

The Art & Science of Love

The Modern Creative Woman

I'm really exciting.
I smile a lot, I win a lot,
and I'm really sexy.

— Serena Williams

She is among the greatest tennis players of all time, ranked world No. 1 in singles by the Women's Tennis Association for 319 weeks, including a joint-record 186 consecutive weeks, and finished as the year-end No. 1 five times.

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.

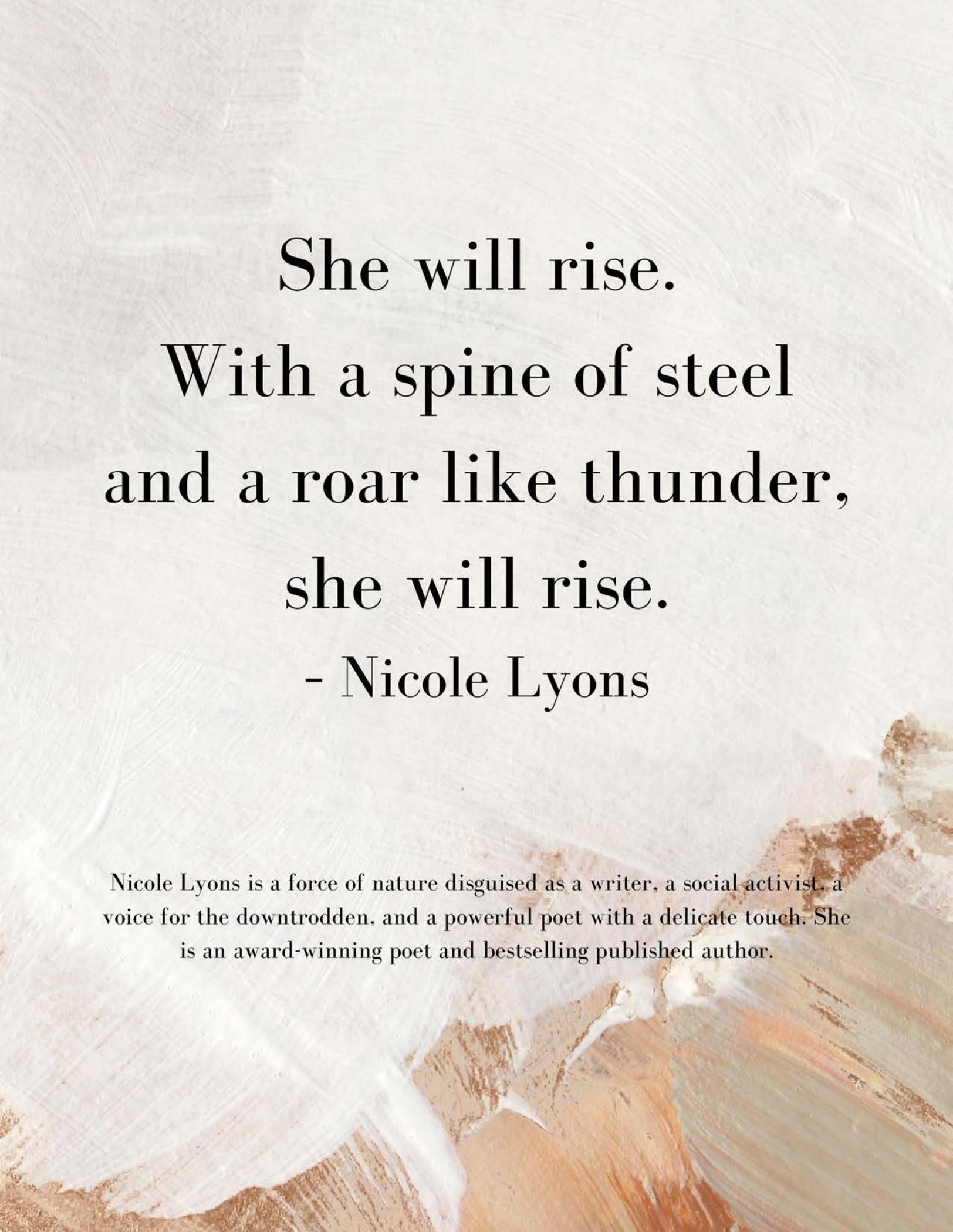
PRESENCE

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.

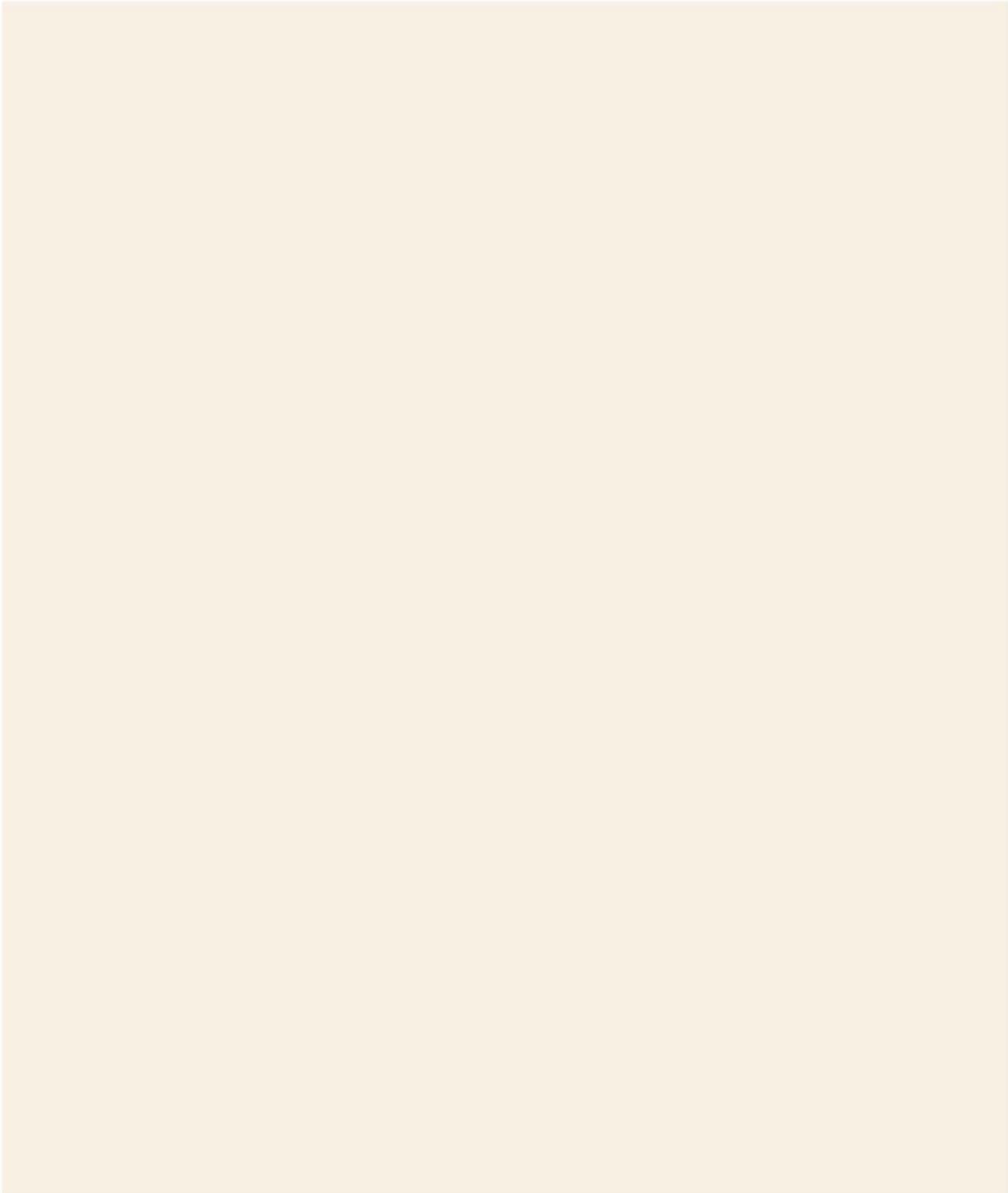


She will rise.
With a spine of steel
and a roar like thunder,
she will rise.
- Nicole Lyons

Nicole Lyons is a force of nature disguised as a writer, a social activist, a voice for the downtrodden, and a powerful poet with a delicate touch. She is an award-winning poet and bestselling published author.

INTENTIONS

Are you ready for love? What are you hoping to get out of this class?



Dating Yourself

Highlight three activities in each section that you will commit to doing this month. Choose something new that will give you pleasure. Choose ones you are not already doing or did in the last 3 months. Stretch yourself take a risk and select ones you find exciting and romantic.



1

Presence

Get a facial, manicure, massage, prayer, meditation, do a mindful walk in nature, visit coffee shop, sleep-in, coffee in bed, go to a clothing or fabric store and touch many kinds of material to learn what feels most amazing, sensual and pleasing to you, wear your favorite color, buy yourself flowers, get dressed up every Tuesday, light a candle, take a bath with salts/oils, savor your favorite kind of chocolate or other treat.

Other _____.



2

Mindset

Write a love note to yourself and send it in the mail, list 25 things about yourself and your life for which you are grateful, name your top three passions and do one of them, ask a friend to tell you a positive story about you when you were your at your best (and return the favor), read a book of love poems, read a modern romance book, watch a romantic movie, journal 10 minute about how you will love yourself this year, donate 5 pieces of clothes that fail to make your heart sing, wear lipstick, have an artist date.

Other _____.



3

Purpose

Learn something your future self wants to know, take yourself on your ideal date, take a class, join a meet-up group, invite someone over for tea, schedule that risk you have been dreaming of, buy new pajamas, try intuitive painting, toss out any old pajamas & underwear, get a bra fitting & purchase a new set in a pleasing color. Other _____.

Dating Yourself

Here are your commitments for the month. Select nine tasks from the previous page. Pick three from the Presence section and write them in in the presence column below. Select three from the Mindset section and write them in the Mindset column below. Pick three from the Purpose section and write them in the Purpose column below.

Presence

Mindset

Purpose

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

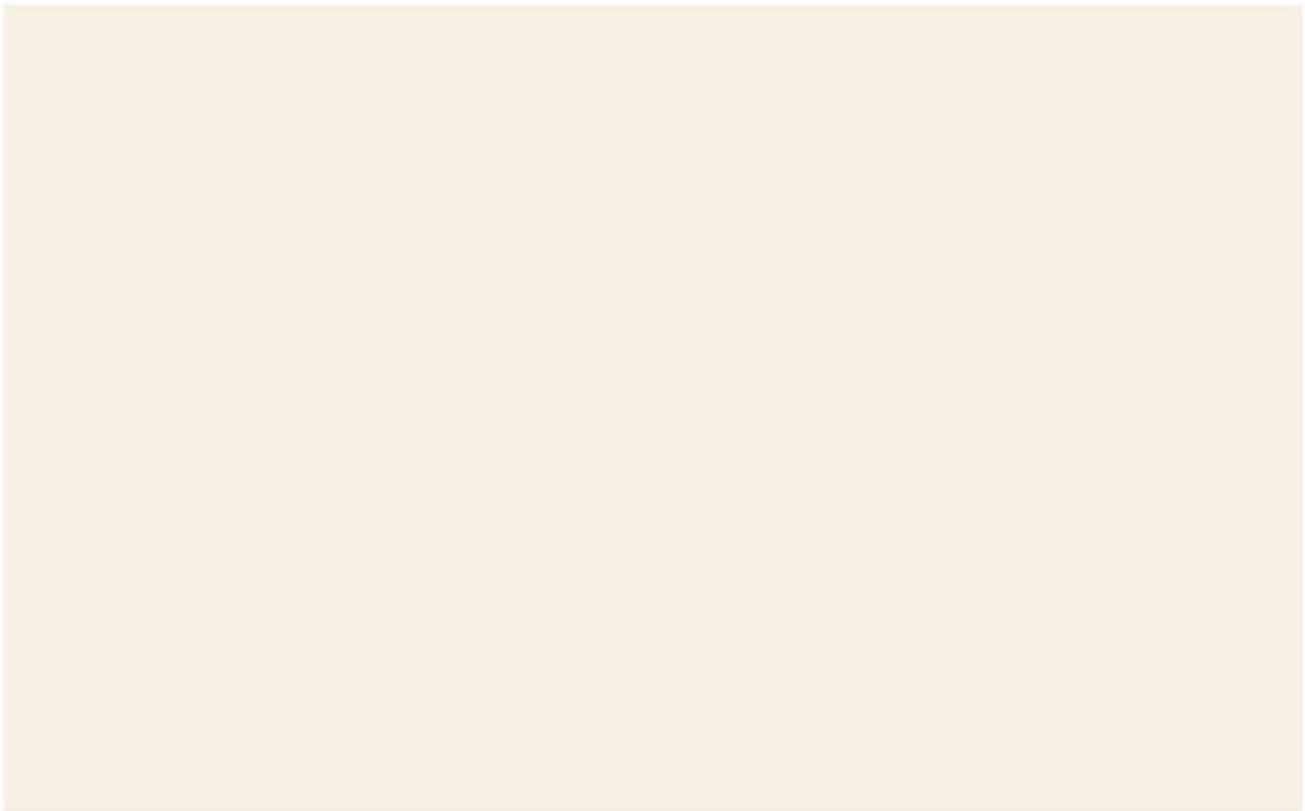
8

9

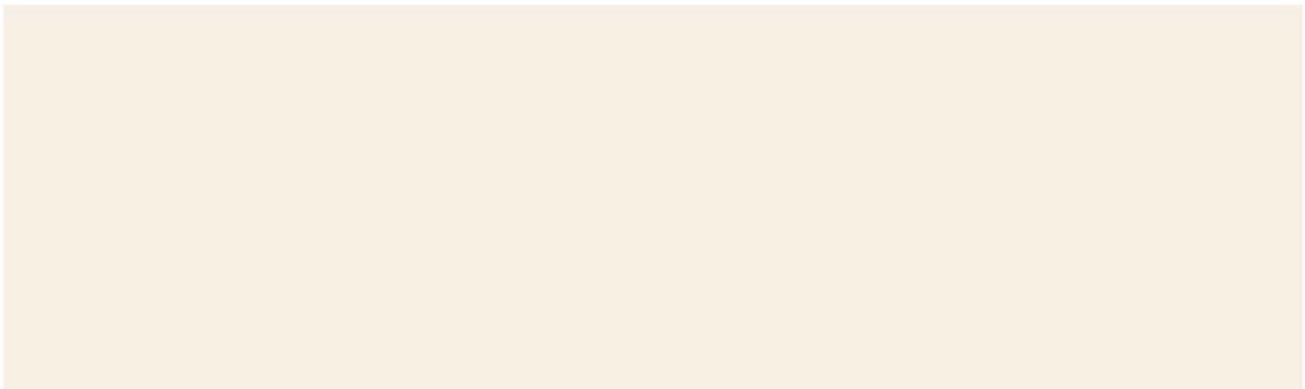
Getting Love in Your Life

How are you doing in showing yourself a little love? Are you taking care of your mind, heart, body, and soul? This month we are focusing on the ways you demonstrate your love for yourself. First you practice love for yourself, then for others and finally, for your community and humanity. You will be working from the inside out (reflection, writing and art) as well as from the outside in (changing your environment, consciously selecting your clothes, food and self care). The first week focuses on your presence and how you are showing up for yourself in loving ways. It is time to update your self-love and self-care strategies.

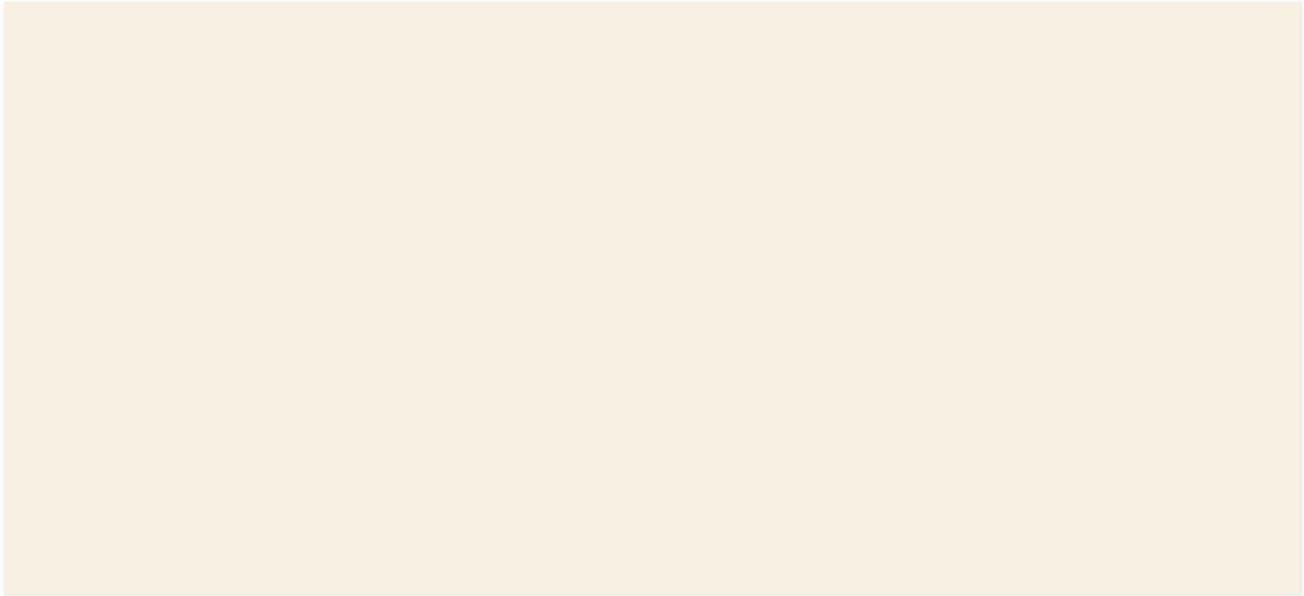
What is your idea of romancing yourself? What does that mean to you right now?



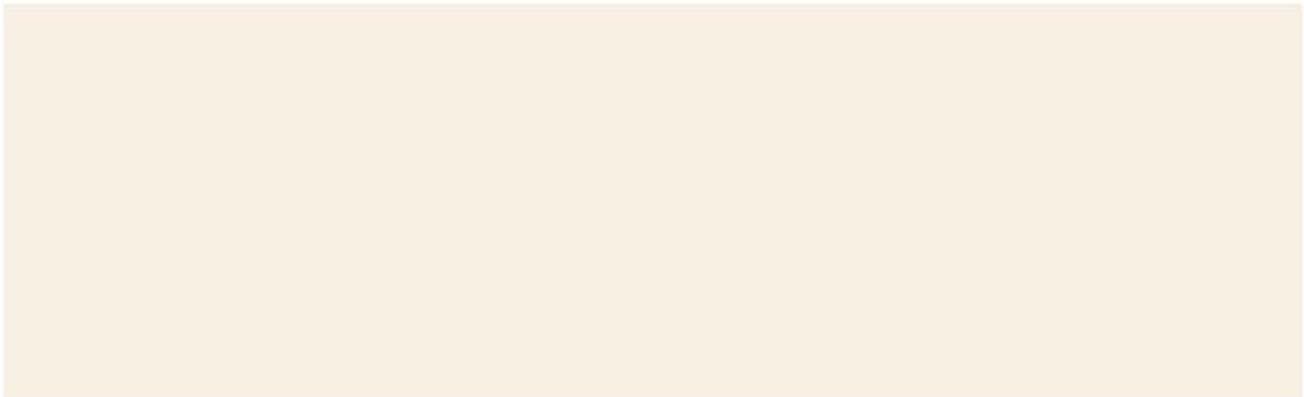
How do you feel about your self-love and self-care the last month? Give yourself a grade 0-100.



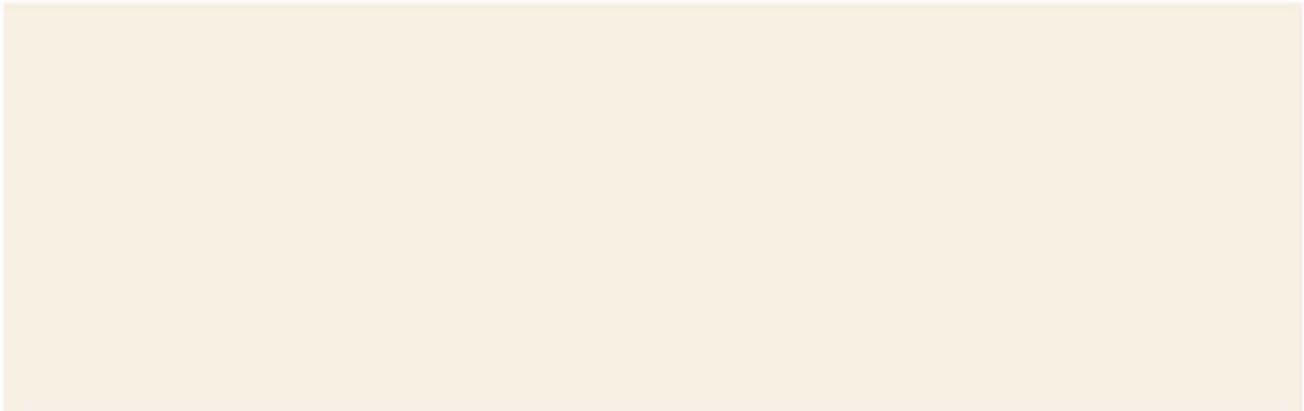
If someone observed your actions for the last month, what would they report about your self-love strategies? What would they notice about how you are taking care of your body (food, sleep, skin-care, clothing choices, exercise, etc.).



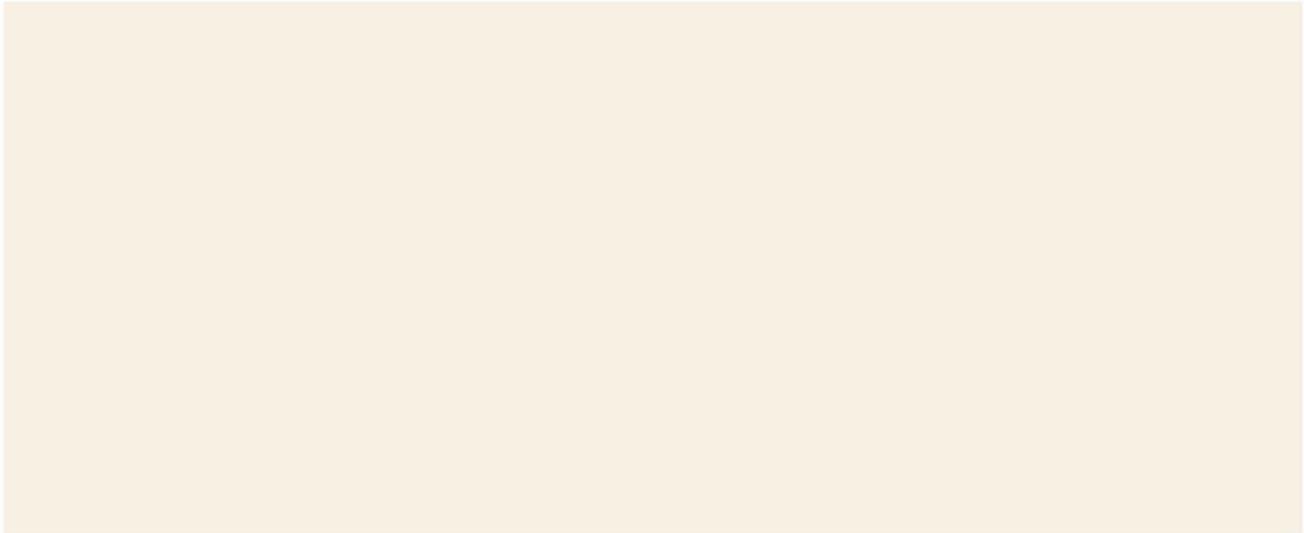
What are you most excited about for a month of romance? What interests you?



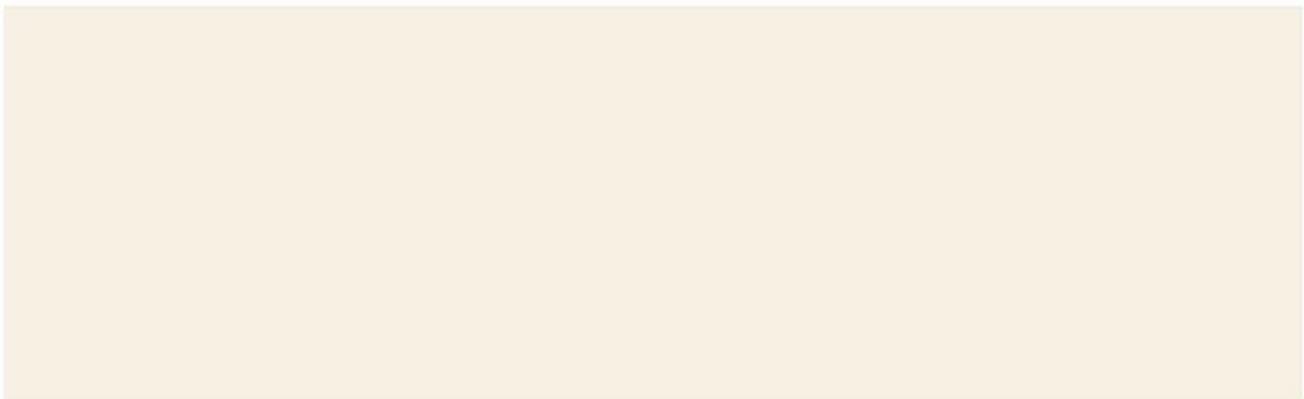
What makes you nervous or uncomfortable about romance or self-love? See if you can walk yourself through the discomfort and be willing to experience it and not push it away. Your discomfort is welcome to join you this month - no need to try and get rid of it.



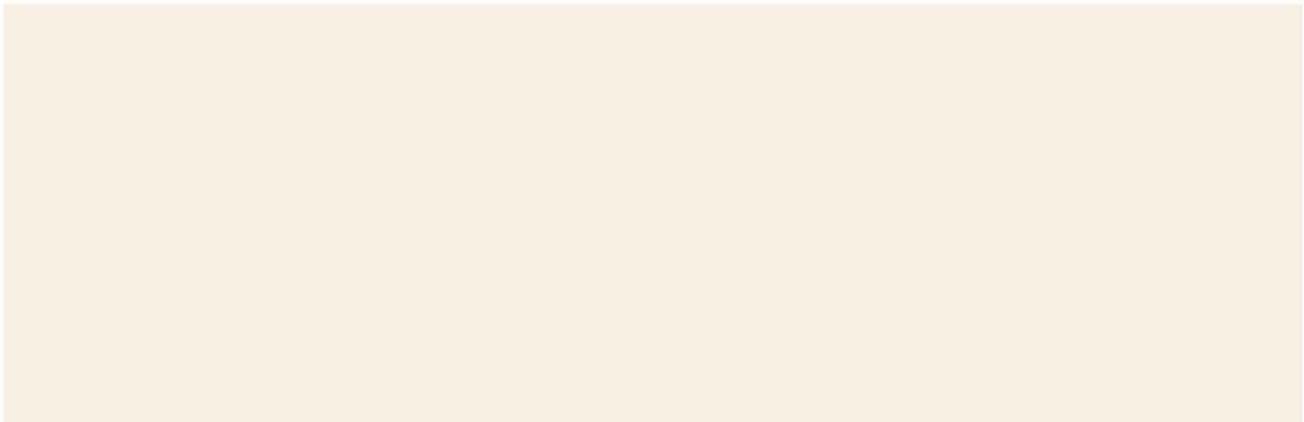
How did you see romance and self-love growing up? Who were your role models? Did you like what you saw? What ideas from the past do you still carry today? Would you choose those ideas again? If you want to change your ideas, what new ideas might you replace them with?



What are your beliefs about a woman who takes exquisite care of herself? What are your judgements? What do you admire?



If you think romance, self love or attention to your clothes and home are not for you, what makes you think so? Do you like your reason? Is it perhaps rooted in lack or feeling unworthy? If so, it's time to unpack this in your journal, with a friend or with a therapist. Stay open. Be willing. You might be surprised at how it feels to value yourself in this romantic way.



Simple Pleasures

What makes you feel romantic? Sensual? What do you think is the ultimate indulgence for yourself? Make a list of things you enjoy, makes you excited, or where you have felt sensual in the past. Need inspiration? Watch the movie Amelie and see how the characters each experience simple sensual experiences. No need to be embarrassed or censor yourself here. Be honest about what is romantic and sensual to you.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

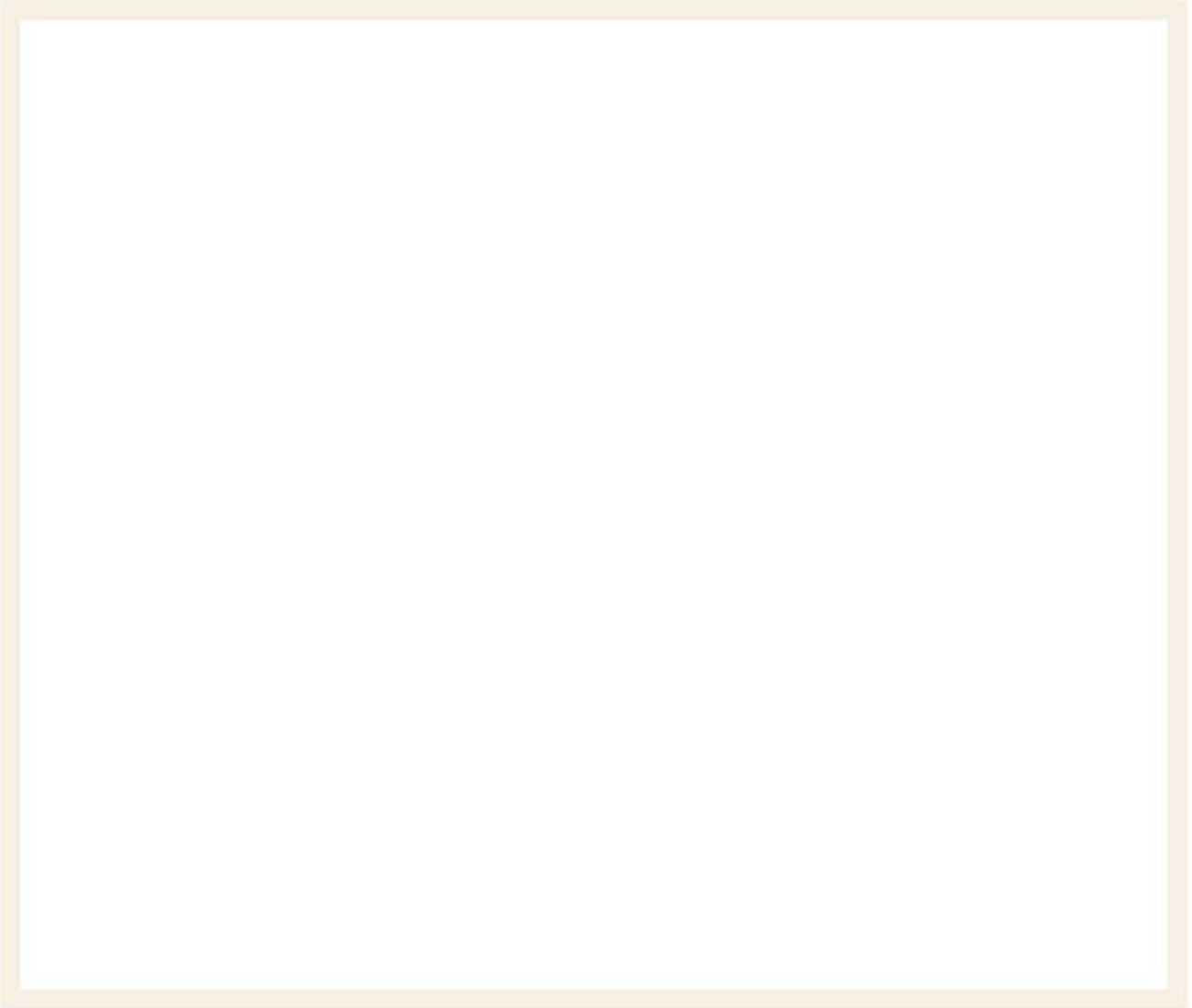
8

9

Visual Expression

Take a few moments to imagine your self as the context for simple, sensual awareness. Imagine what a simple sensation might look 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!



Title:

Three words or phrases to describe your art.

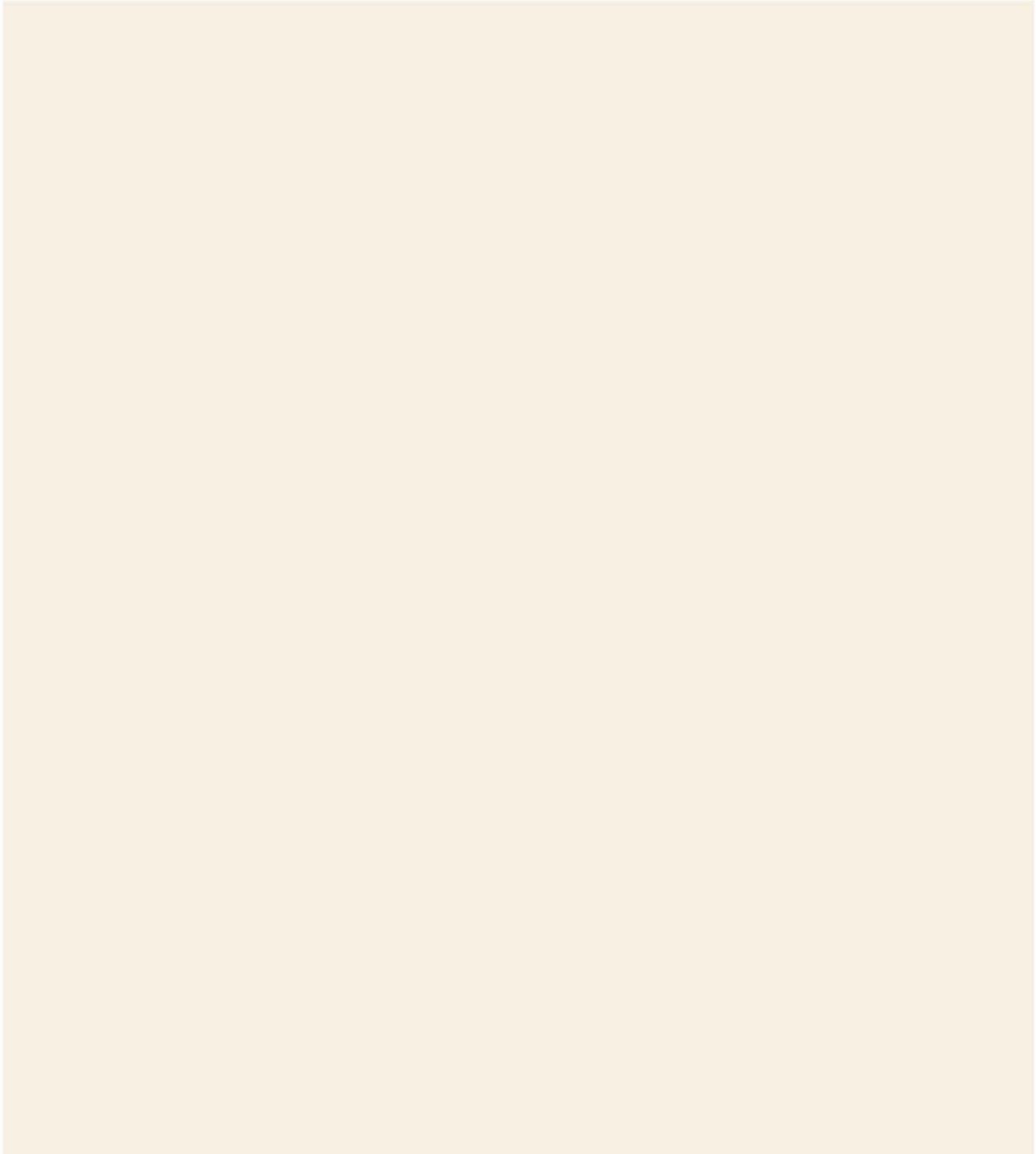
-
-
-

How do you feel?

REFLECTION

Reflect on what you have learned about your romantic presence and your sensual self as context.

How will you apply present moment awareness to your life in order to romance yourself? What is your understanding of yourself as the context of your life? How can thinking this way help you feel great? Appreciate your strengths and celebrate your insights.



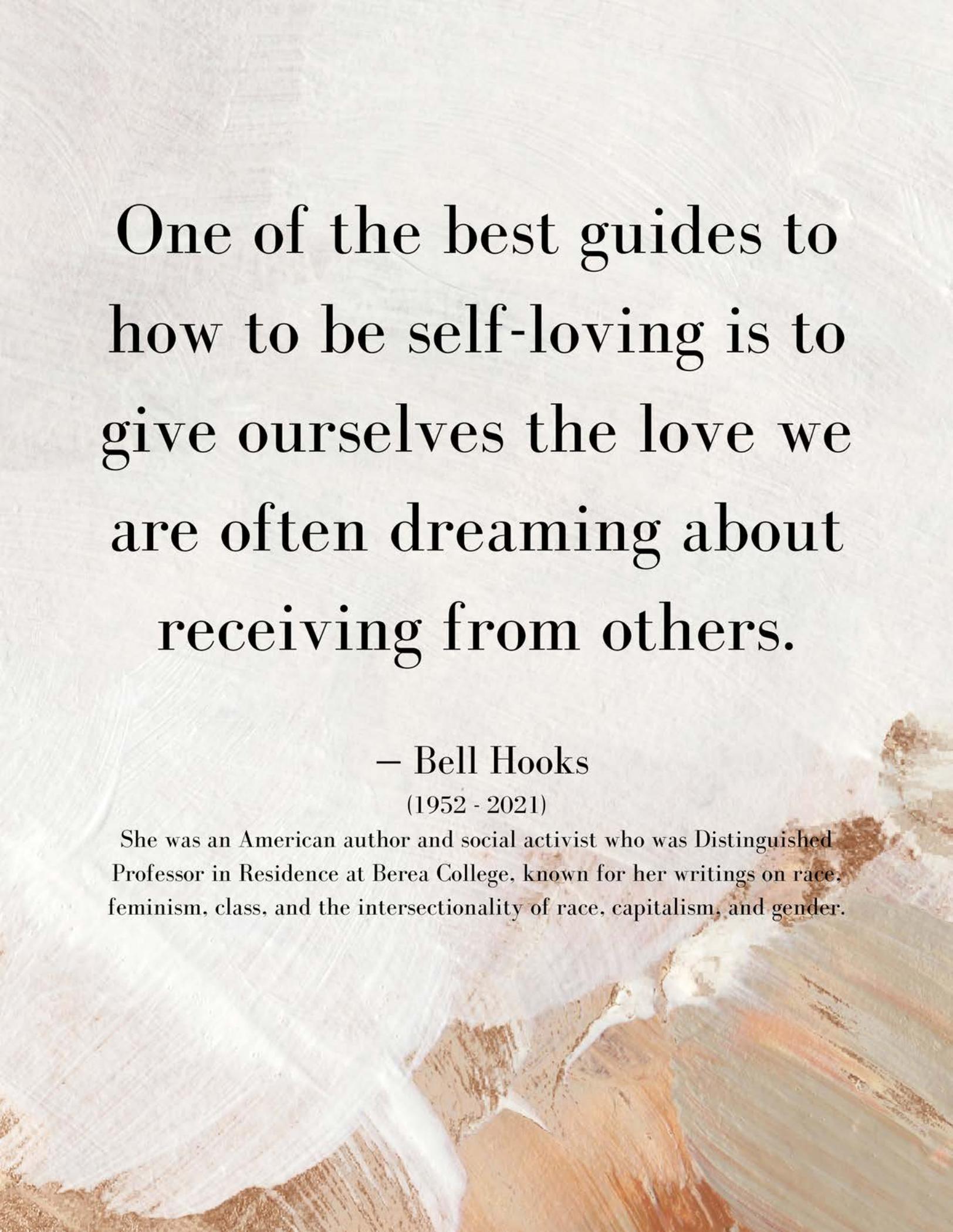
MINDSET

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.



One of the best guides to
how to be self-loving is to
give ourselves the love we
are often dreaming about
receiving from others.

— Bell Hooks

(1952 - 2021)

She was an American author and social activist who was Distinguished Professor in Residence at Berea College, known for her writings on race, feminism, class, and the intersectionality of race, capitalism, and gender.

Make Romancing Yourself a Regular Habit

Creating your ideal day is a great way to get in touch with your desires and what would make your time feel more more enjoyable. What you write here is a rough draft of where you want to make changes to romance yourself on a regular basis.

Create your ideal day by describing what you will be doing throughout the entire day. Avoid choosing a vacation day at an exotic location - just a regular day (work-day or day off) that includes romantic and fun activities. Use all your senses to write what you will see, hear, touch, taste, and smell for each activity. Be as specific as possible.

For example, you can begin like this: I wake up to the sun just beginning to rise in a tidy bedroom with fresh clean sheets and flowers on the dresser. The sheets are warm, and I smell coffee brewing and hear jazz music playing softly in the background. I have a leisurely breakfast of juicy mango and toast with butter and the flavors complement each other perfectly. I am without my phone, computer or TV. I watch the sun rise and write my thoughts using a beautiful pen and lovely journal.

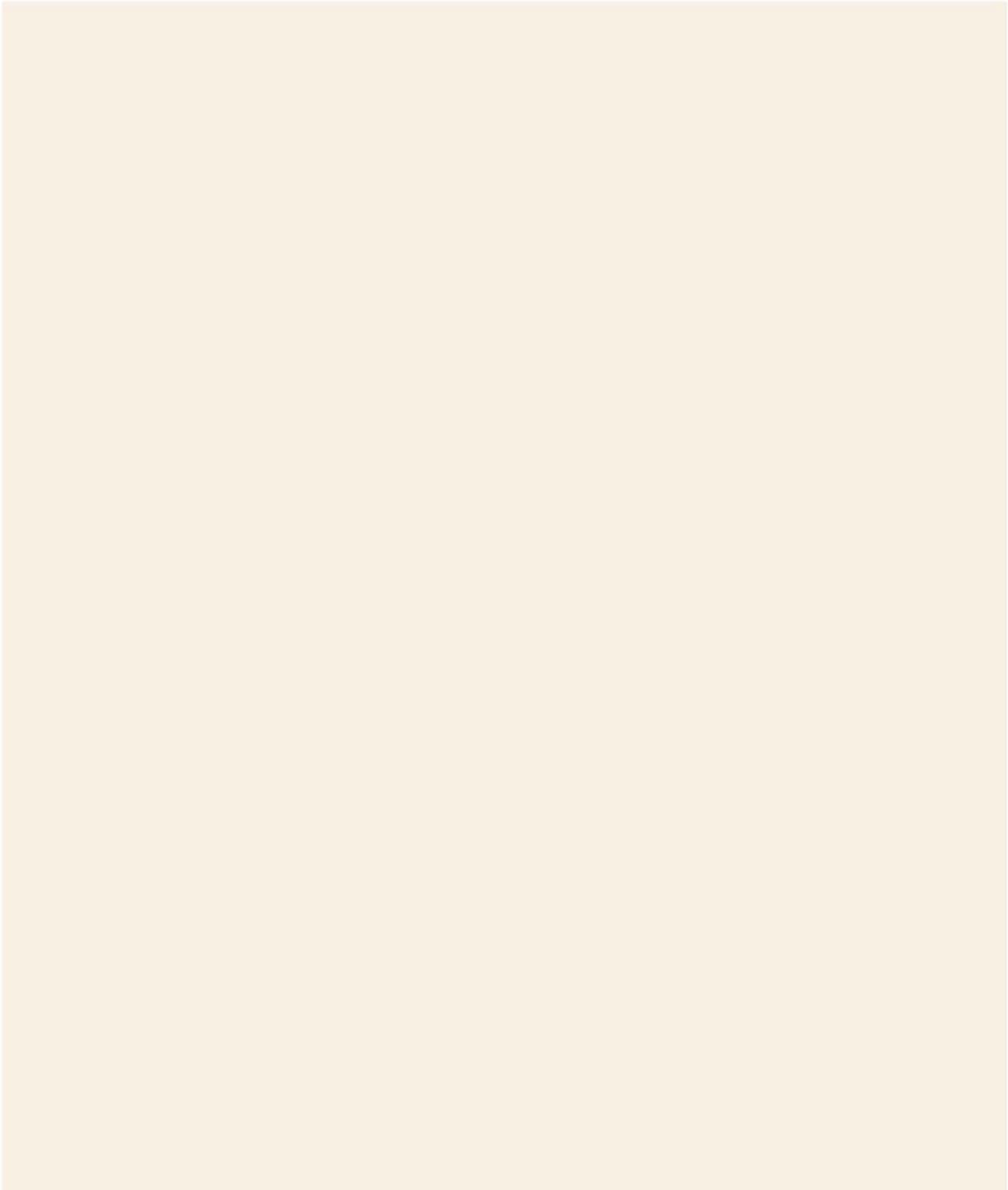
Continue on in this way writing about each aspect of your day using all your senses to describe what you are noticing and enjoying. Pay attention to what is not in your day - for example, an ideal day does not start by checking the news on my phone, and in fact research suggests we should set aside technology-free time an hour before bed and at least an hour after rising.

Describe your entire day.

*The ideal day example above is how I start my day now - it was not always the case. I used to wake up late and rush out of my messy bedroom and jump straight into parenting or work. Over time, I began adding 20 minutes at a time to my morning and evening routine and now this is how I really start my day.

YOUR IDEAL DAY

Use all your senses and describe your ideal day.



Reflections on your Ideal Day

How close are you to living your ideal day?

An ideal day is unique to you and includes what you described on the previous page.

1. Give yourself a score for the past week.

What percentage of the last 7 days included your ideal activities? Score_____%

2. Now rank each day individually

If your days are never ideal, you get a 0 out of 7.

If you are living your ideal days on the weekends only, you get a 2 out of 7.

If Monday through Friday is ideal but it all falls apart on the weekends, you get a 5 out of 7.

If you are living ideal days every single day you get a 7 out of 7.

Your score_____

Having ideal days is achievable and happens by changing one habit at a time, letting go of activities that no longer serve you, or adding in new behaviors or activities.

Answer these two questions below. How do you feel about your scores? If you are less than a 7 out of 7 or 100%.what do you need to change to have an ideal day tomorrow?

Scheduling a Special Day

Make a list of nine activities you want to add to make one day special and even a little frivolous. For example: take a walk downtown and window-shop at your favorite stores, have coffee/tea at a fancy hotel, host a special lunch for a friend, take have lunch at a restaurant you have wanted to try, have dessert at a cute cafe, visit an art museum, etc.

Schedule one of these each week starting the month after this workshop ends. Savor your special days and cross them off as you complete them.

1

2

3

4

5

6

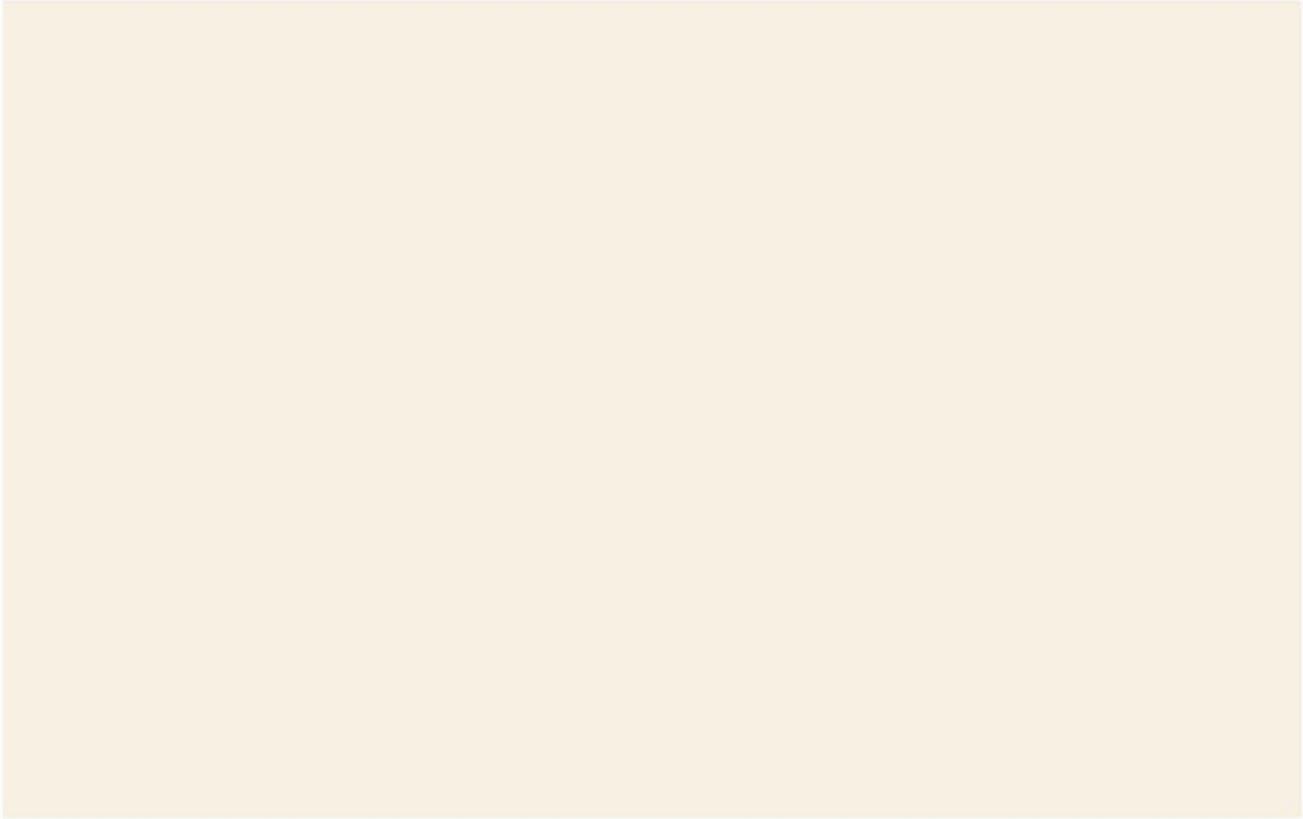
7

8

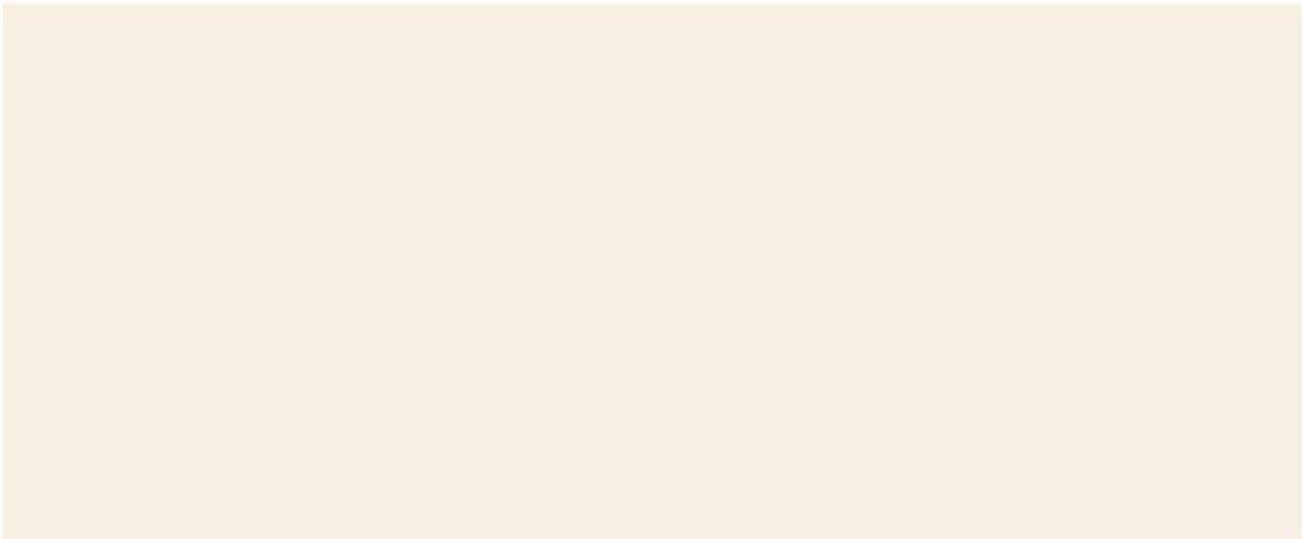
9

Mindset

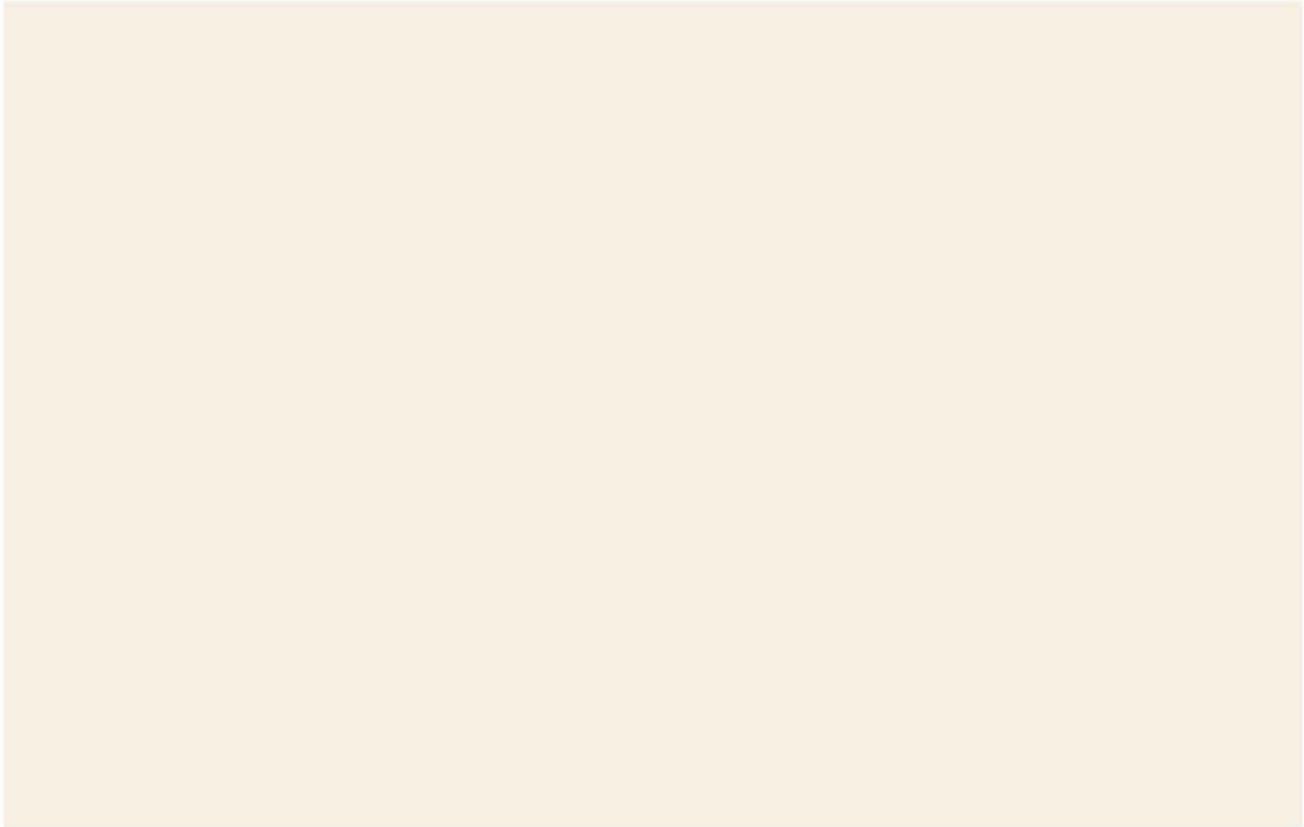
Make a list of all the the positive examples you saw growing up about self-care and self-love.



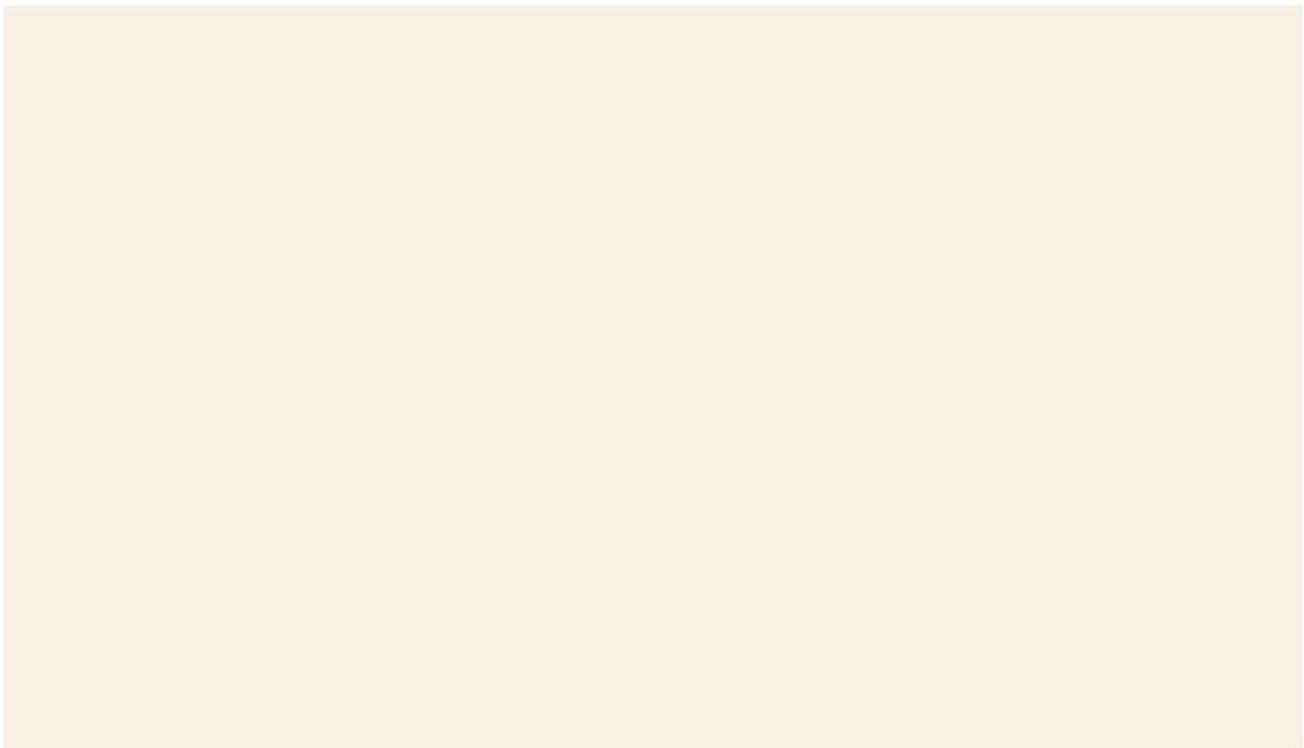
Make a list of all the the negative examples you saw growing up about self-care and self-love. For example: self-neglect, self-abuse, ignoring needs, trying to do it all, people pleasing, etc.



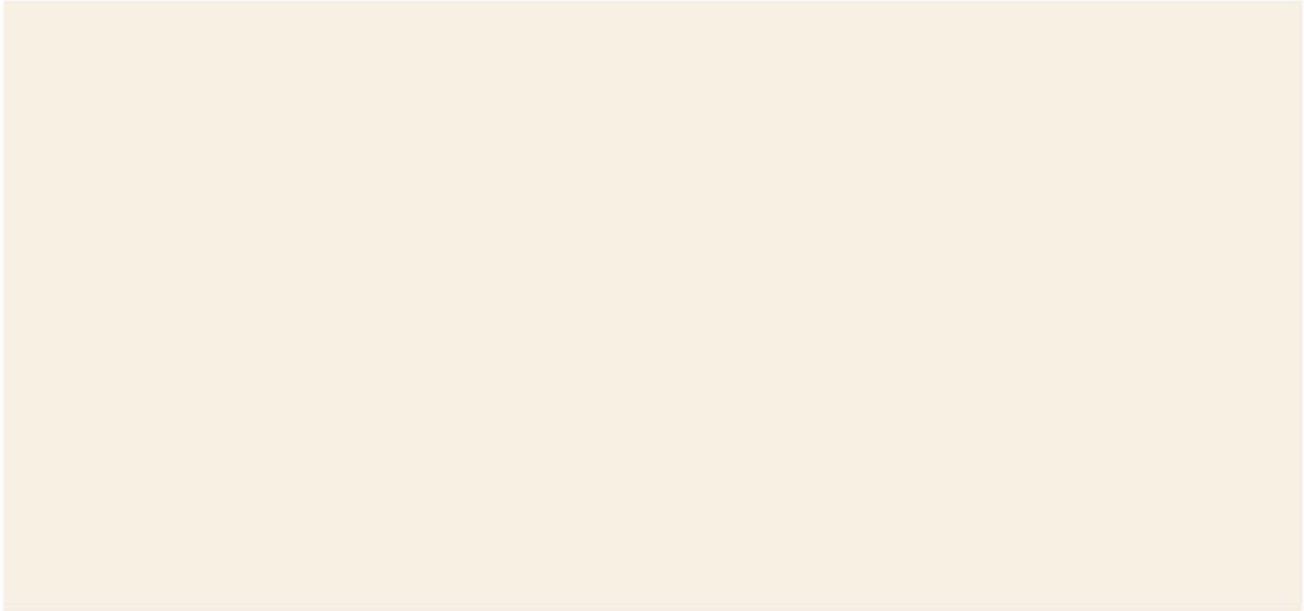
Reflect on the lists you just made about the positive and negative ways that self-care and self-love were modeled to you. What do you think about these? How do you feel about these?



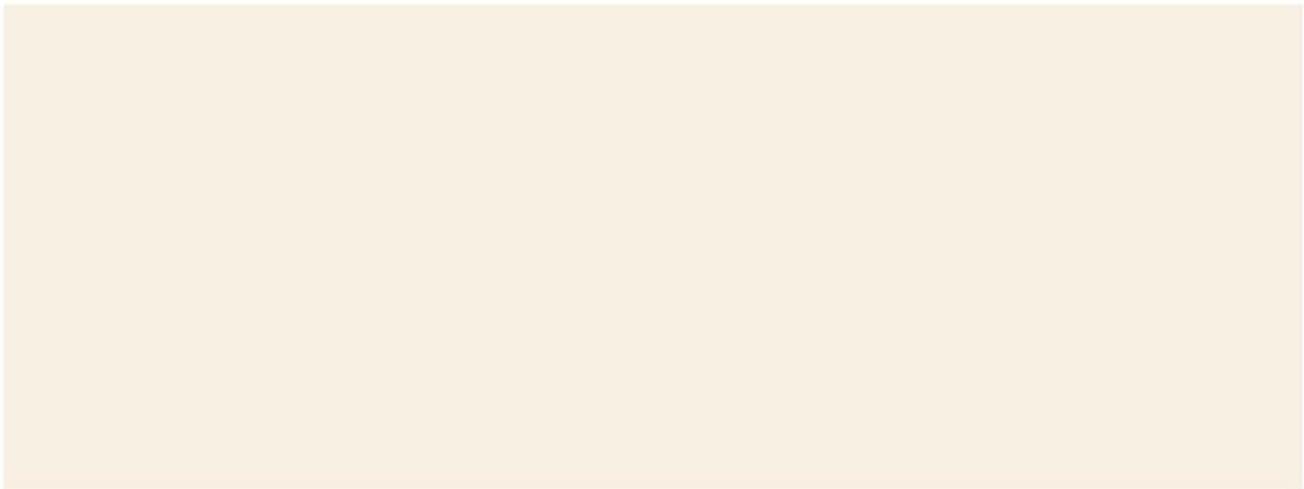
Who are your current role-models of women who take exquisite care of themselves? What do you admire about these women who have lots of self-love?



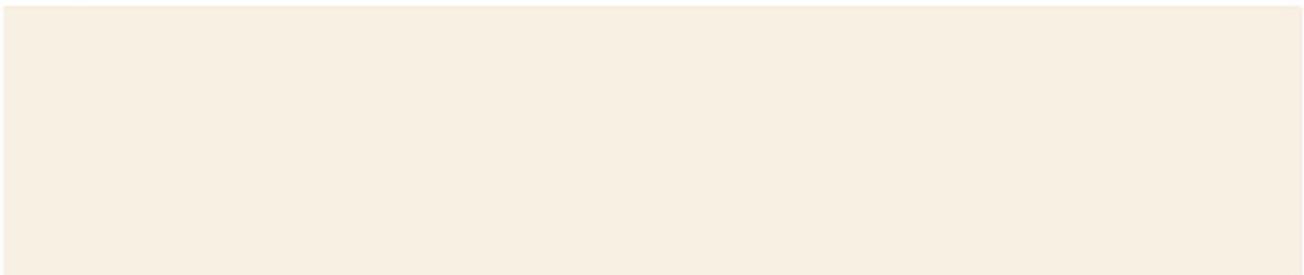
Which positive self-care and self love strategies that you saw growing up do you like? Are you doing those things? Why or why not?



Note any changes you want to make.



Choose or create a statement that will serve as your mantra for self-love, self-care, and self-romance. For example, "I am a woman who takes exquisite care of myself. I am a woman who respects herself and her body." Post your sentence where you can see it for the next month (eg. write it on your calendar, white board, make it your screen saver, etc.) Start your sentence with "I am a woman who....."

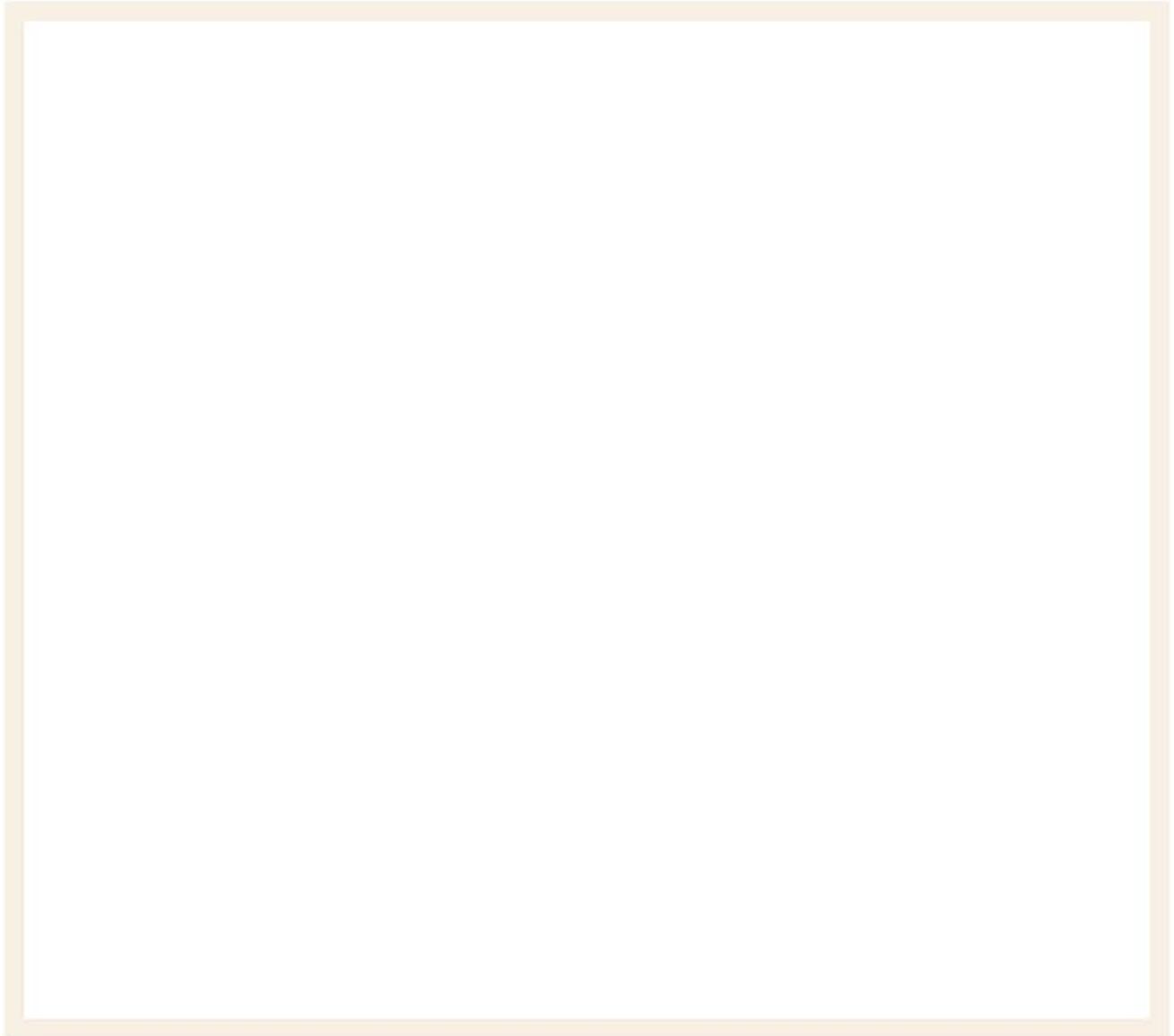


Visual Expression

Find three images on Pinterest or in magazines of women who embody your statement from the previous page that starts with "I am a woman who..."

Avoid thinking too long about it and just be spontaneous. It's ok if you are unable to explain in words why you like the images. 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?

REFLECTION

Reflect on what you have learned about your mindset and how you changed your relationship with your thoughts about self-love and actions to create an ideal day. Why do you think a mantra is important? Do you think your ideal day is achievable? Why or why Not? What new thoughts do you need to think to know that you can indeed create your ideal type of day 7 days a week? Avoid judging yourself for what you did or did not do this week.

A large, empty, light beige rectangular area intended for writing reflections. It occupies the central portion of the page, below the introductory text and above the footer.

PURPOSE

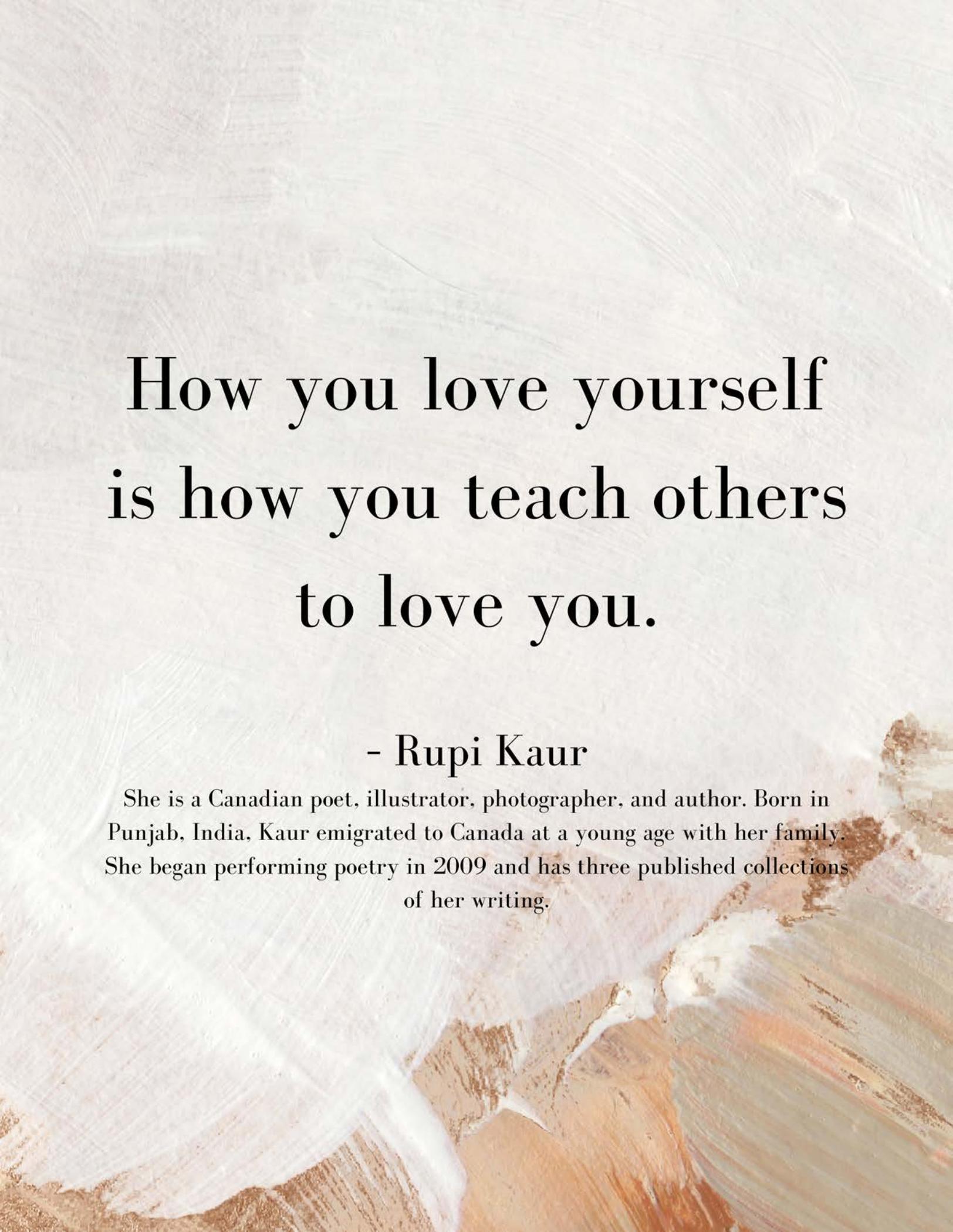
Your Values & Committed Actions

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 created with thick brushstrokes. The top half is dominated by light, creamy white strokes, while the bottom half features more varied colors, including shades of brown, tan, and muted green, suggesting a layered or marbled effect. The overall texture is rough and painterly.

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

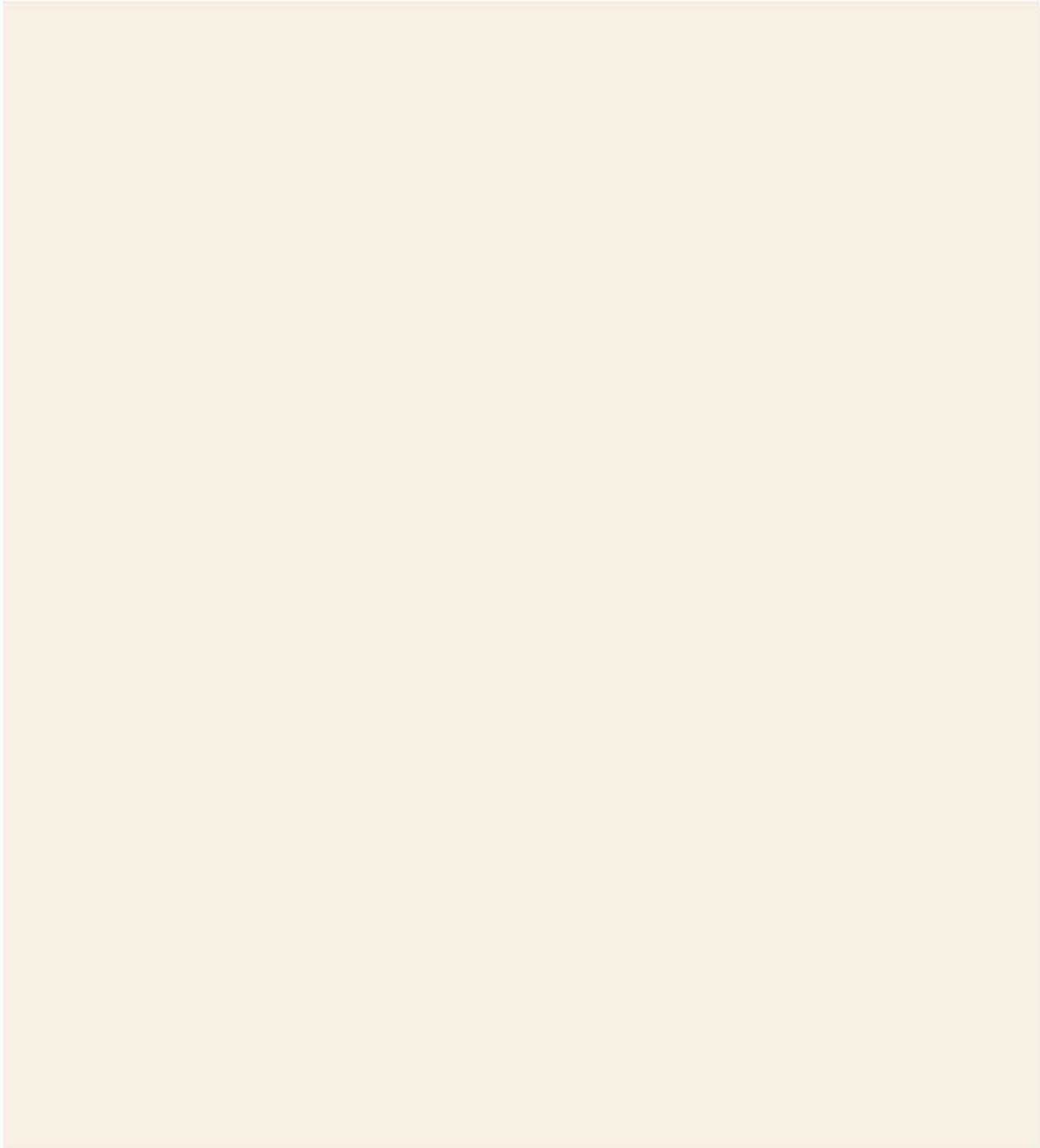
- Rupi Kaur

She 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.

Still Self-Sacrificing?

Society has many examples of self-sacrificing women and there is no extra prize for self-neglect. If you are still struggling to justify the time, energy, and money it takes to care for yourself, ask yourself why. What does it mean to you to let go of self-sacrifice?

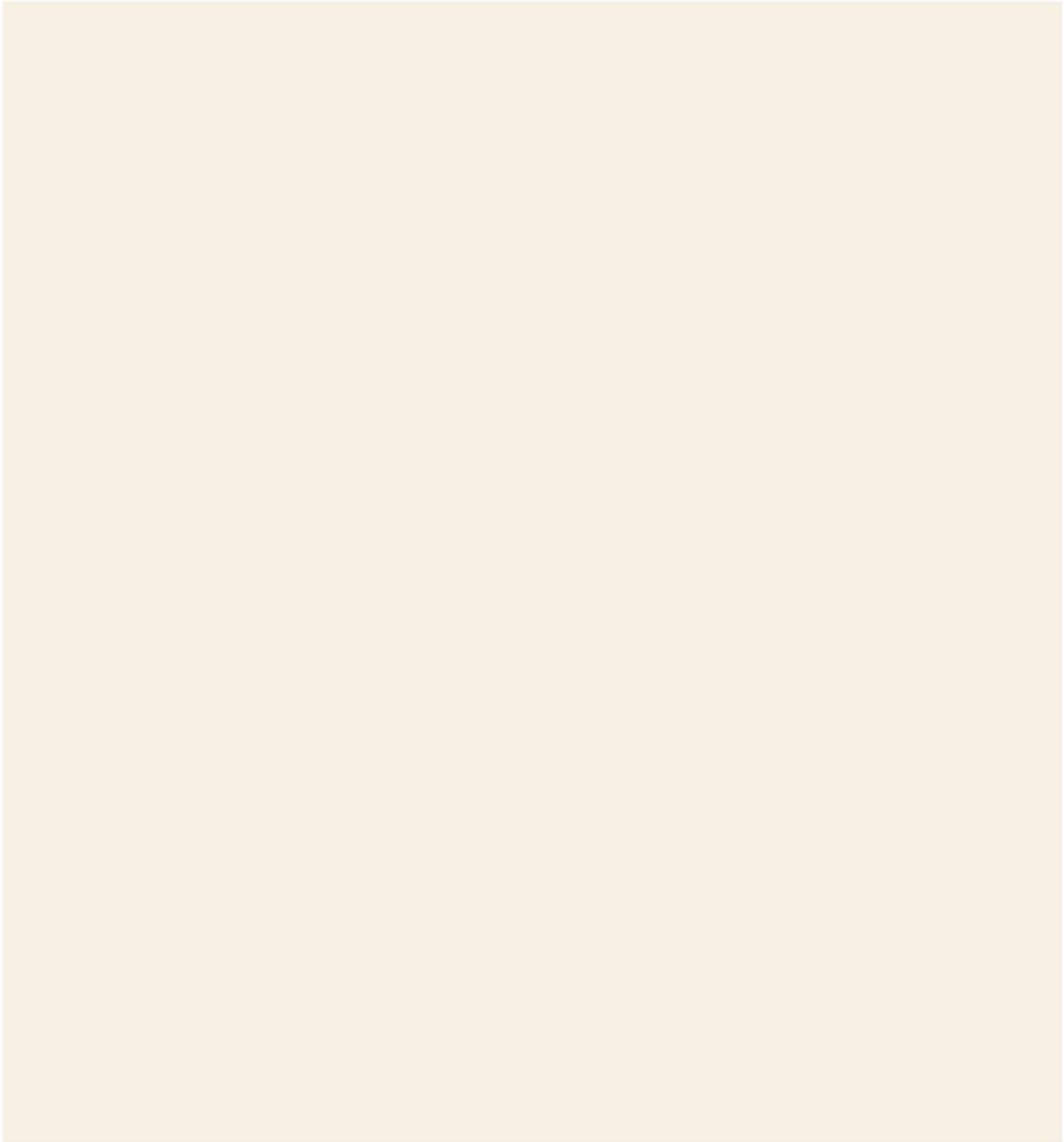
What is self-sacrifice costing you? What are the benefits to you? What are the benefits to others? What do you lose by self-sacrificing? What do others lose out on when you self-sacrifice?



Benefits of Being your Best

Write down the benefits of romancing yourself so you can be your best. Here are some questions to inspire you:

How does a woman who takes exquisite care of herself and romances herself every day feel? Why do you want to be your best self? Whose lives will you impact if you give yourself more love and romance? For whom will you be a role model? Will you be a more patient friend, parent, lover, creator, or worker? Will you have more confidence to set limits or speak out against injustices?



Your Values

Have you considered the ripple effect of your self-love and self-romance? It can make every area of your life better! How will romancing yourself positively impact each of these areas in your life? Give specific examples of how it could/will change your feelings, thoughts and behaviors in each area. Focus on how self-love and romance will get you closer to your values as well as help you be more present for yourself and others.

FAMILY

FRIENDS

HEALTH

CREATIVITY

SPIRITUALITY

COMMUNITY

WORK/SCHOOL

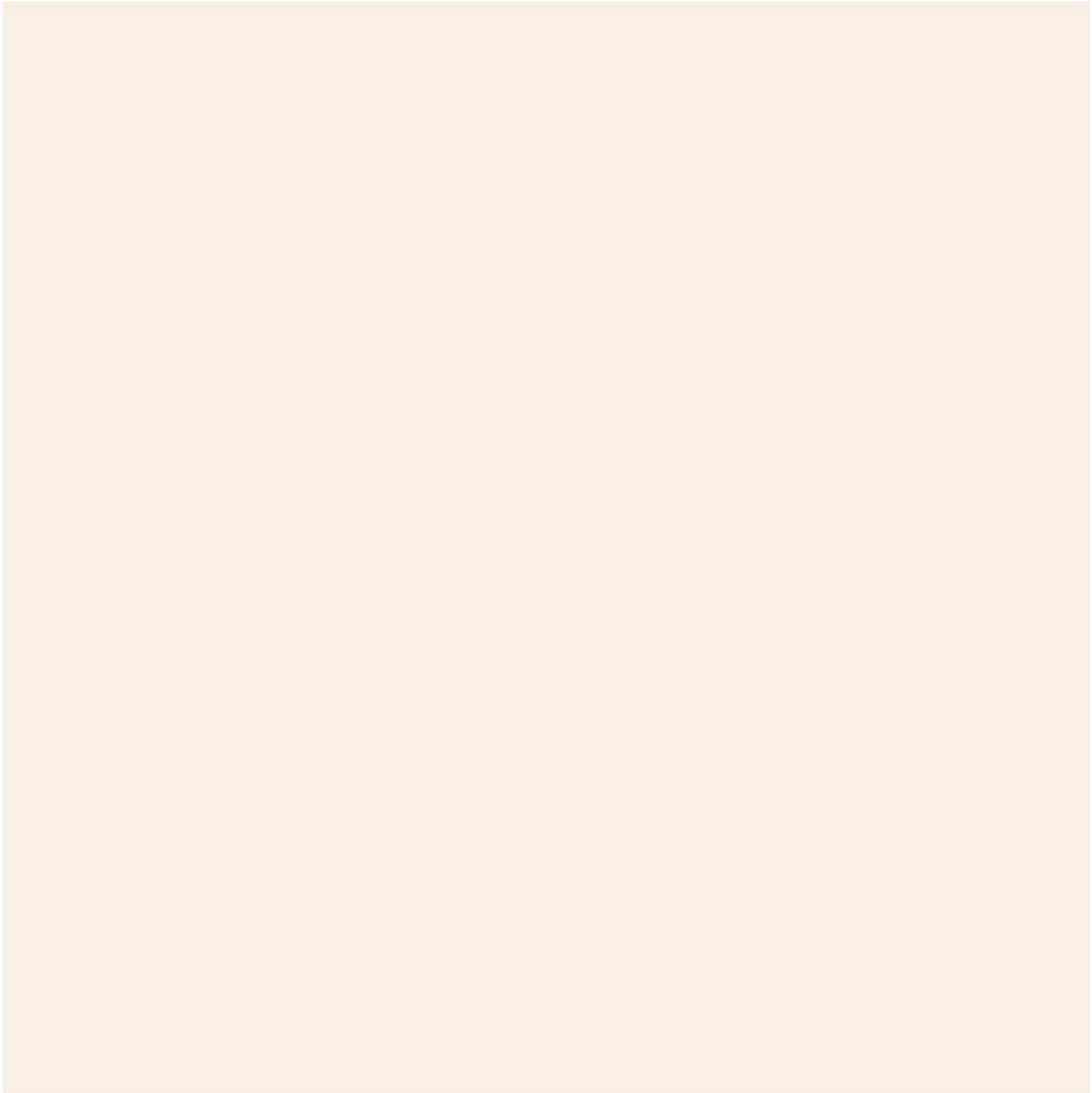
FUN/LEISURE

INTIMATE
PARTNER

Committed Action

It is time to put your new positive romantic feelings for yourself into action. Pick one of the values areas above and make your plan of action. What will you do TODAY regarding self-love and romance? What action will you take to get you closer to your value?

For example, if you chose "intimate partner" as the value area you want to work on today, what kind of self romance will you do today that will impact your relationship with that person? What can you do to romance yourself that will help you be present for that relationship? Be creative. You can brainstorm a list of possible ideas and pick just 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 big that you are unable to accomplish it today.

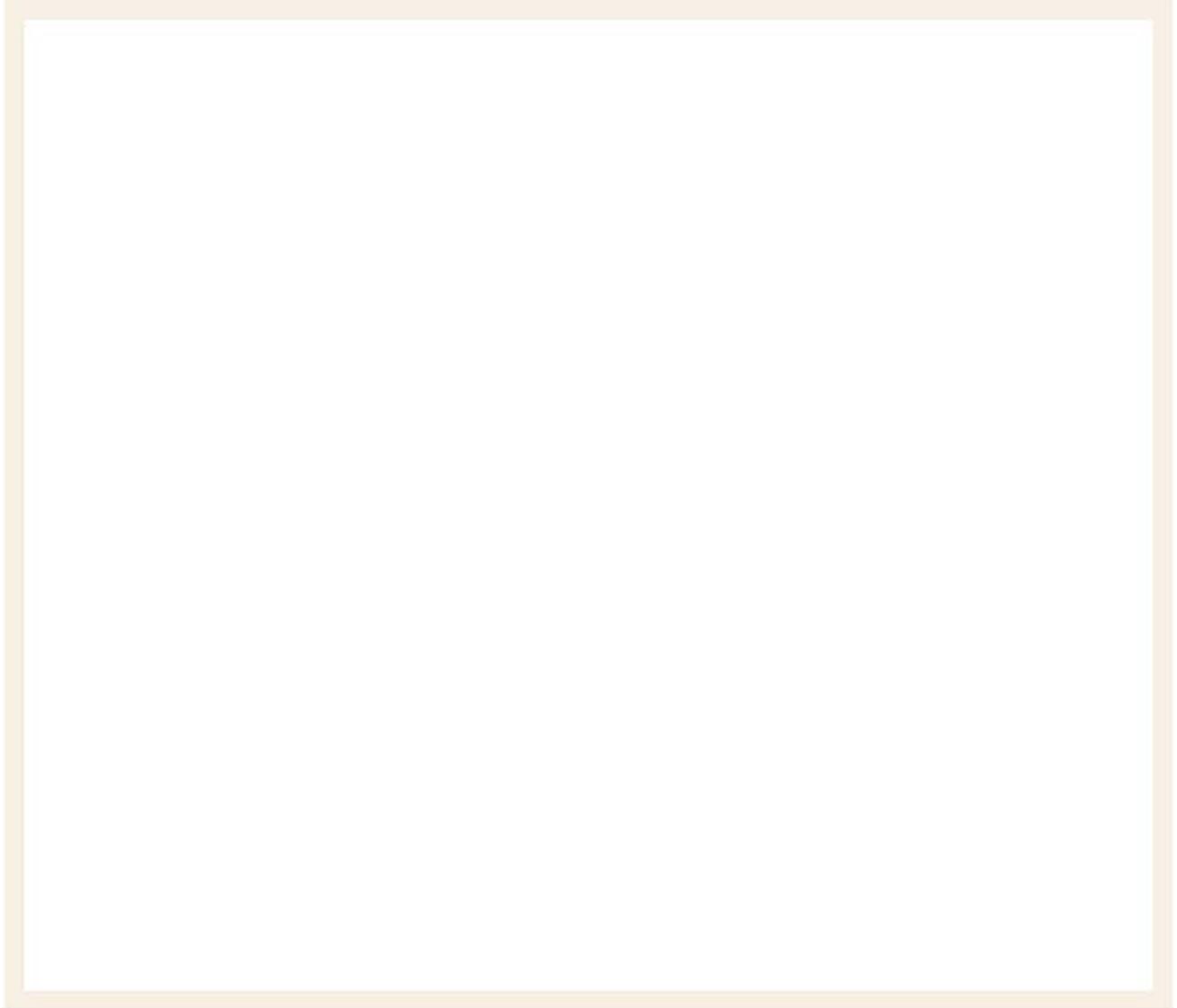


Visual Expression

It is time to imagine a more sensual environment for yourself. What kinds of environments do you find pleasing? Sleek and modern? Bold and colorful? Feminine and romantic? Find three pictures of places that you find pleasing and sensual on Pinterest or from a magazine. Print out your pictures and glue them here, in your journal or on another piece of paper. Hang it up where you can see it.

Be sure and answer the questions at the bottom of the page. However you do it will be great!

Now ask yourself, how can you create or put yourself in an environment like this?



Title:

Three words or phrases to describe your art.

-
-
-

How do you feel?

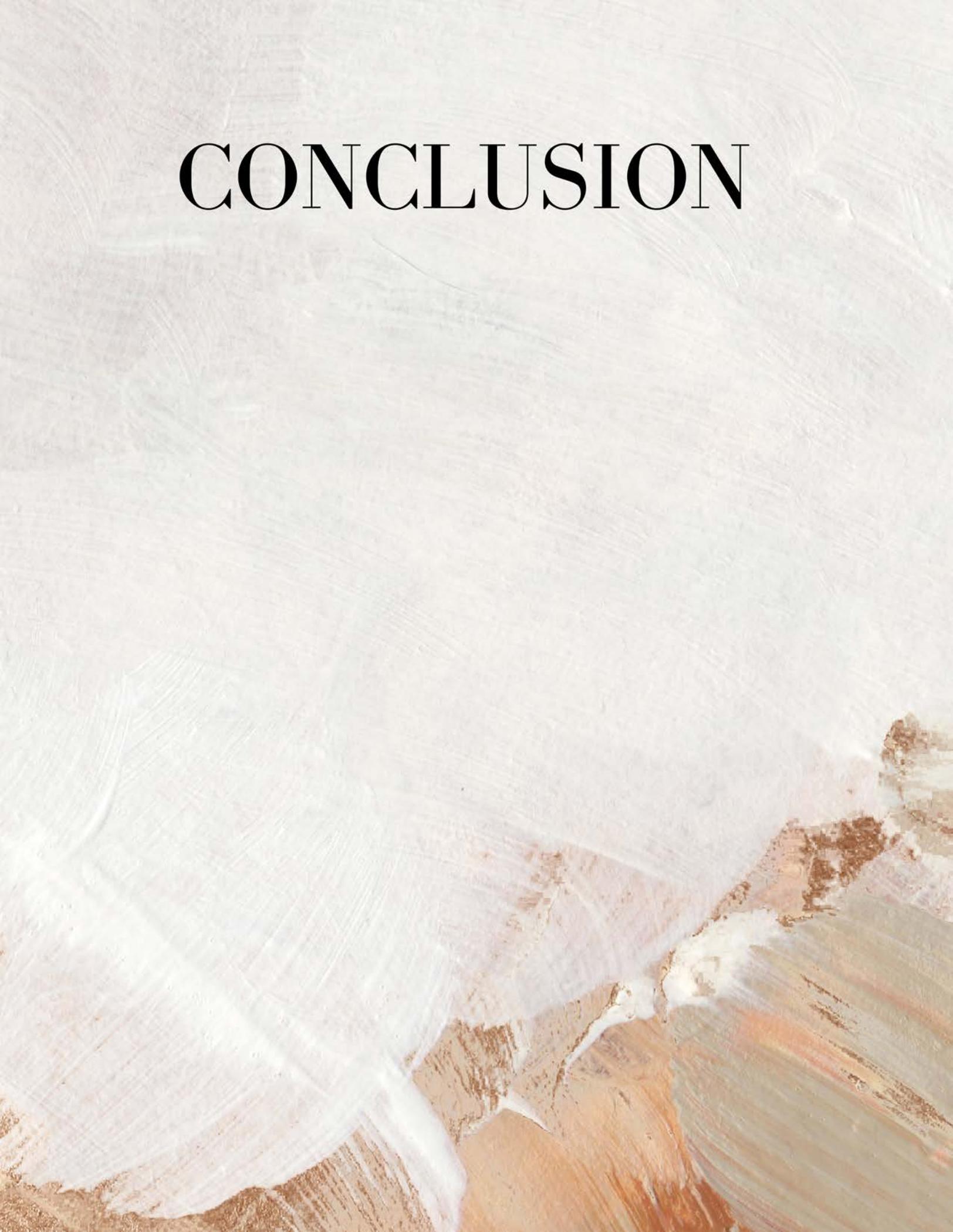
REFLECTION

Reflect on what you have learned from this month about romancing yourself. Notice your thoughts, feelings and actions in alignment with the idea of romance. How did you feel paying such close attention to yourself? Was it fun? Uncomfortable?

Whatever comes up for you is welcome in your writing.

A large, empty, light beige rectangular area intended for writing reflections. It occupies the central portion of the page, below the introductory text and above the footer.

CONCLUSION

The background of the page is an abstract composition of textures. The upper portion is dominated by a dense, fine-grained white texture that resembles a thick layer of paint or a fine fabric. This white area transitions into a more complex, layered structure at the bottom. This lower section features broad, diagonal brushstrokes in shades of light brown, tan, and beige, interspersed with darker, more saturated brown and reddish-brown tones. The overall effect is one of organic, painterly movement and depth.

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

I am celebrating my sensual presence...

2

I am celebrating my self-loving mindset...

3

I am celebrating my romantic purpose...

4

How I am celebrating this month...

ROMANCE & LOVE

You have completed a month of romance for yourself! Congratulations on all your progress! What new thoughts will you keep? What new actions will you take to make self-romance a daily experience?

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 self love and romanced themselves...the world would be a more fun 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 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. If you are so inspired, 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.

RESOURCES

05

Book: Intimate Detail

A well-researched and gorgeously illustrated book about lingerie from the "lingerie addict" Cora Harrington. This beautiful book offers both history and inspiration on how to choose, wear, and love lingerie.

06

Book: 100 Love Sonnets/Cien Sonetos de Amor

This book by famed Lauret Pablo Neruda brings his sensual poetry to life in both his original Spanish writings and in delicate translations into English. A romantic bed-side book!

07

Book: I am Invincible

A fun book of life lessons from acclaimed fashion designer, Norma Kamali. She offers life, health, and style advice along with practical tips for being your best self as you age powerfully.

