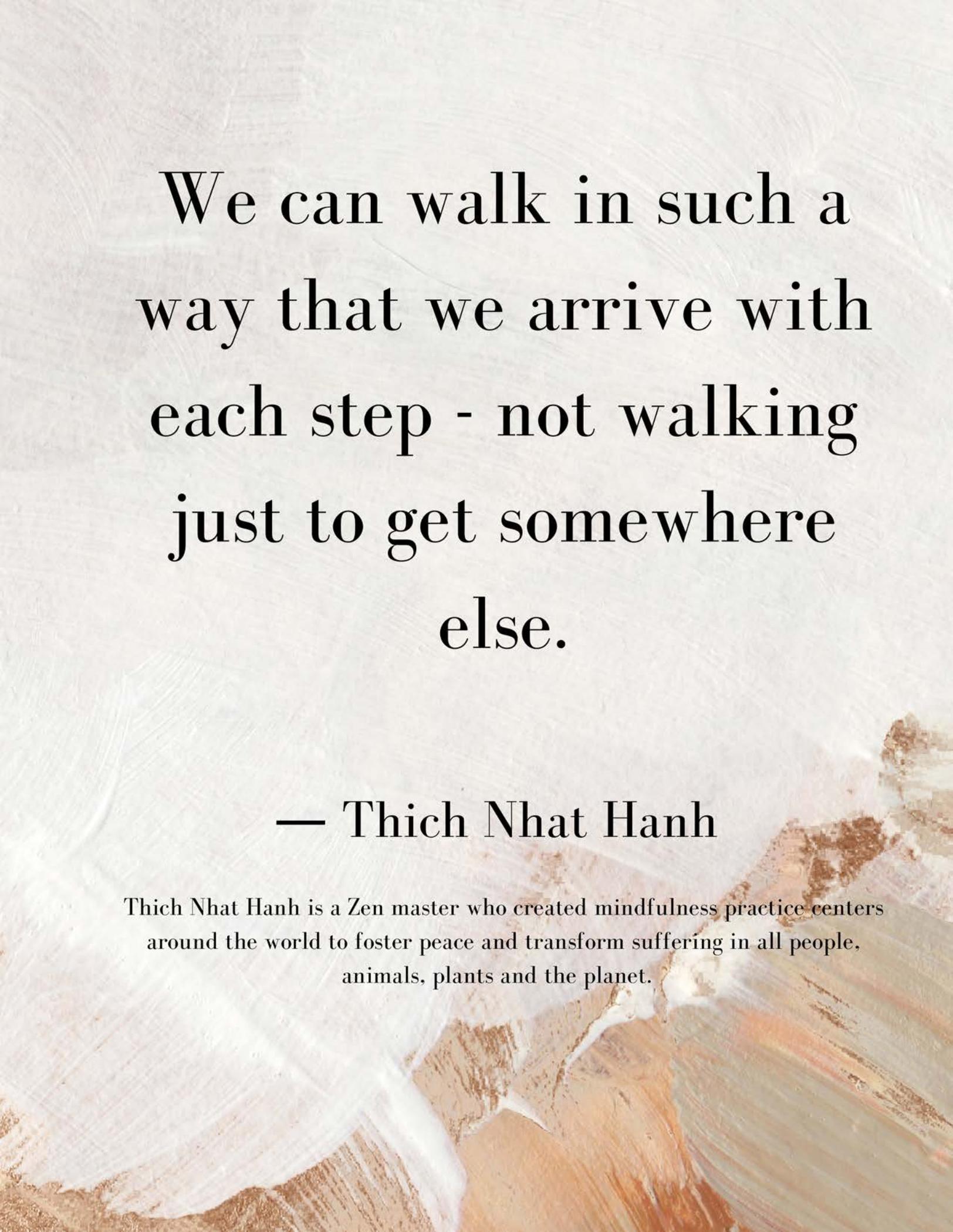
PRESENCE

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.



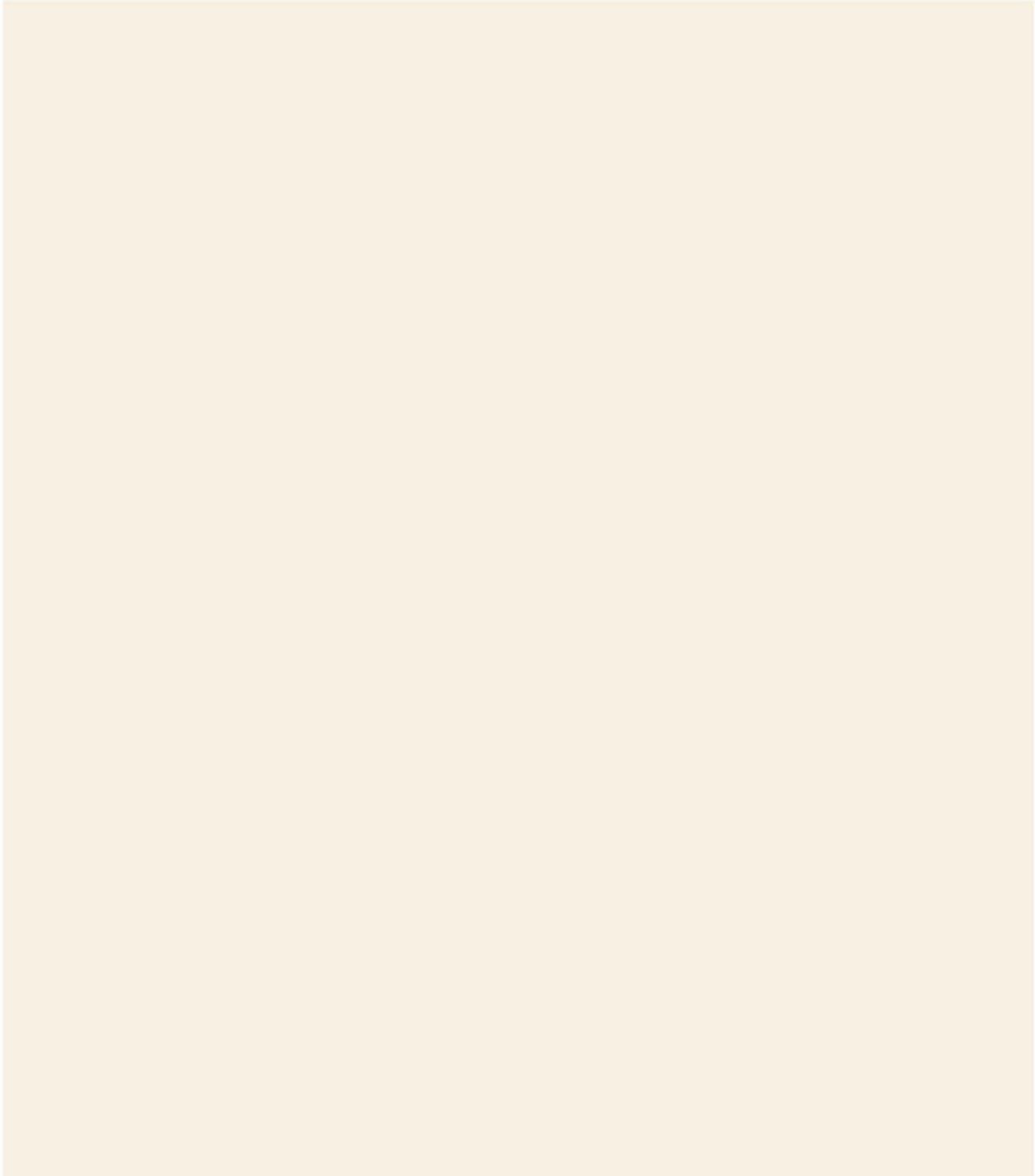
We can walk in such a
way that we arrive with
each step - not walking
just to get somewhere
else.

— Thich Nhat Hanh

Thich Nhat Hanh is a Zen master who created mindfulness practice centers around the world to foster peace and transform suffering in all people, animals, plants and the planet.

INTENTIONS

Are you ready to get out of your own way? What are you hoping to get out of this class? What thoughts and behaviors do you want to let go of?



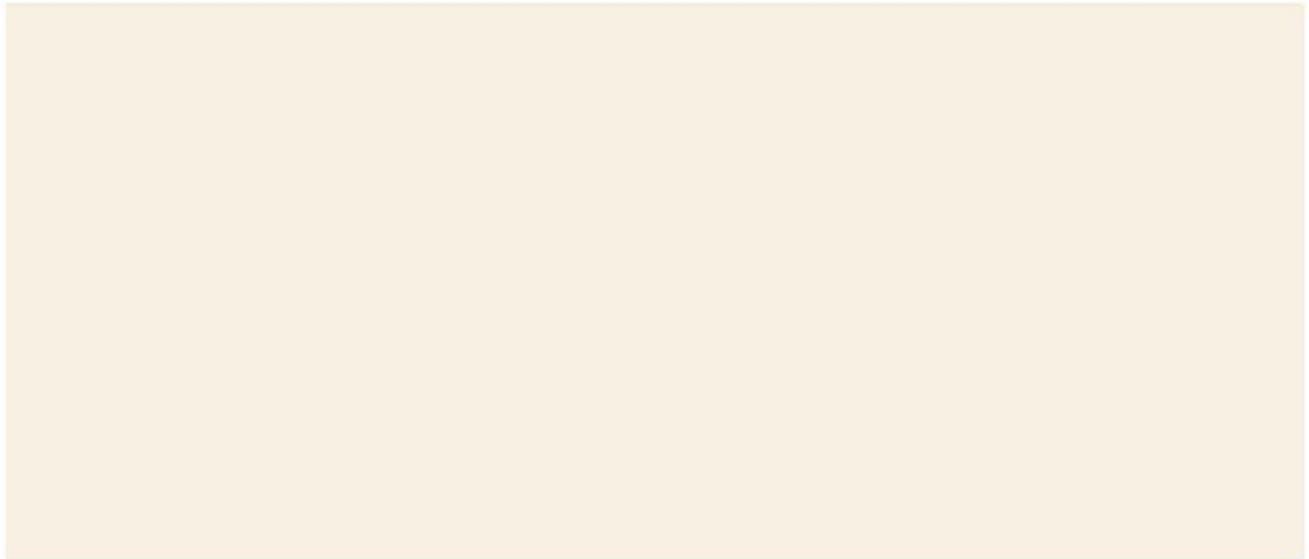
First things first

The first step to getting out of our own way is to see things clearly. To know ourselves and our contribution in the world requires us to make contact with the present moment. In other words, paying attention to what is happening around you AND seeing reality as distinctly different from your thoughts and feelings about it. What gets in your way today has nothing to do with what you experienced in the past. Rather, research shows your thoughts and perceptions about what is happening (or happened in the past) determine how you feel. Focusing yourself in the present moment frees you from the past in surprising and pleasant ways.

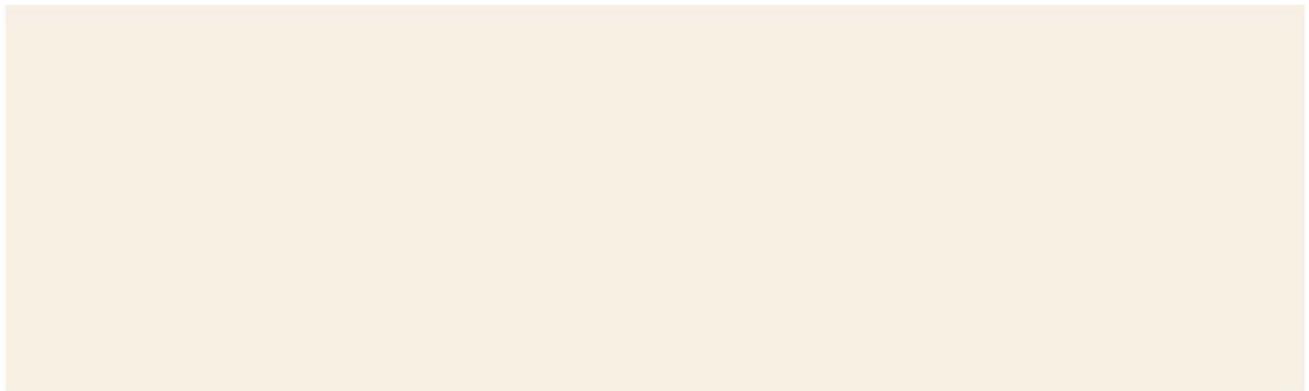
What percent are you in the moment right now? Give yourself a grade 0-100. What do you think about this? Are you usually at this level of present moment awareness?



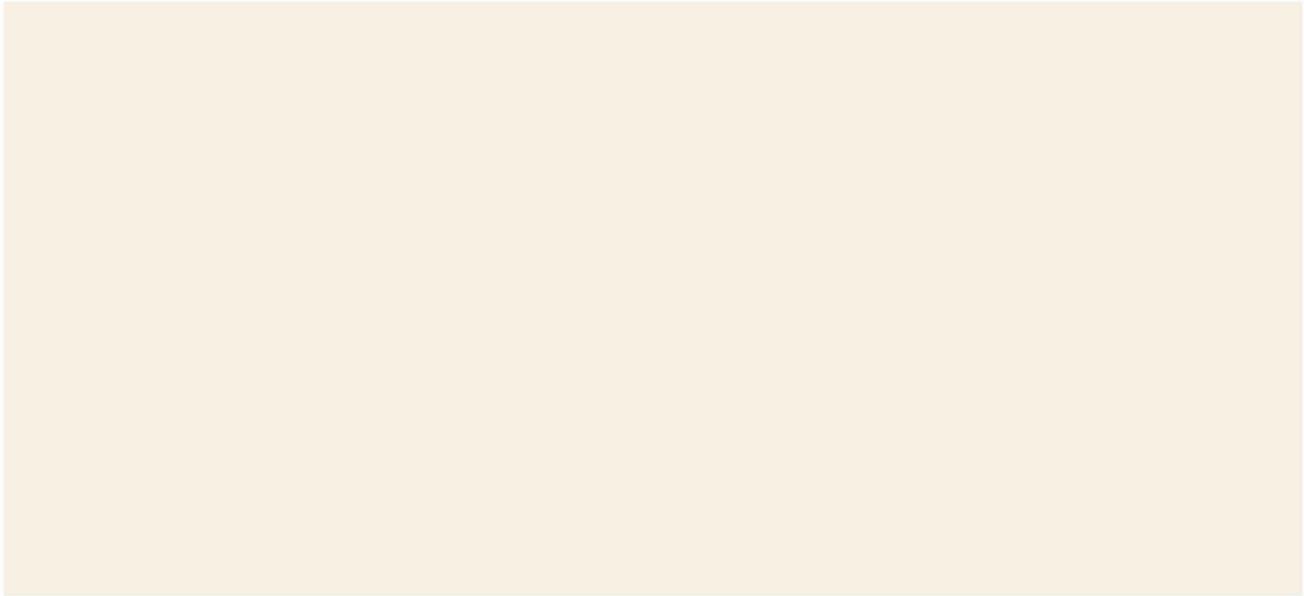
What are you aware of right now? Write down what you see, taste, touch, smell and hear.



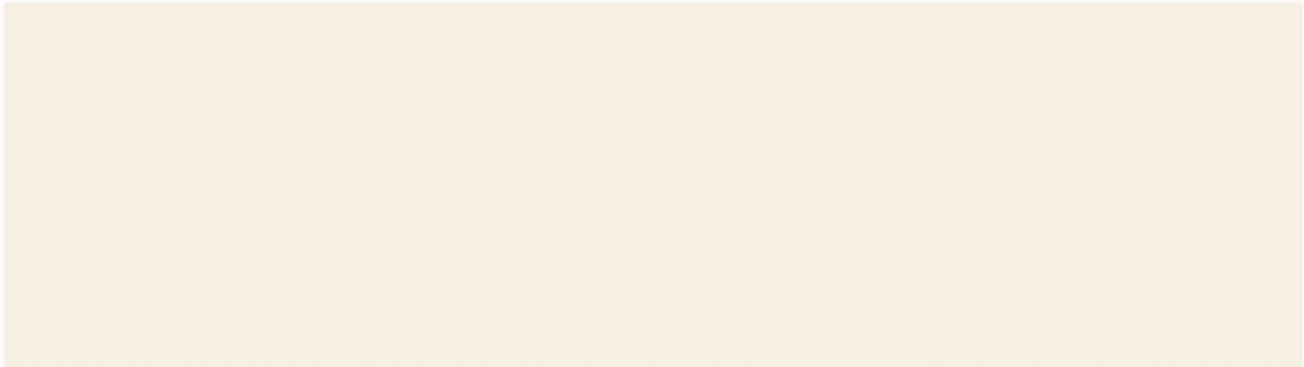
Why do you think present moment awareness is important to you and the life you want to live?



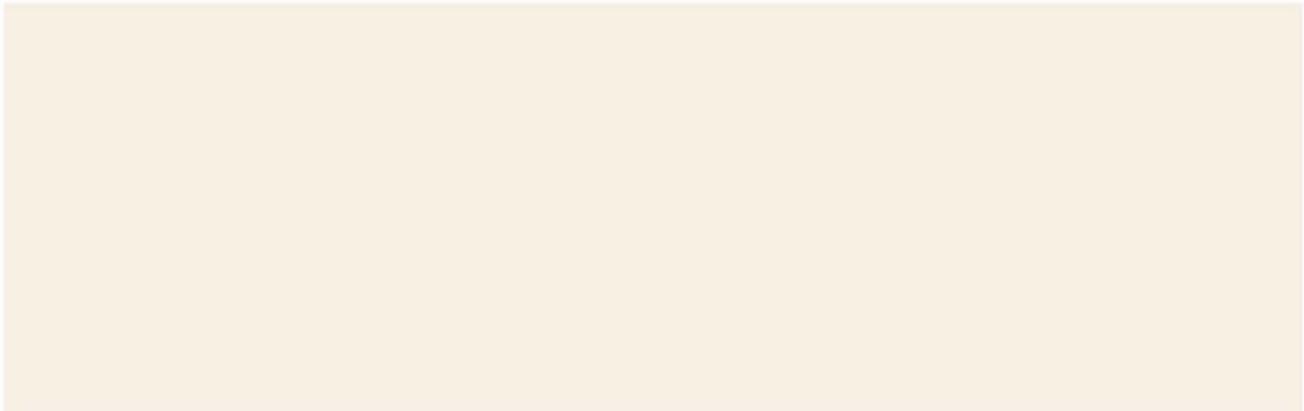
If someone observed all your actions for the last month, what would they report about your ability to be in the present, listen carefully, remember to do the things you find important? What would they notice about how you "showed up" in your life the past month?



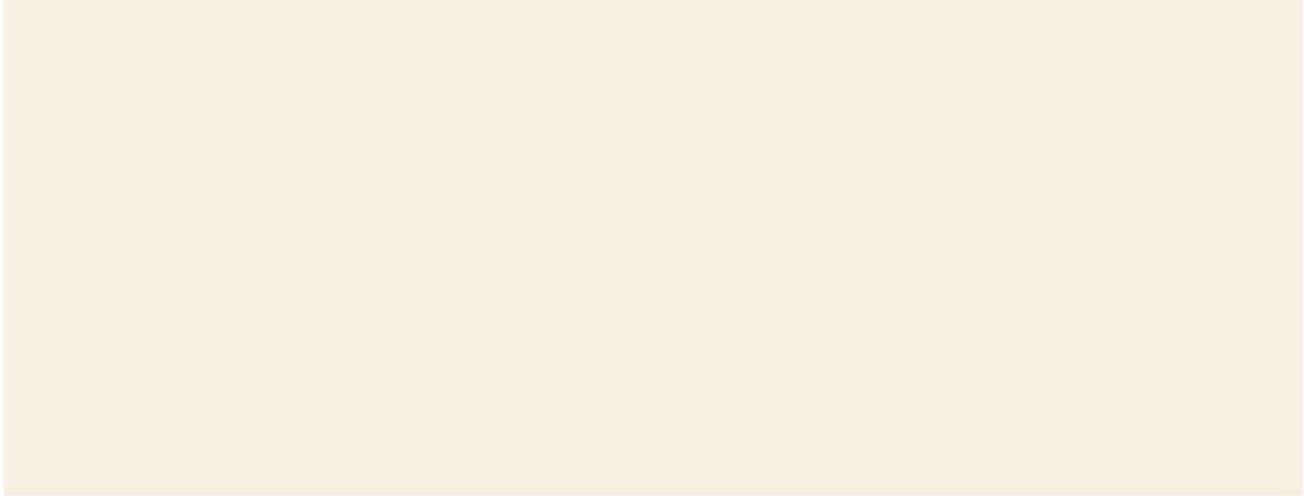
What do you think gets in your way the most? What stops you from living life the way you want? What are the thoughts, people, and things that support you in living the life you want?



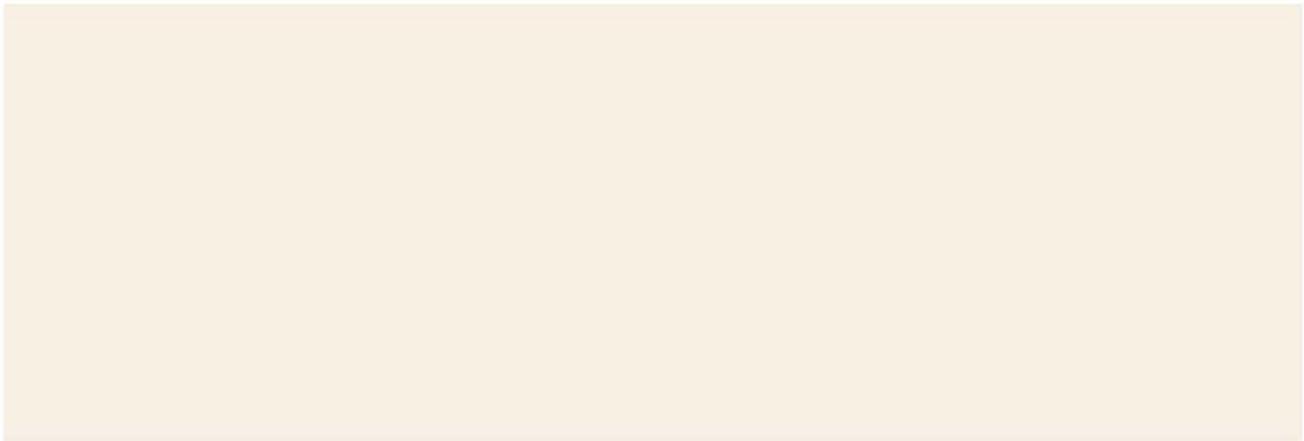
What makes you nervous or uncomfortable about making a change to get rid of the thoughts and behaviors that interfere with you living your values? See if you can walk yourself through the discomfort and be willing to experience it and not push it away.



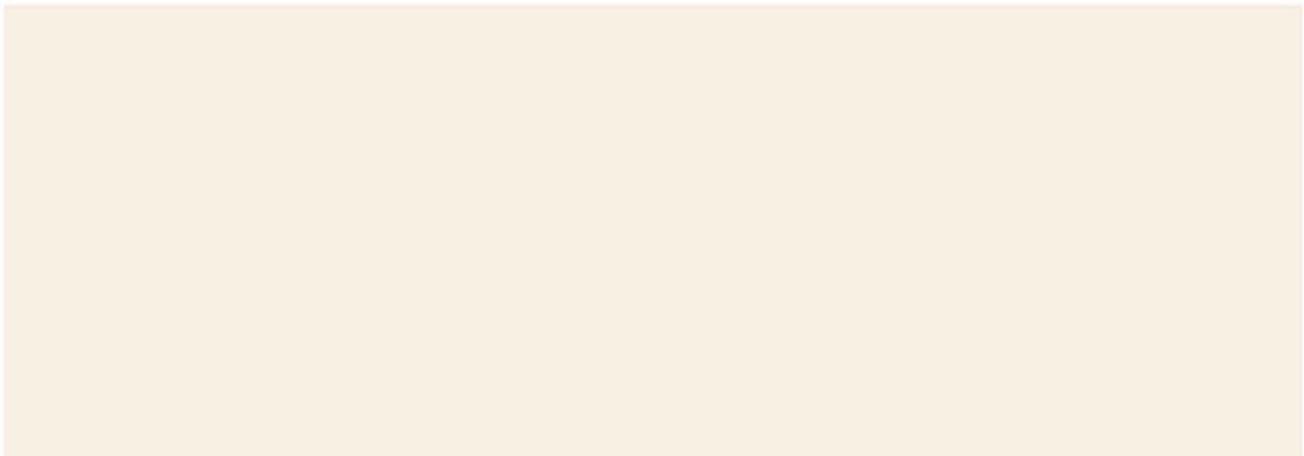
Who do you know who has gotten out of their own way to live according to their values? Take a few minutes to reflect on a woman you think has been successful in this. It could be someone you know, a celebrity, author, or a character in a book or film. Describe how they got out of their own way and what they had to overcome to live a life according to their personal values.



What do you most admire about this person?



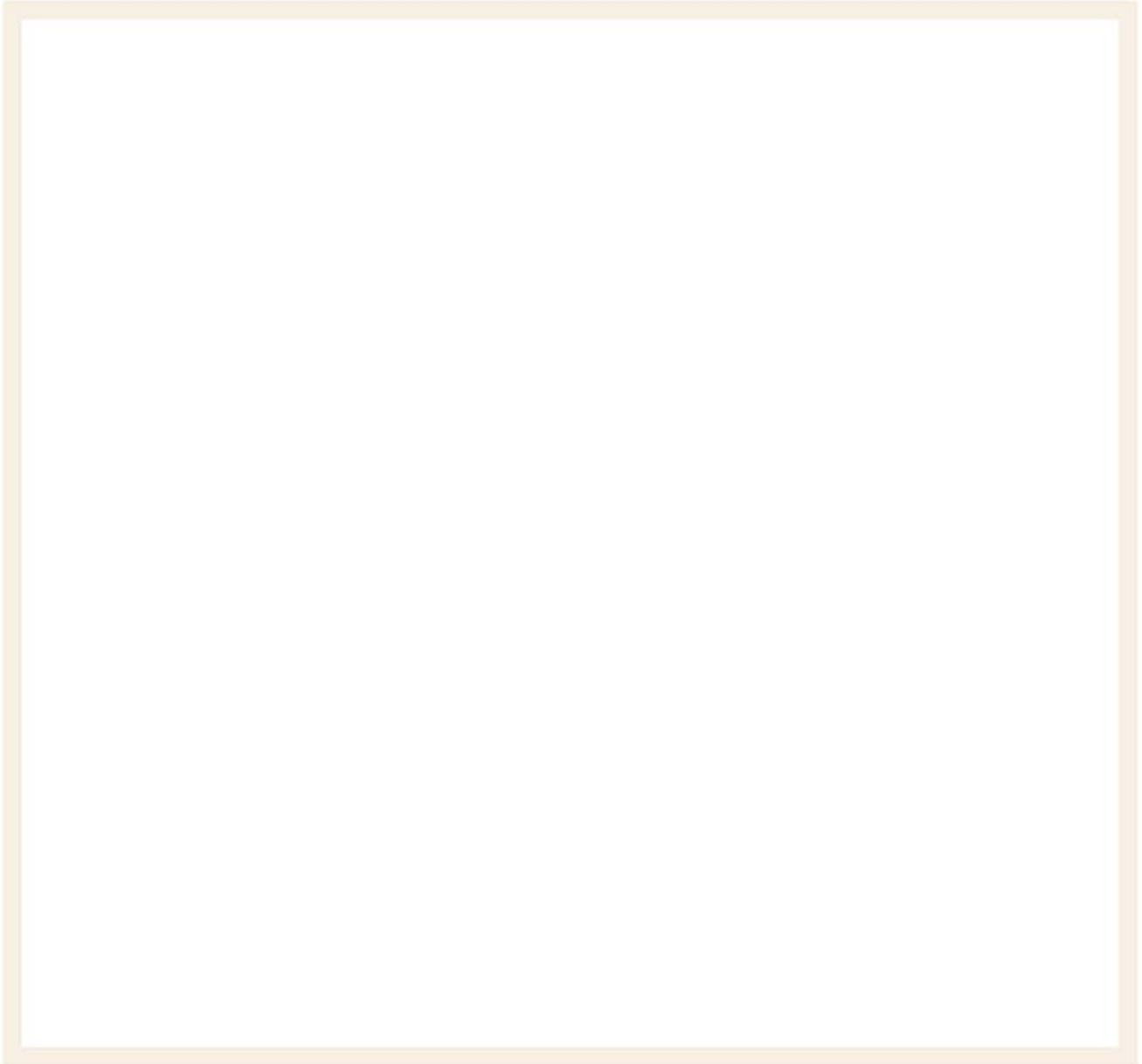
What steps did this person take to accomplish their goals, overcome their obstacles and limiting beliefs? Be as precise as possible and it is ok to use your imagination since we can't know everything about another person. Just guess if you are unsure.



Visual Expression

Using lines shapes and colors, depict what it looks like when you are fully present and in contact with the present moment. Avoid thinking too long about it and just be spontaneous. 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?

REFLECTION

Reflect on what you have learned about your presence this week and how you are using your time to demonstrate what is most important to you. Avoid judging yourself for what you did or did not do this week.

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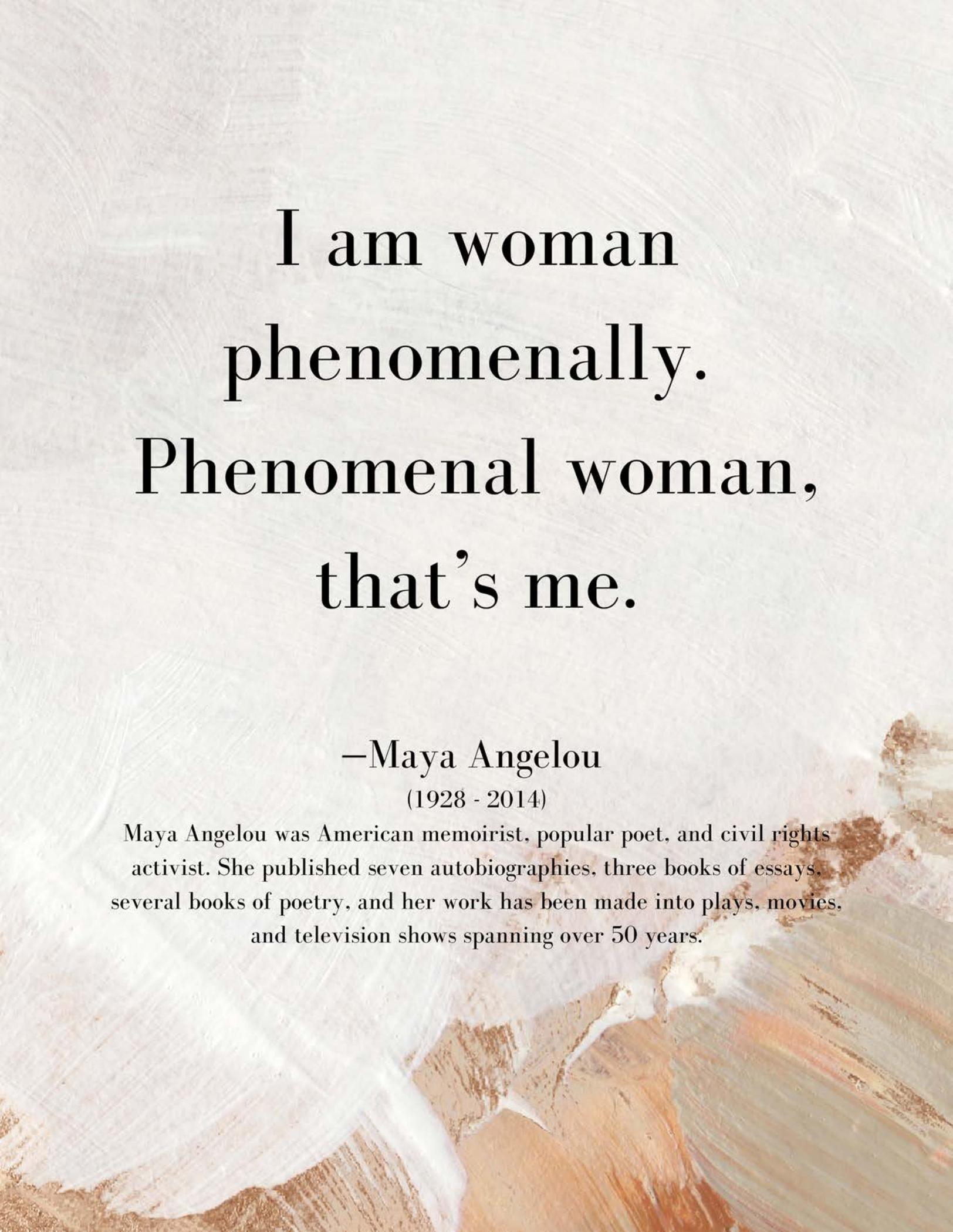
MINDSET

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.



I am woman
phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
that's me.

—Maya Angelou
(1928 - 2014)

Maya Angelou was American memoirist, popular poet, and civil rights activist. She published seven autobiographies, three books of essays, several books of poetry, and her work has been made into plays, movies, and television shows spanning over 50 years.

Unintentional Habits

What are your habits? Observe yourself and take an honest inventory of yourself to see where you are spending your time. How much time are you spending on activities that do not support yourself such as scrolling social media, drinking, watching TV, spending time with negative people, etc.. How much time are you taking care of yourself each day? How much time are you investing in your future self? Are you spending time on your values? Look for clues in your bank account, your schedule and the time measurement on your phone. Zero judgement!

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

Intentional Rituals

A ritual is an intentional habit. It is one we cultivate as a gift to our future selves. Each time we do something intentionally, we are increasing our conscious awareness and making contact with the present moment. Evaluate yourself in each of these areas to see how you are doing taking care of yourself and your future. Estimate how much time have you spent in each area this past week. What did you do to support yourself in each area? What are your observations about how you spend your time in each area?

1

solitude/meditation

2

learning

3

caring for your environment

4

physical health

5

mental health

6

managing money

7

passion project

8

work/making money

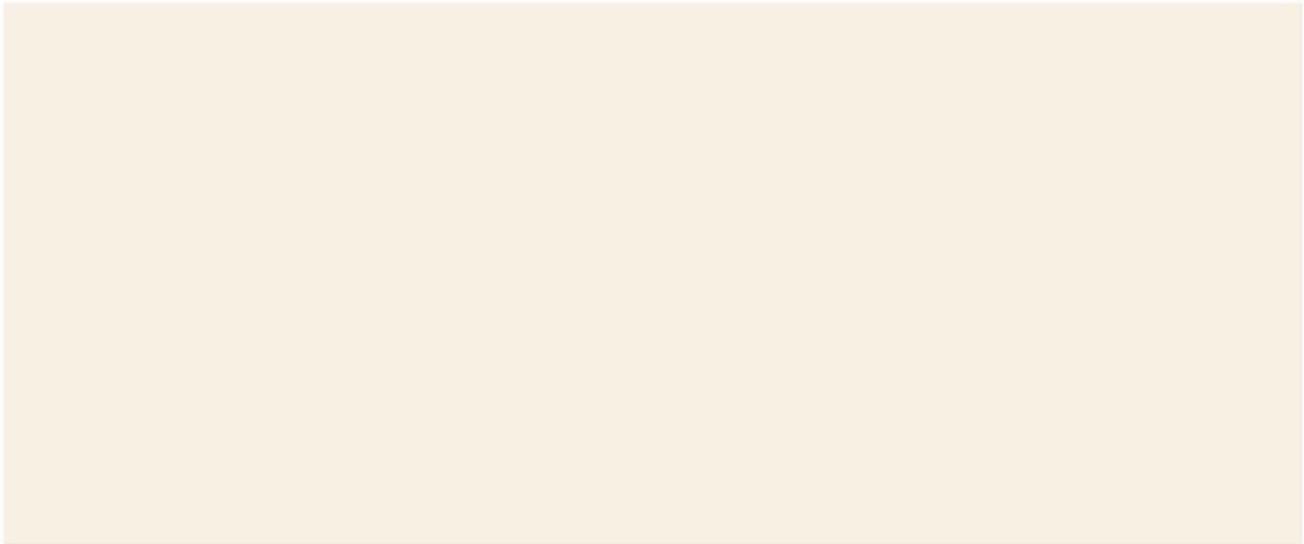
9

social time

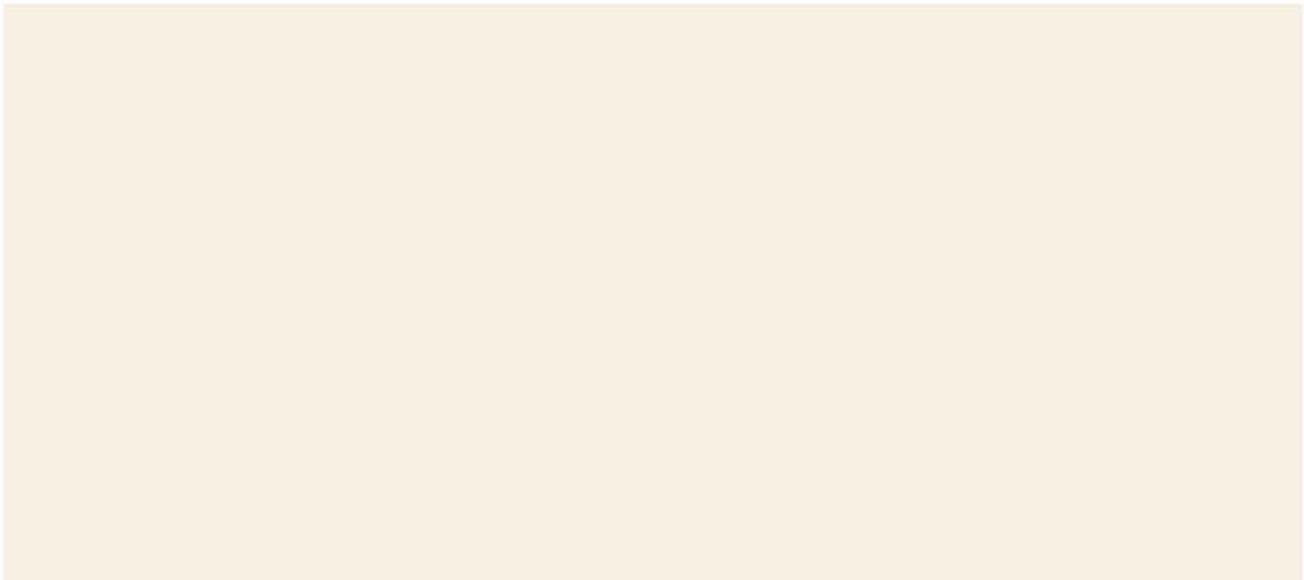
INTENTIONAL THOUGHTS

When was the last time you updated your thoughts? It is time to choose your thoughts carefully. Your thoughts inform your feelings, which in turn, inform your actions and the outcomes. What thoughts do you need to let go of and what new thoughts do you need to think to overcome your internal obstacles? Answer the questions below.

What thoughts do you need to let go of? Write down any old, repetitive, negative thoughts as well as any usual/common thoughts that come up when you are stressed or sad. Write down your painful thoughts which are echos from the past.



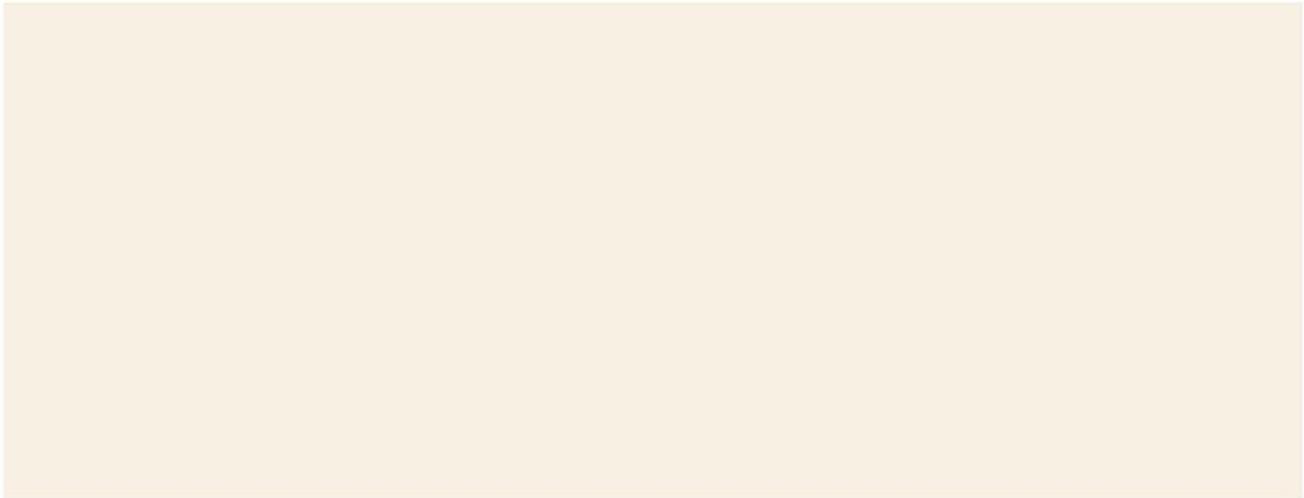
Where did these thoughts come from? Do you think these old thoughts are true or serve you now? Do you want to carry them forward? Are you ready to let them go?



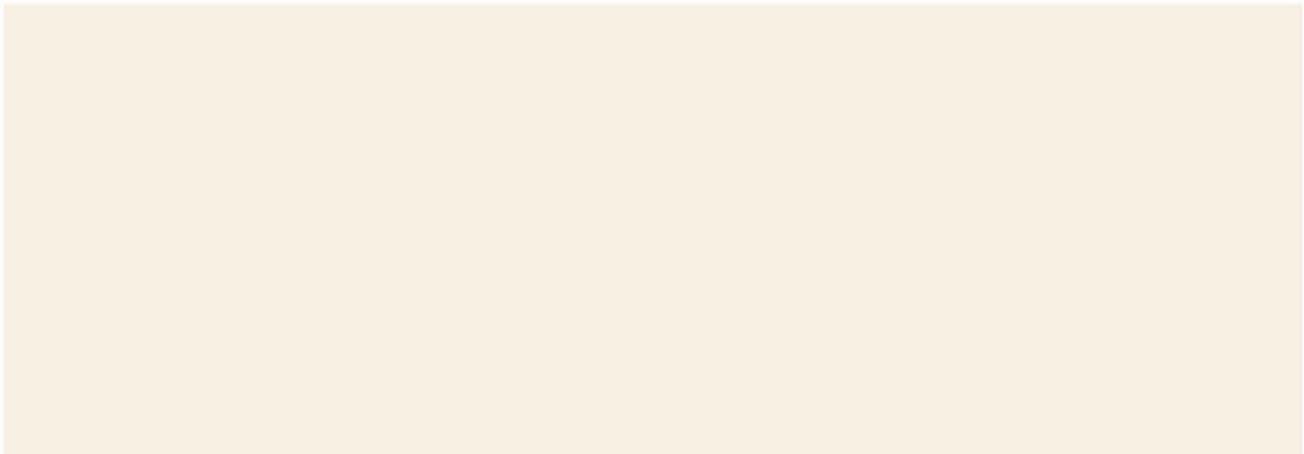
INTENTIONAL THOUGHTS

It is impossible to turn old, negative thoughts into something positive. Instead, we can accept that these old thoughts will sometimes emerge, especially when we are stressed, angry or tired. It is essential that we replace old, negative thoughts with new, helpful and productive thoughts. Overtime, the new thoughts will help you overcome the negative ones. Answer the questions below.

Start by imagining what a confident woman thinks. Write down all the thoughts you imagine she is thinking, and all the feelings you imagine she is feeling. Use your imagination.

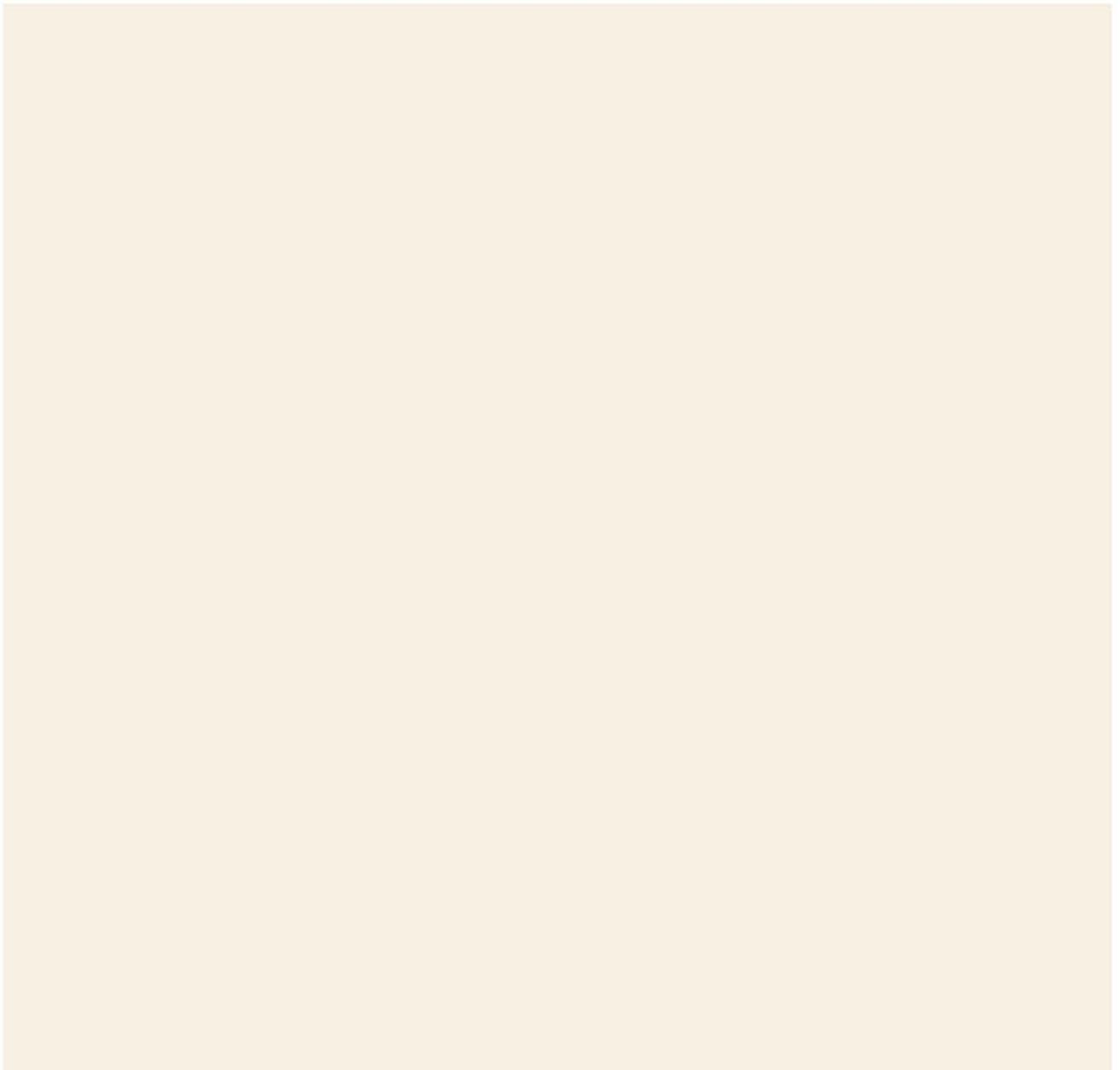


Perhaps the thoughts you wrote down seem too extreme or far away for you right now. If that is the case, remember, it was your brain that thought of those confident thoughts! You created them! Practice reading and thinking the above thoughts every day. If you think you would have difficulty believing the thoughts you wrote above, you can modify your statements. Craft a few more moderate thoughts that will serve you if the above statements seem extreme, and for days when you are feeling down. You can add the following phrase in front of the statement: "It is possible...." For example, "I am amazing" can become, "It is possible that I can amazing today". Write a few thoughts that will serve as a "ladder" to the stronger statements you wrote above.



Reflections on Your New Thoughts

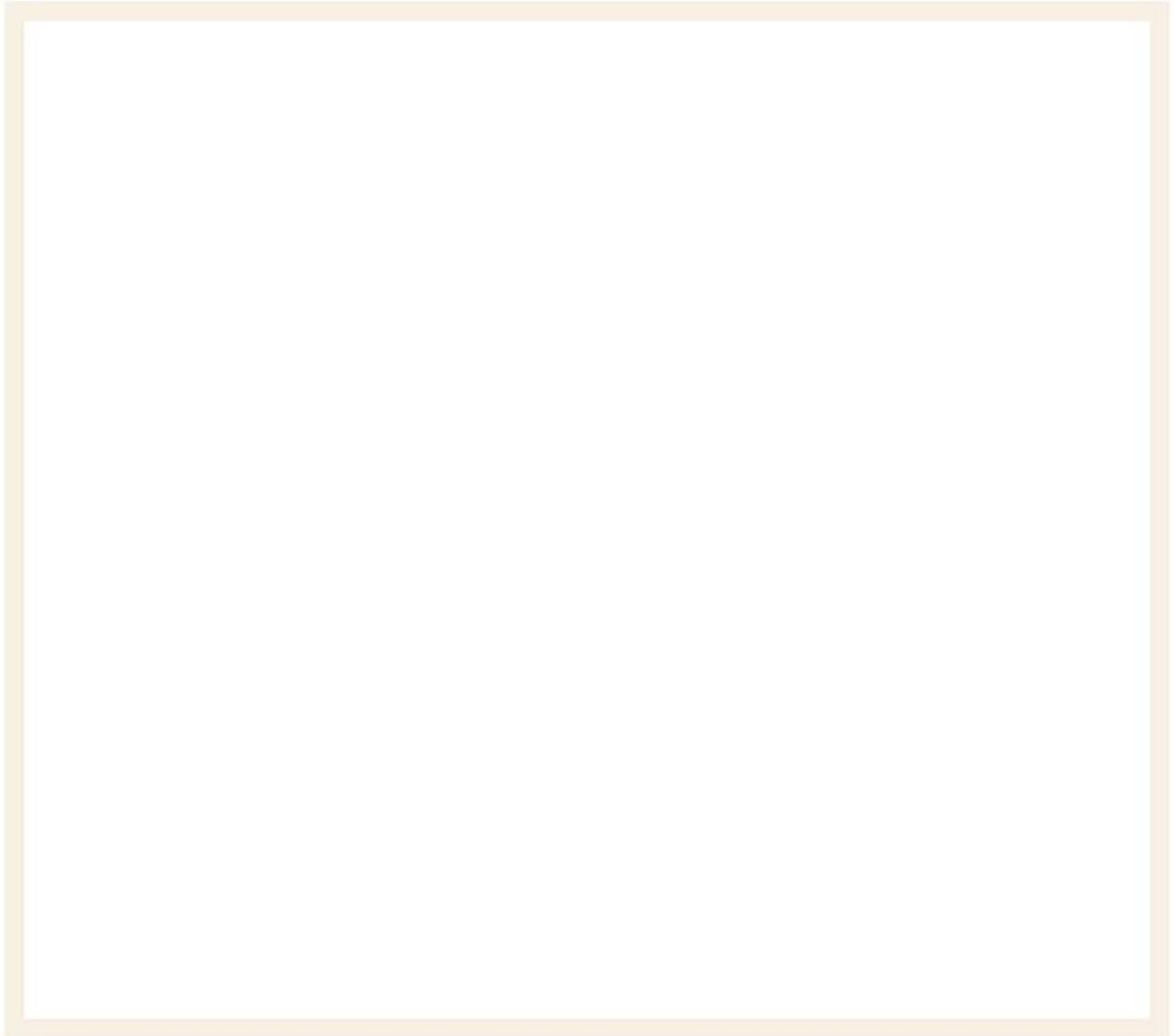
Remember thoughts are just one neuron firing to another neuron. Thoughts are not true - they are neurotransmitters engaged in a biological process in your brain. As another example, your heart is not your life - it is pulses and electrical signals in your chest. Thoughts are often repetitive and we think 3-5 times more negative thoughts than positive ones! It seems almost too simple to just start thinking new thoughts to start feeling better. While new thoughts take time to change your feelings, research shows we need positive thoughts about ourselves, others, our circumstances and the future. In particular, we need thoughts about being a positive and optimistic person. How did you benefit from creating your new thoughts this week? How will these help you? What judgments will you let go of? Where will you post these new thoughts? The more times you read your new thoughts, the faster your brain will begin to believe them.



Visual Expression

Find three images on Pinterest or in magazines that illustrate your new positive thoughts.

Avoid thinking too long about it and just be spontaneous. It's ok if you are unable to explain in words why the images relate to your new thoughts. 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! Perhaps you can hang the images where you can see them and be inspired.



Title:

Three words or phrases to describe your art.

-
-
-

How do you feel?

REFLECTION

Reflect on what you have learned about your mindset and how you changed your relationship with your thoughts. Why do you think new thoughts are important? Do you understand yet how your thoughts are not facts and we can't believe everything we think? Avoid judging yourself for what you did or did not do this week.

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PURPOSE

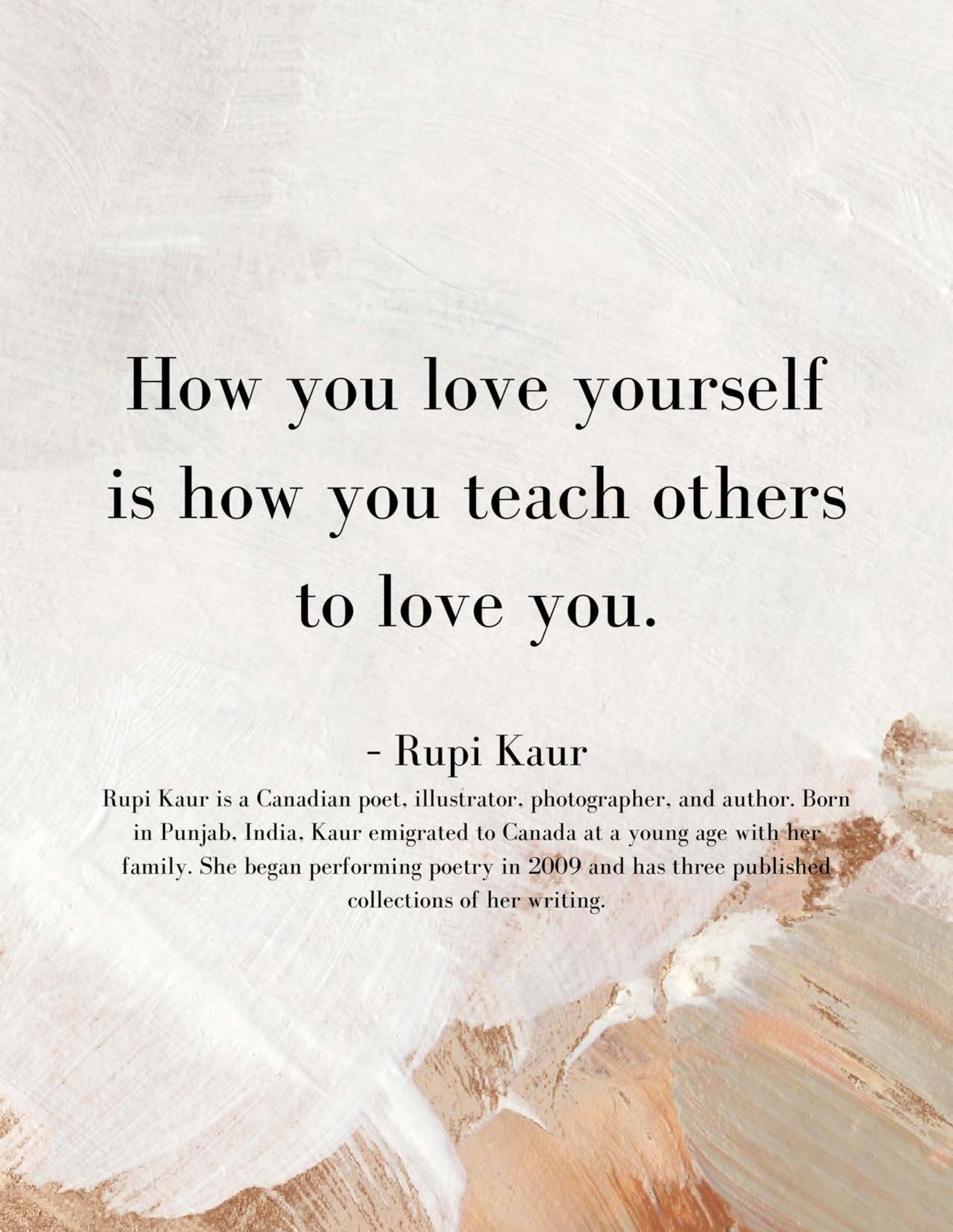
Your Values & Committed Actions

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 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 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.

The background of the image is an abstract, textured surface. It features broad, sweeping brushstrokes in shades of white, cream, and light brown. The strokes are layered and overlapping, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall effect is reminiscent of a watercolor or oil painting on a slightly rough canvas. The colors are soft and muted, contributing to a calm and artistic atmosphere.

How you love yourself
is how you teach others
to love you.

- Rupi Kaur

Rupi Kaur is a Canadian poet, illustrator, photographer, and author. Born in Punjab, India, Kaur emigrated to Canada at a young age with her family. She began performing poetry in 2009 and has three published collections of her writing.

Make Your One Priority

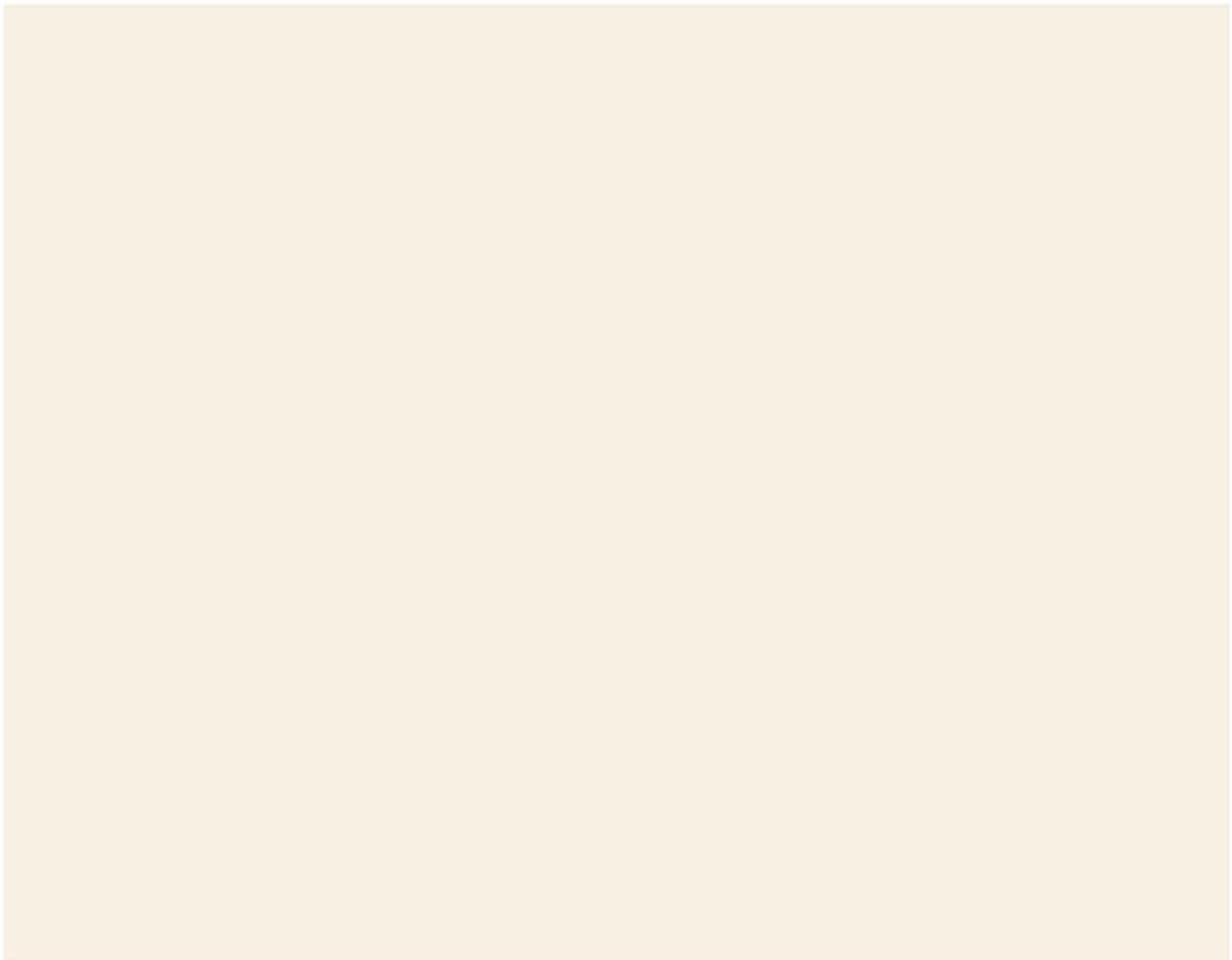
Priority is a "singular" word - meaning we have only one priority. Only recently did it become a plural noun. "Priorities" implies we can have more than one thing important at a time. This runs opposite to our goal of making contact with the present moment and being focused. Pause for a moment and identify your priority right now. Hopefully, you named only one thing - doing this workbook. If you are trying to multi-task, just pick one and let the other ones wait. We double the time needed to accomplish two tasks when we are trying to do them both at the same time. Research shows we leave "attention residue" on each task we do in a day. Thus, we fatigue more easily when we shift tasks frequently and we have less mental energy to focus.

Reflect on what is most important to you. See the link below and in the bonus materials on the Modern Creative Woman Membership page for a quick and fun values inventory.

<https://personalvalu.es/personal-values-test>

What was your top value?

Using your top five values from the quiz, reflect on how often you are actually practicing and demonstrating our values on a daily basis. Give yourself a percentage grade between 0-100 to show how often you are living your values. What gets in your way of focusing on your values?



Solving a Small Problem

Choose a small problem. It needs to be a small problem so you understand how this process works. While you are learning this very powerful art exercise, please avoid picking a large problem or one with a lot of heavy emotional challenges associated with it. You want to master the technique before you use it on something emotionally complex.

You will complete three drawings. Avoid worrying about what the drawings look like - this is all about the process. Create your three drawings, answer the questions at the bottom of each page and then answer the questions at the end. Plan enough time so you can complete all three drawings and answer the questions all in one session. It might take you 45 - 60 minutes. Read the instructions here before you begin.

First Drawing - draw a small problem with a pencil, pen or markers. Depict the problem in as much detail as possible. Feel free to label and write on your art to make everything clear and specific.

Example: need to talk to a friend, set a boundary, go see the dentist, make a small decision.

Second drawing - draw what it would look like when the problem is already solved. What do you notice? What is happening? How do you feel and think differently when the problem is gone?

Depict the solution in as much detail as possible. Feel free to label your art to make everything clear and specific.

Example: Draw and label the specifics of talking to your friend, sitting at the dentist office, or your decision has been made.

Third drawing - draw a way you can solve the problem to get you from drawing one (the problem) to drawing two (the problem is solved). What will you have to do to get from the problem to the solution. Avoid anything fanciful such as "win the lottery" or "find a pot of gold." Instead focus on strategies you can use to solve the problem.

Repeat this third drawing as many times as you need until you have an approach you are invested in using to solve your problem.

Writing and Reflection: label your drawing and answer the questions.

Extra copies of these worksheets are located at the back of the workbook.

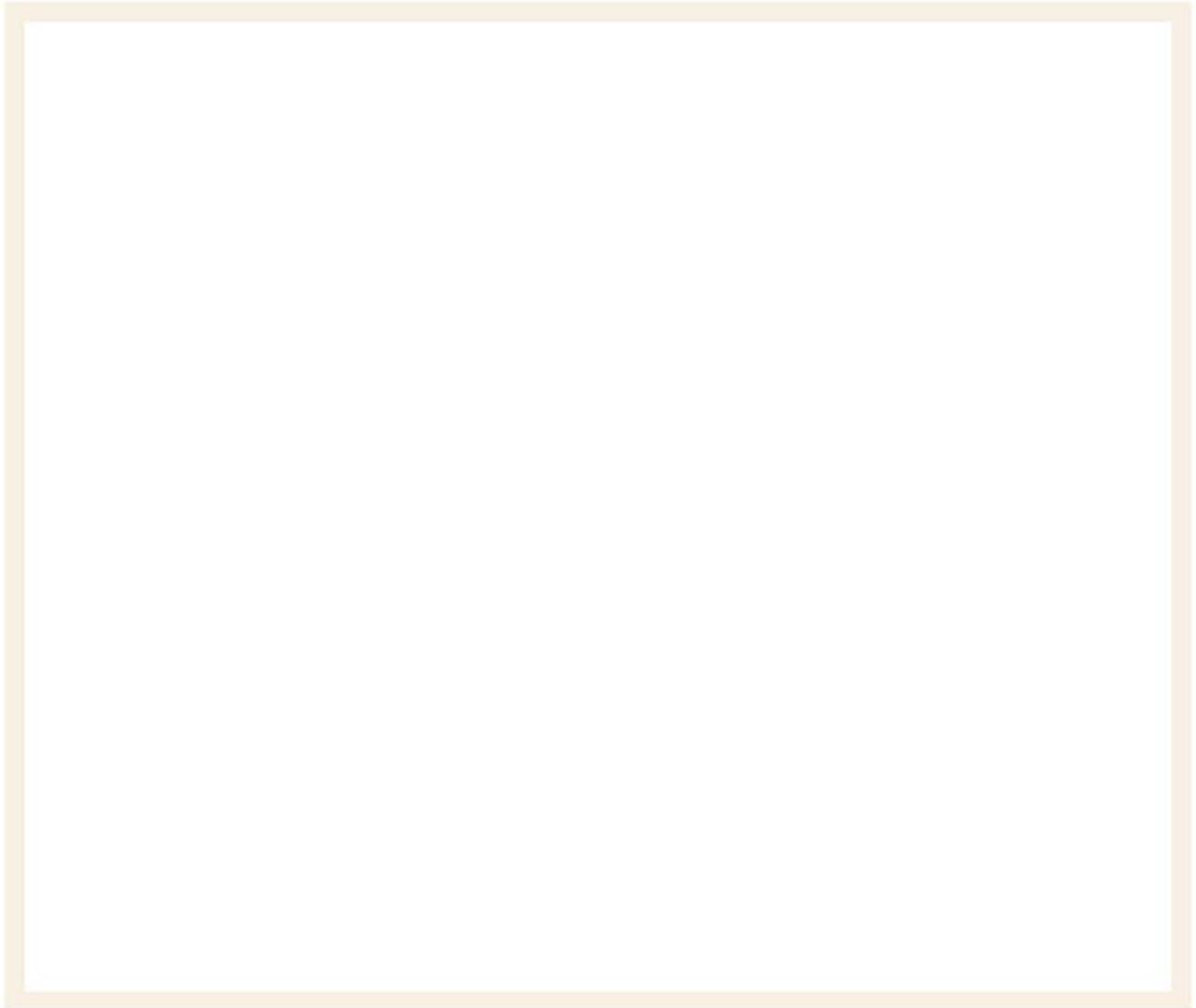
The Problem

First Drawing - draw a small problem. Depict the problem in as much detail as possible. Feel free to label and write on your art to make everything clear and specific.

Example: need to talk to a friend, set a boundary, go see the dentist, make a small decision.

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!



Title:

Three words or phrases to describe your art.

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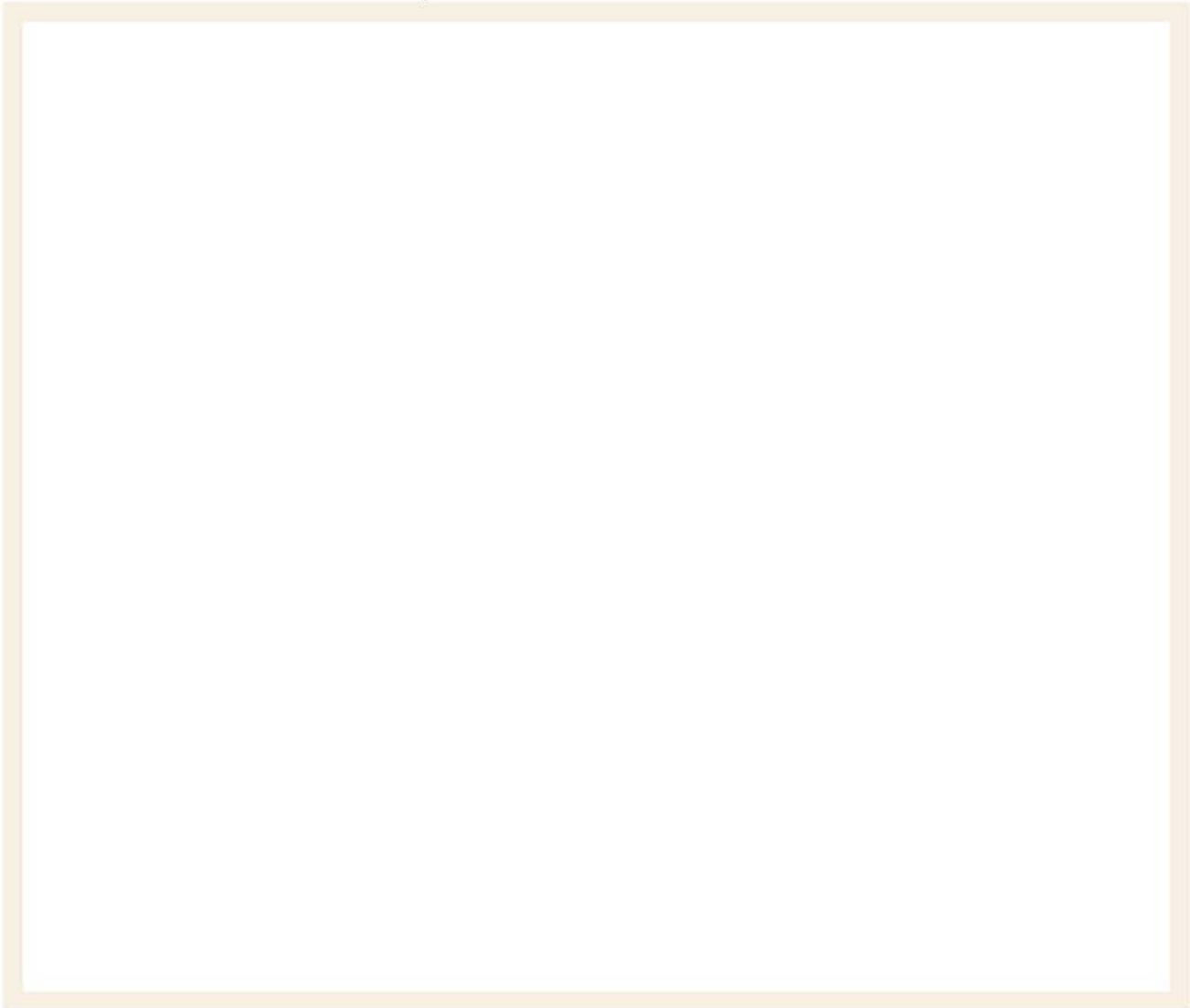
How do you feel?

The Problem is Solved

Second drawing - draw what it would look like when the problem is already solved. What do you notice? What is happening? How are things in your life when the problem is gone?

Depict the solution in as much detail as possible. Feel free to label your art to make everything clear and specific. Remember, this is not how you will get to the solution...just a picture of the problem already resolved.

Example: Draw and label the specifics of talking to your friend, sitting at the dentist office, or your decision has been made.



Title:

Three words or phrases to describe your art.

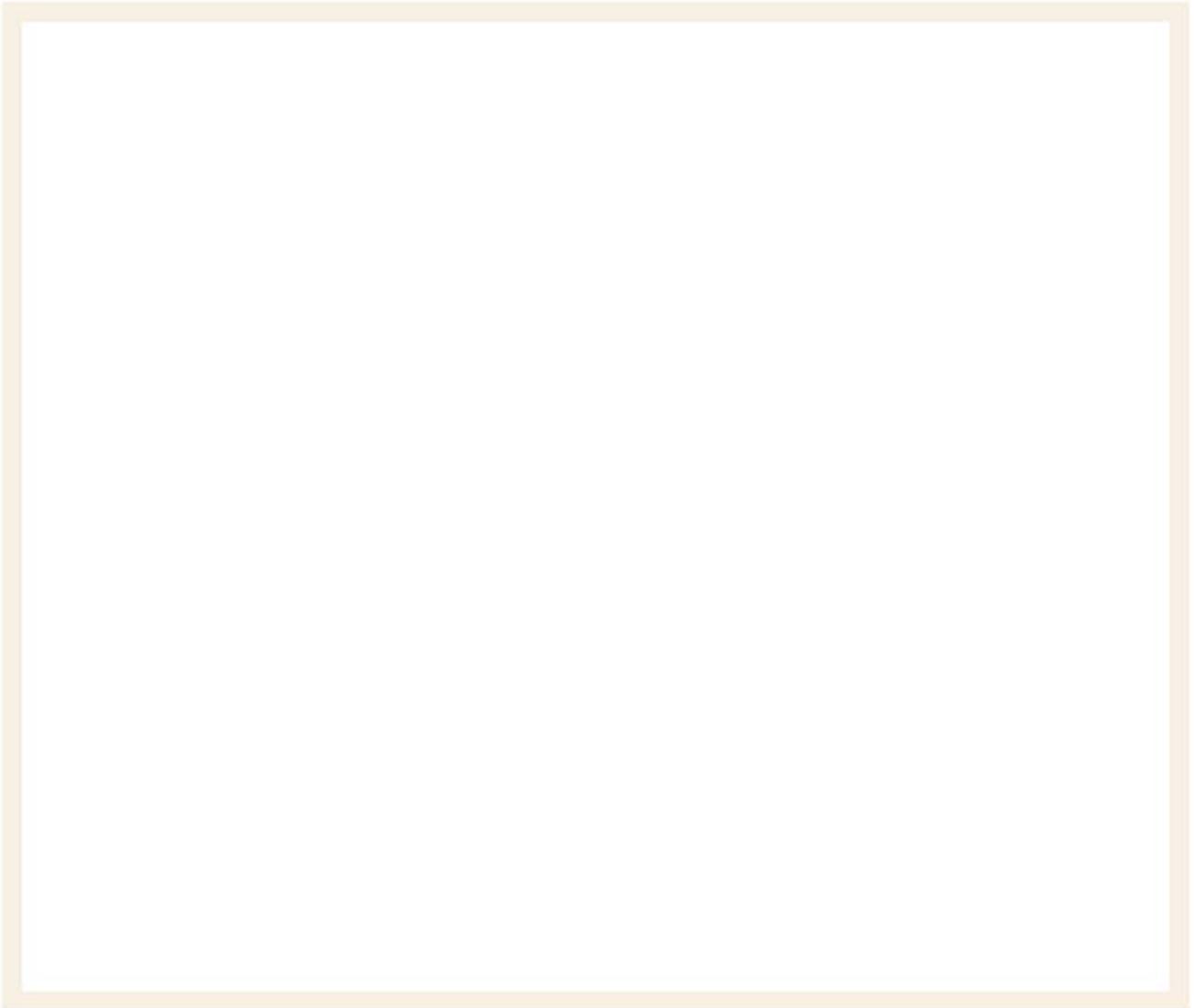
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How do you feel?

From Problem to Solution

Third drawing - draw a way you can solve the problem to get you from drawing one (the problem) to drawing two (the problem is solved). What will you have to do to get from the problem to the solution? Avoid anything fanciful such as "win the lottery" or "find a pot of gold." Instead focus on strategies you can use to solve the problem.

Repeat this third drawing as many times as you need until you have an approach you are invested in using to solve your problem.



Title:

Three words or phrases to describe your art.

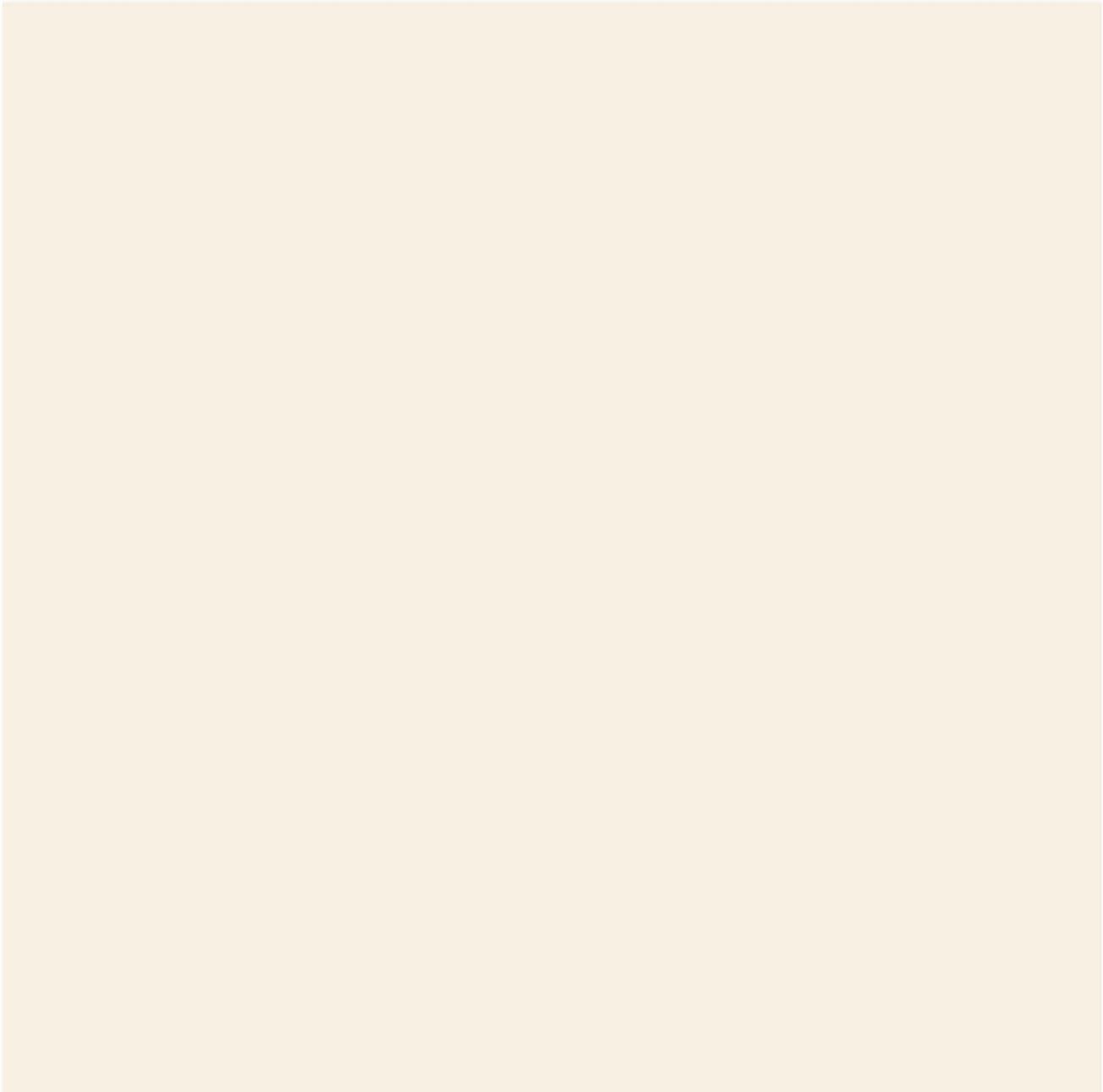
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How do you feel?

REFLECTION

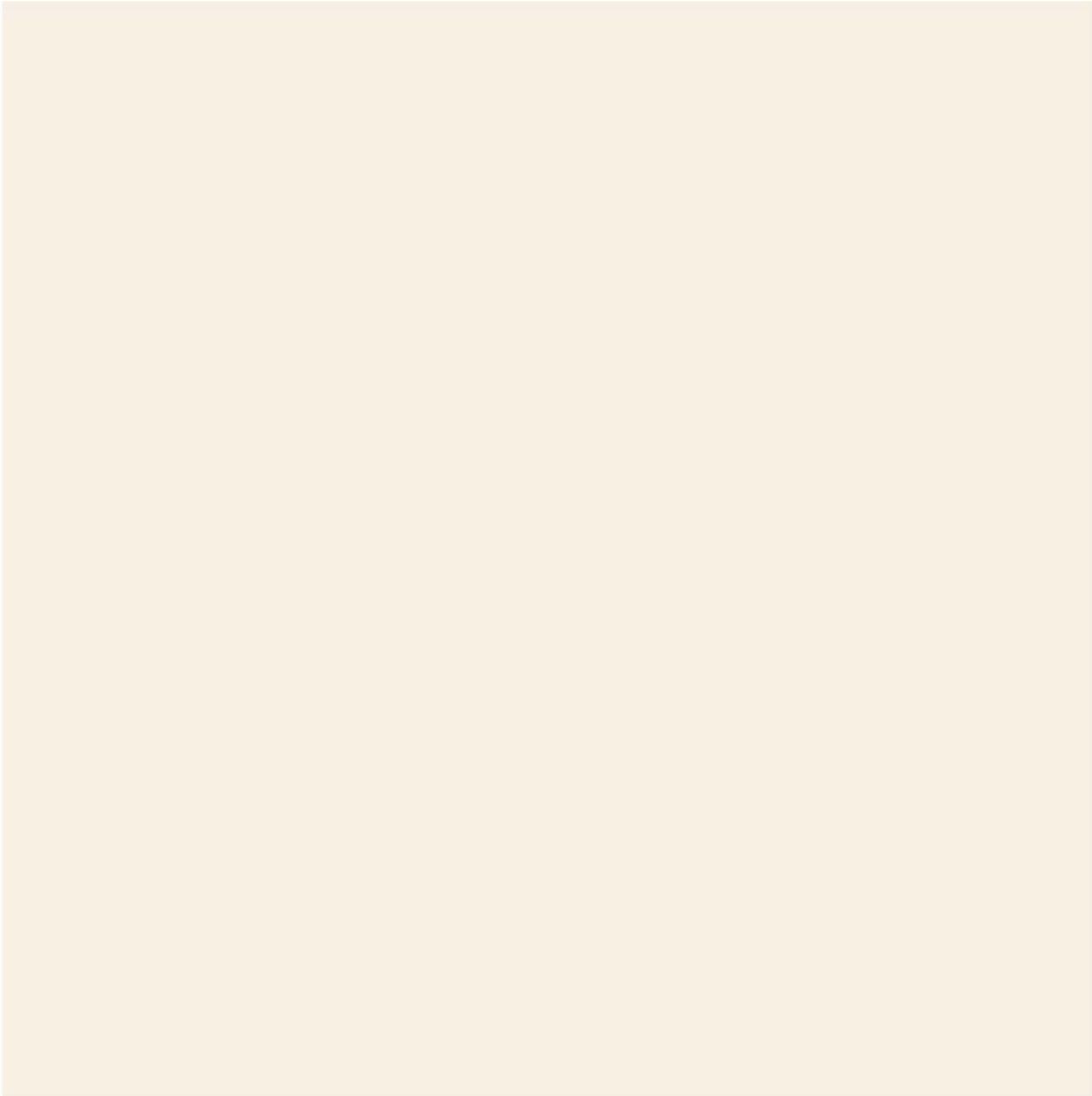
Write about your art making process and what you think of your strategy to solve your problem. Where do you feel at ease with the problem now? Are you able to see clearly in how to solve the problem? What sticks out to you about the process? If you are still undecided about how to solve the problem, give yourself 10 more minutes to reflect and then take action. Avoid lingering in confusion. If you need more information, take a step to get the information. If you have all the information you need, pick one of your solution ideas and start working on it. It is most important that you take action to solve the problem and not delay until you are perfectly confident, secure or fully decided. Those moments of total confidence rarely, if ever, exist for important decision.

Taking action, not thinking, will give you clarity.



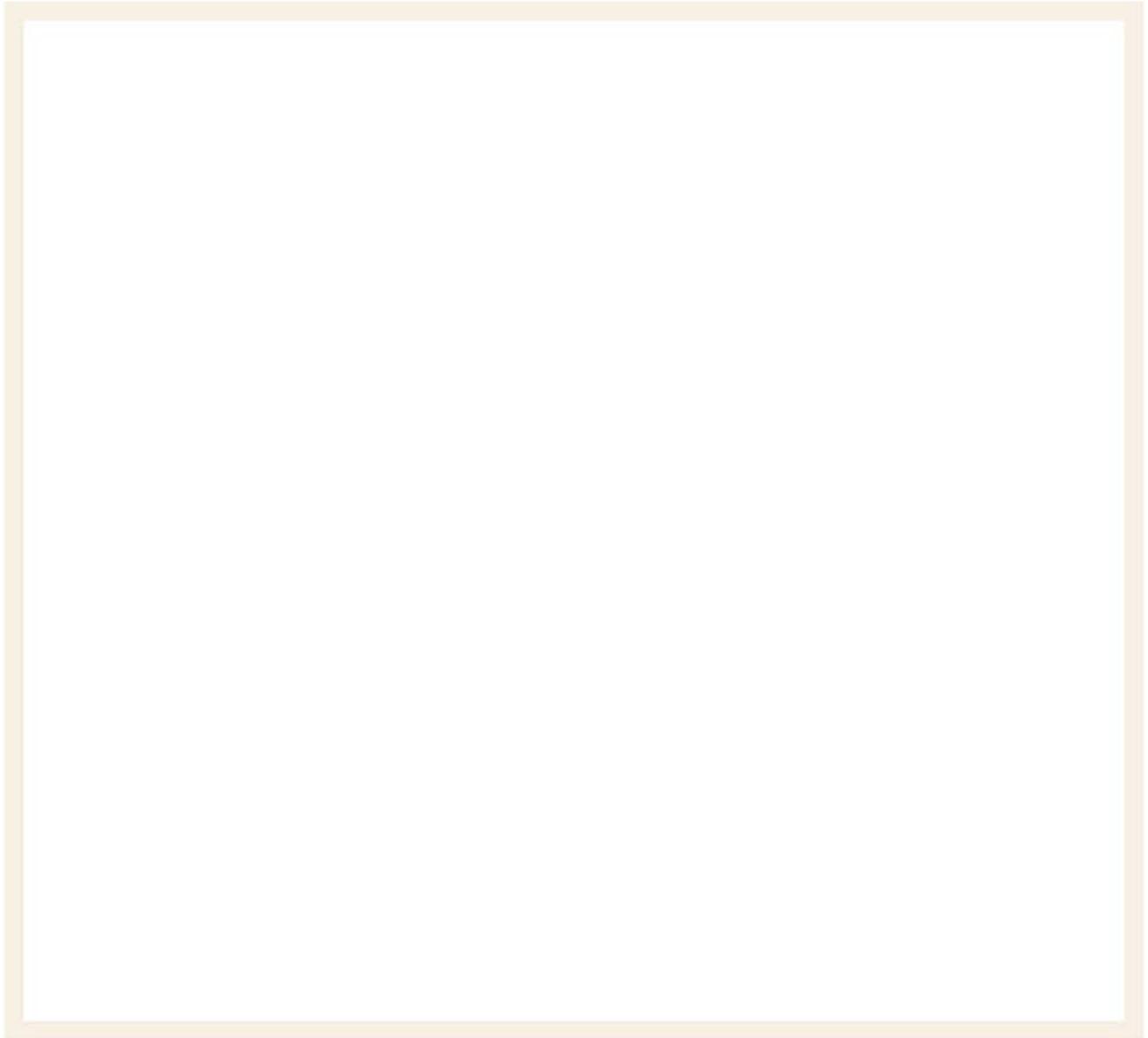
Committed Action Brainstorm

It is time to take action! Pick one of your top values and brainstorm your plan of action. What will you do TODAY to show that value? Exercise? Call a friend? Start a savings account? Spend a little more time by yourself? A brainstorm means a list of all possible ideas, without judgment. One idea will lead to the next if you are able to suspend judgement until after you have a long list. Brainstorm activates the creative parts of our brain. Once you have a list of possible ideas, pick one you will do today. Make your action small enough and possible for today. Do not wait or put it off for tomorrow or pick anything complicated or so big that you are unable to accomplish it today. If you worry you will be unable to follow through, text a friend or post on social media what you are doing. Research shows that kind of declaration helps us follow through.



Visual Expression

Create a doodle to motivate yourself to take one small action. Think about your action while you doodle and imagine how wonderful you will feel after you keep your word and take action. Be prepared for judgmental thoughts about why you did not act sooner, or that you have so much more to do. That is just your brain doing what brains do. Review your positive thoughts when these old, negative thoughts emerge. Answer the questions below.



Title:

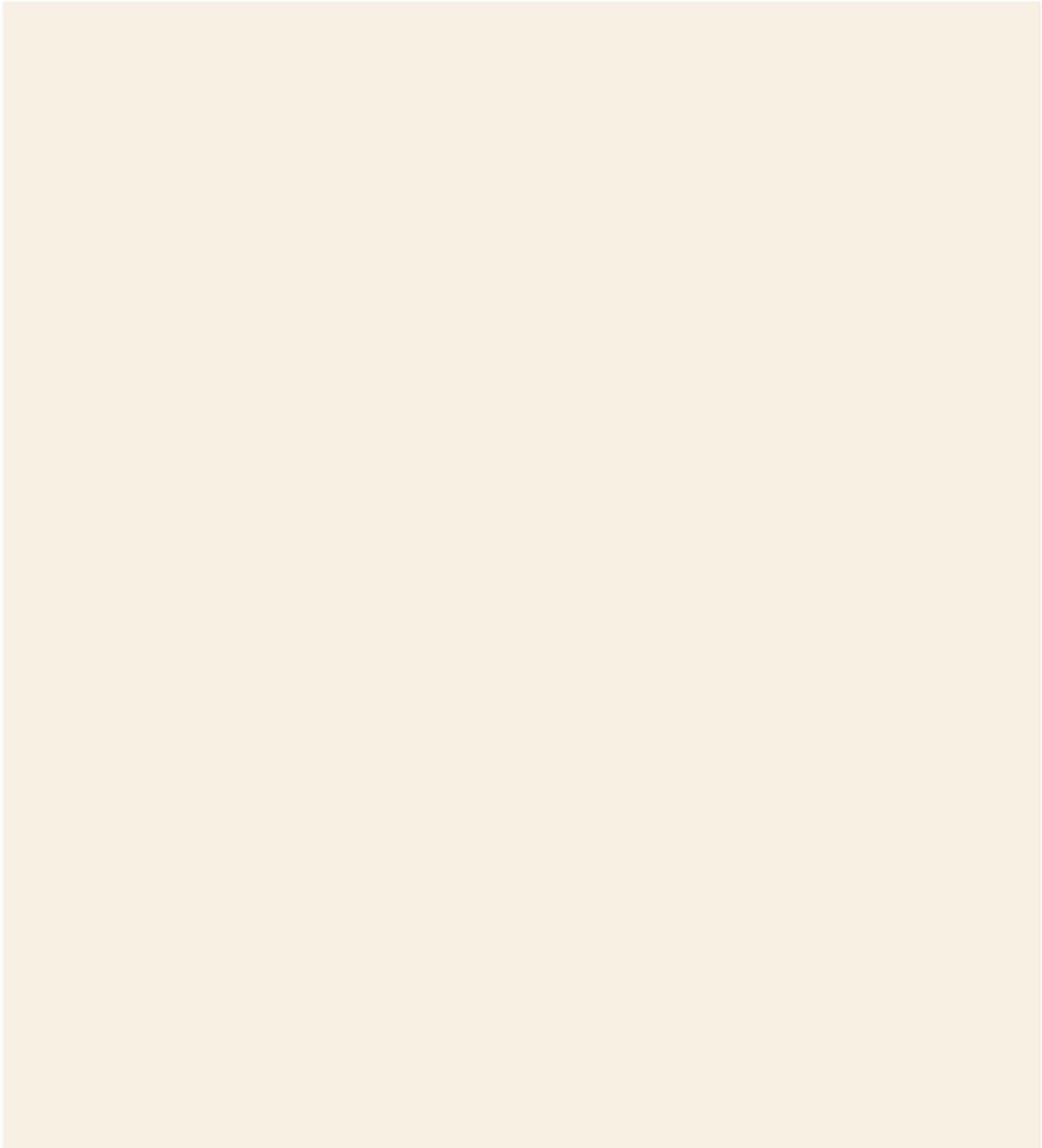
Three words or phrases to describe your art.

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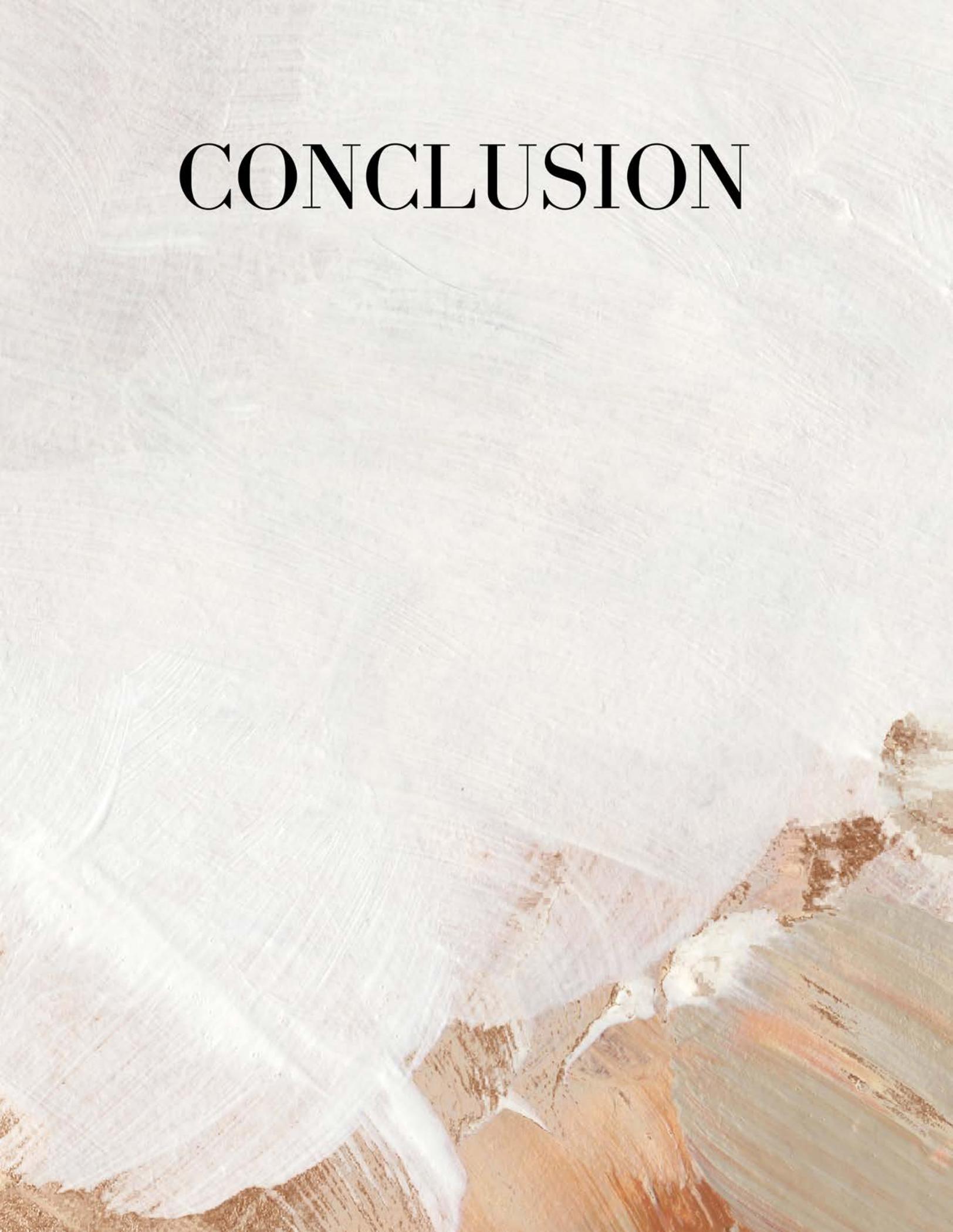
How do you feel?

REFLECTION

Reflect on what you have learned from this month about getting out of your own way. Notice your thoughts, feelings and actions in alignment with the idea of taking action. How did you feel paying such close attention to yourself? Was it fun? Uncomfortable? Whatever comes up for you is welcome in your writing.



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 earthy tones, including various shades of brown, tan, and beige, interspersed with white and light greenish-grey areas. The overall effect is that of a layered, possibly marbled or painted surface, with visible brushwork and organic, irregular patterns.

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 this month that I am celebrating...

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...

(coffee, cake, new book, manicure, time alone, etc.)

YOU GOT OUT OF YOUR WAY!

You have completed a month of practicing getting out of your own way! Congratulations on all your progress! What new thoughts will you keep? What new actions will you take to engage more with your values?

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, the Women's Search for Meaning individual program, or mentoring. If you live in CA, you can also schedule individual psychotherapy.

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

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.

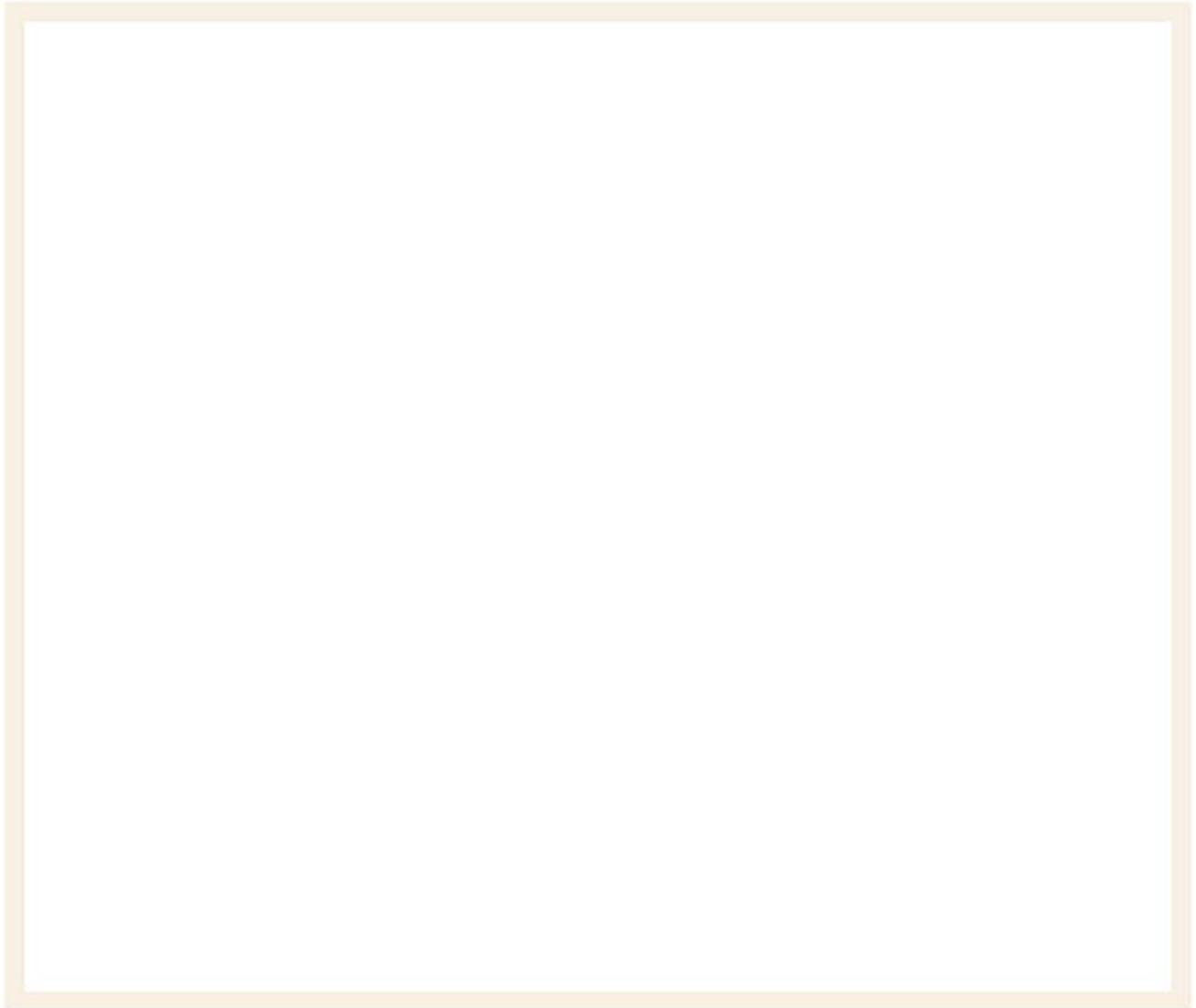
The Problem

First Drawing - draw a small problem. Depict the problem in as much detail as possible. Feel free to label and write on your art to make everything clear and specific.

Example: need to talk to a friend, set a boundary, go see the dentist, make a small decision.

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!



Title:

Three words or phrases to describe your art.

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-

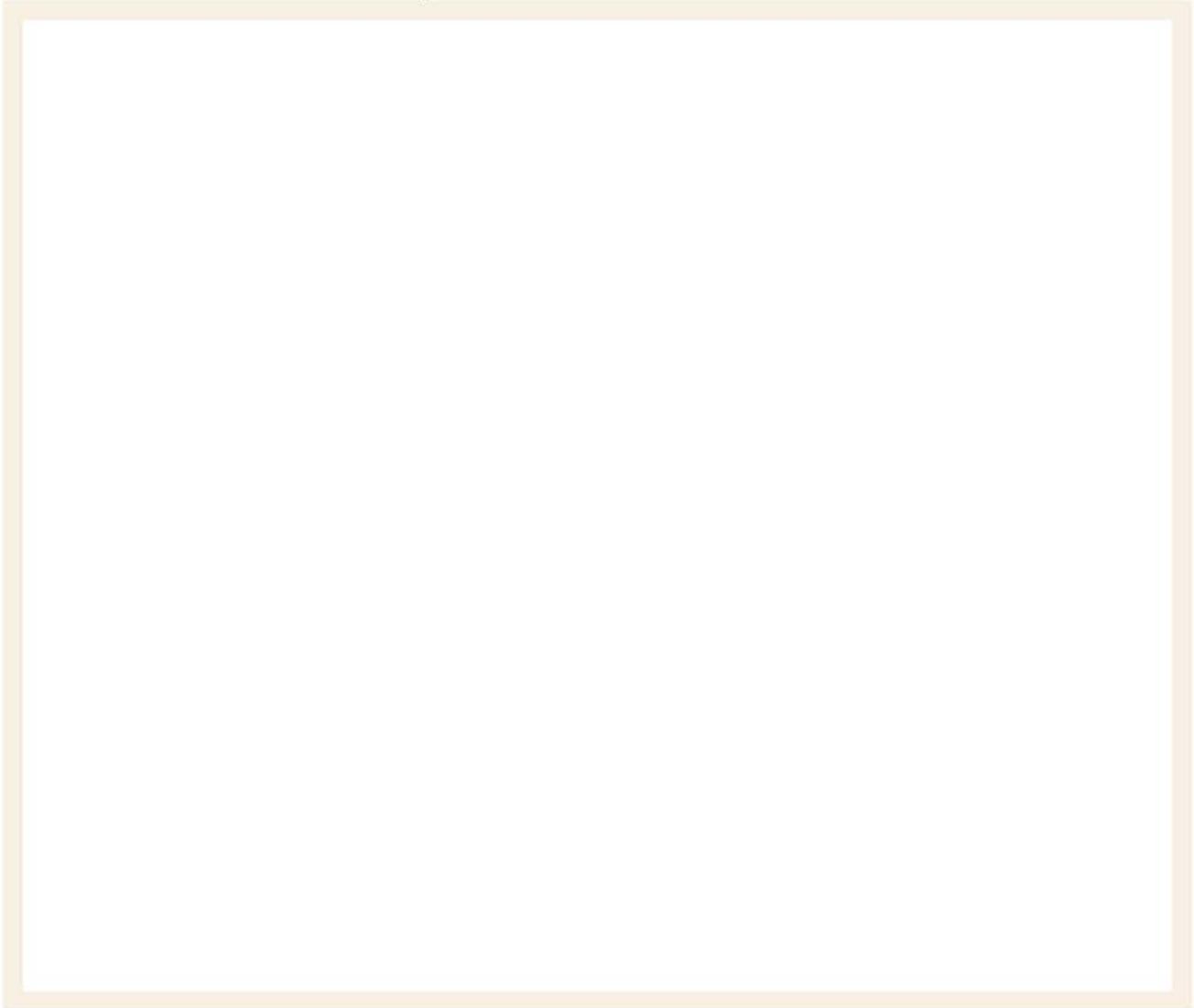
How do you feel?

The Problem is Solved

Second drawing - draw what it would look like when the problem is already solved. What do you notice? What is happening? How are things in your life when the problem is gone?

Depict the solution in as much detail as possible. Feel free to label your art to make everything clear and specific. Remember, this is not how you will get to the solution...just a picture of the problem already resolved.

Example: Draw and label the specifics of talking to your friend, sitting at the dentist office, or your decision has been made.



Title:

Three words or phrases to describe your art.

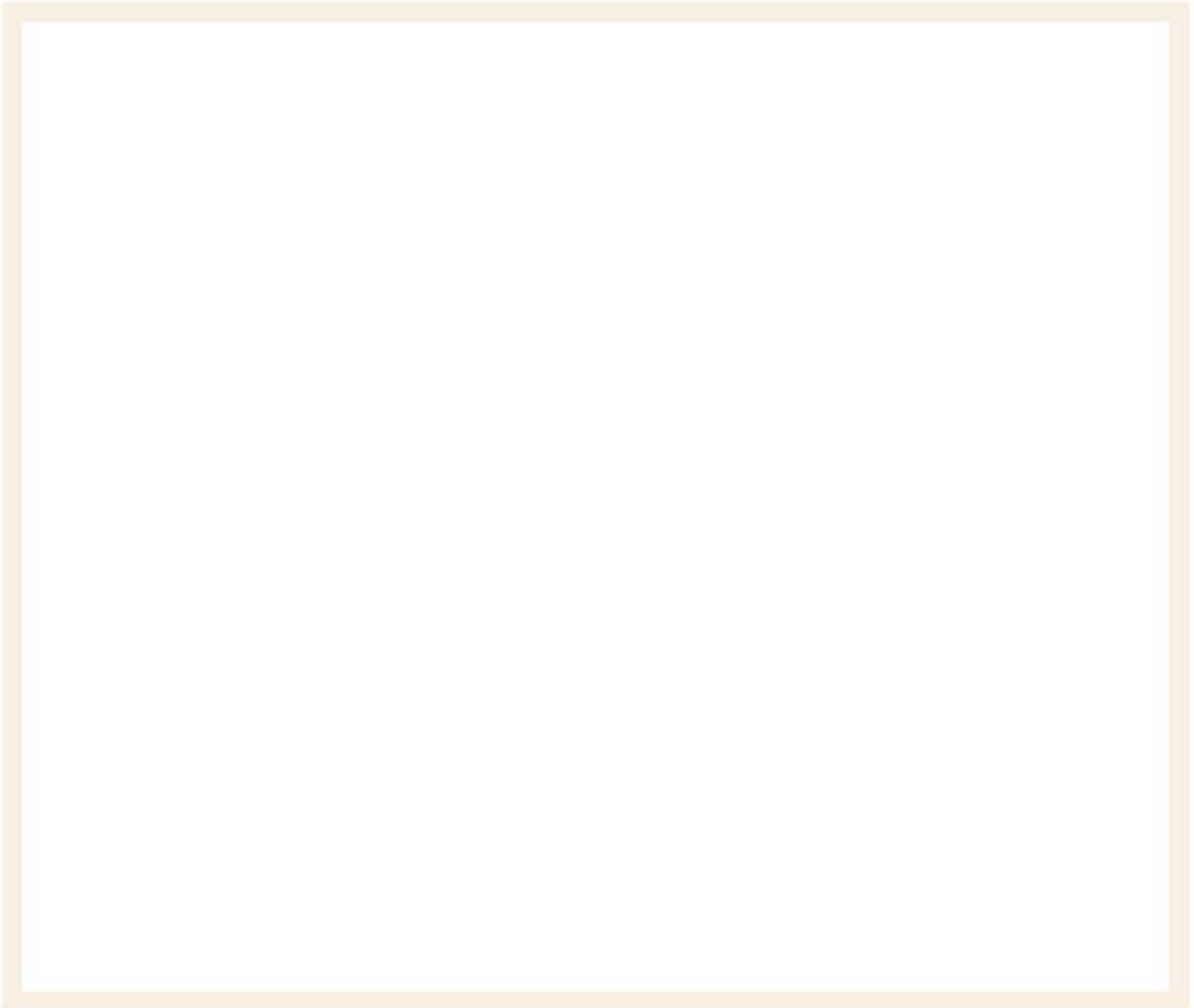
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How do you feel?

From Problem to Solution

Third drawing - draw a way you can solve the problem to get you from drawing one (the problem) to drawing two (the problem is solved). What will you have to do to get from the problem to the solution? Avoid anything fanciful such as "win the lottery" or "find a pot of gold." Instead focus on strategies you can use to solve the problem.

Repeat this third drawing as many times as you need until you have an approach you are invested in using to solve your problem.



Title:

Three words or phrases to describe your art.

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How do you feel?

