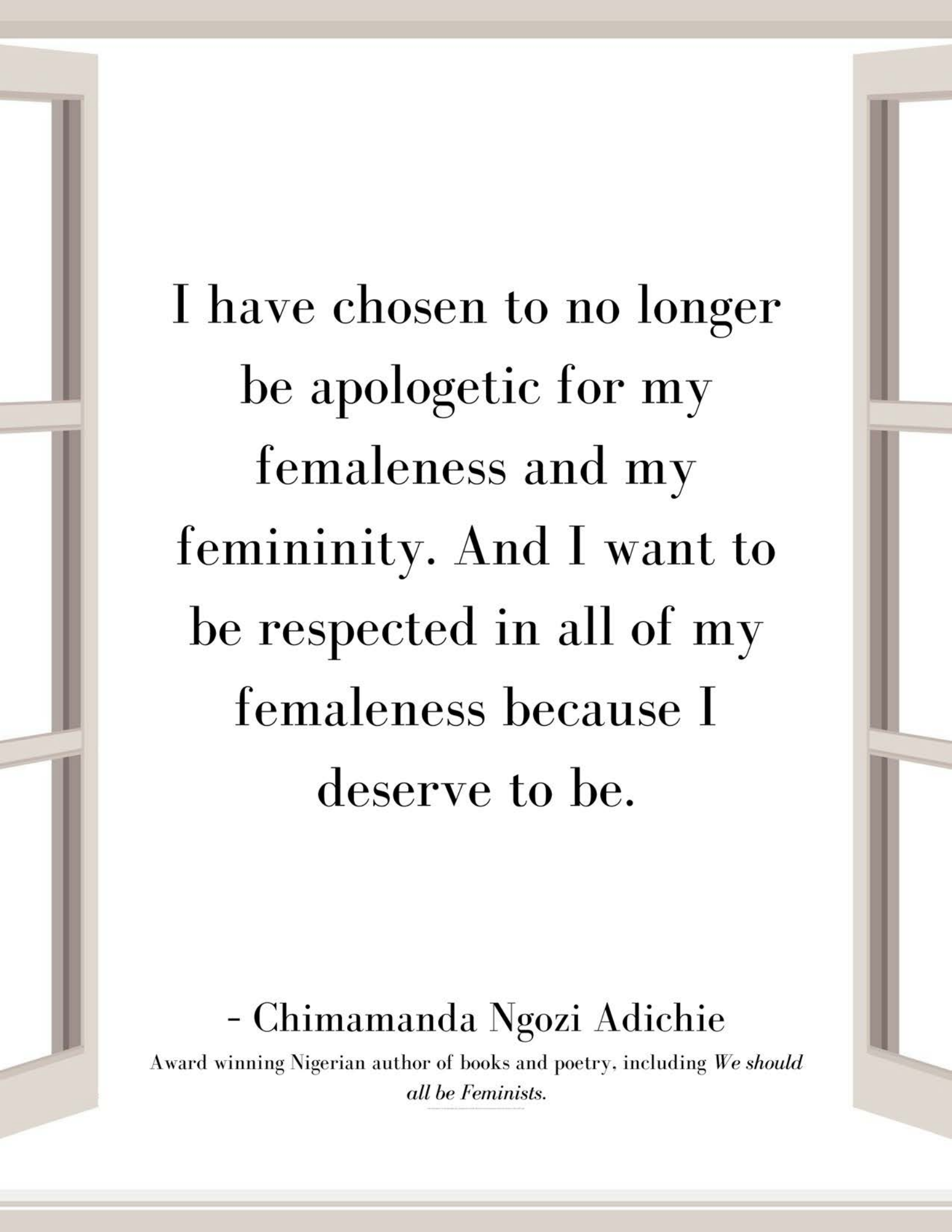




The Modern Creative
Woman Publishing Co.



The Modern Creative Woman
**Women Making
Meaning**



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

- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Award winning Nigerian author of books and poetry, including *We should
all be Feminists.*

Presence Mindset Purpose



- Make full contact with the present moment.
- See yourself as the 'context' for all your life experiences.
- Get out of your mind and get into your life.



- Acceptance of your thoughts, feelings, and circumstances as they are, rather than what you think they should be.
- Forging a new working relationship with your thoughts.
- Practicing conscious & creative thinking.



- Your personal values about what is most important to you.
- Daily movement towards your values
- Committed actions in alignment with your values and Modern Creative Why.



The path to Presence

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.

INTENTION

Imagine if you were living your purpose in a life full of meaningful decisions and actions. What would be different in your life?

Imagine if you woke up tomorrow and you were living your life full of meaning. What would you be thinking, feeling and doing if you were living your most meaningful life? What would be most important to you? This description can include things you are currently doing as well as things you might be doing differently.

Your Modern Creative Presence

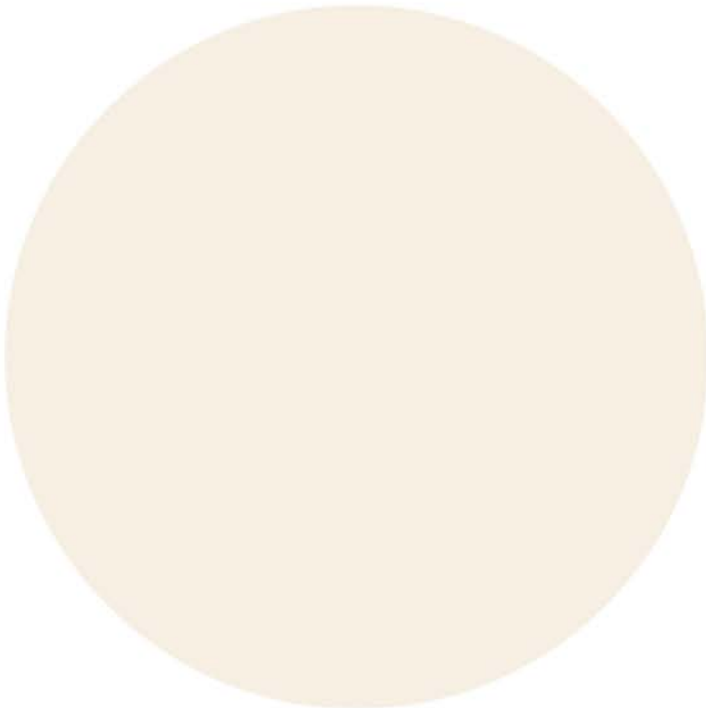
Take a few deep breaths and think about how you want to live your values (ex: loving parent, reliable worker, loyal partner, etc) and how good it feels when you act in alignment with your values. This is not about how good it feels to give or receive from others - this is how you feel about your value-based actions.

What are you willing to give up to make this happen? For example - you might want to let go of or set time limits on activities that are both unproductive and not much fun such as scrolling social media, watching TV, drinking, or spending time with people with whom you no longer resonate.

To add more value based behaviors, you will have to let some behaviors go.

Write what are you willing to consider letting go of so you can pursue your values.

Create a simple design inside the circle to reflect how you want your value-based life to FEEL. The art can be lines, shapes, and colors or a specific picture. Be sure to give title and write three words or phrases to describe your art. However you do it will be great.



Mindfulness

Mindfulness is paying attention in a particular way without judgement. The benefits are significant and there is abundant psychological and medical research to demonstrate its advantages to our mind, mood, and body. You can practice mindfulness while walking, sitting quietly, dancing, doing dishes, eating, exercising, making art, playing with your pet or talking to a friend.

All you have to do is notice what is happening and then notice the part of you that is observing.

Instructions

Grab your paint brush or pen. Your task is to make lines in the workbook or in your sketchbook. While you are painting or drawing, alternate between 1) noticing what is happening (listening to your thoughts, noticing what you are doing, seeing, hearing, or touching, etc) and 2) awareness of that part of you that is noticing. There is no right and wrong in how you do this. Just notice whatever comes up.

If you only have two minutes to make art, you have plenty of time to do this task. If you have 10 minutes to make art, even better. If you have 20 minutes to make art, I am cheering you on!

Have fun and avoid judgement

REFLECTION

Reflect on your week focused on creating meaning and making contact with the present moment through art and mindfulness techniques. What came up for you? Are you comfortable with getting in the present moment? Did you avoid the mindfulness exercises? Did you judge yourself in the process? Whatever comes up is ok. Let go of judgement about how you think the present moment “should” be, and just let it be.

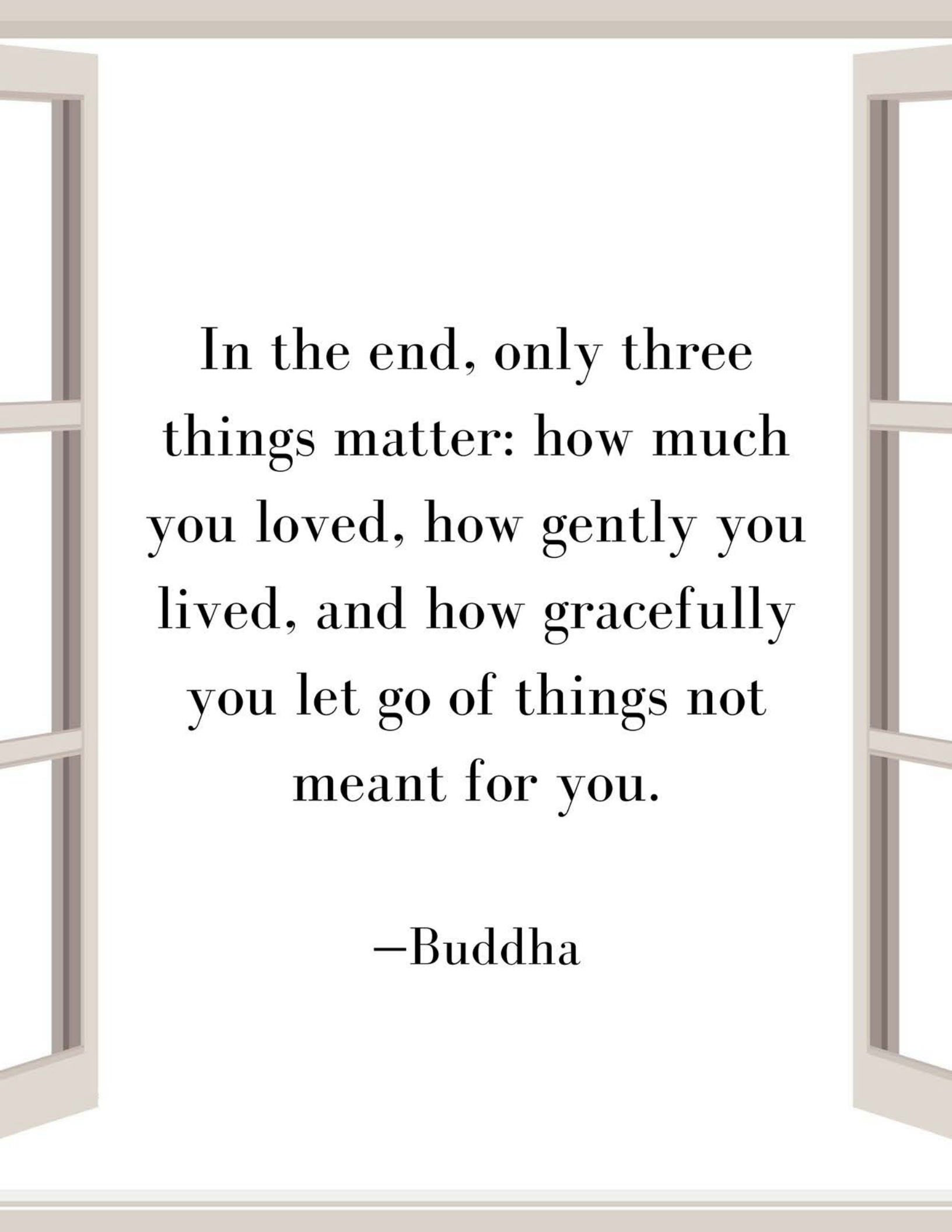
A photograph of a Zen garden featuring raked sand in concentric circular patterns and several smooth, light-colored stones. The title 'The Path to Mindset' is overlaid on the right side of the image in a serif font.

The Path to Mindset

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. 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 at ease in relationships by not taking things personally. Acceptance means we avoid distorting comments into something negative or personal. This one change in your life can completely transform your relationship with yourself and others.

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.



In the end, only three
things matter: how much
you loved, how gently you
lived, and how gracefully
you let go of things not
meant for you.

—Buddha

Mindset of Meaning

What is important to us as children is to grow, achieve developmental milestones, learn how to play, and learn about the world through our families, schools, and communities. We strive to fit in by adopting the values shown to us and finding meaning in accomplishment, friendships, family, hobbies, spirituality, etc.

It is time to take an inventory of what has been important to you in your life and where you learned it. Do you have the same set of values as your family does? If so, why? If not, why?

Seeing From the Outside

You may hold a value and think nothing is special or important about it. For example how you treat friends or family, raise children, spend or save money, drive, treat your server, and even buy groceries, are all choices based on your values.

Make a list of values you have - remember to see if you can uncover the ones that are automatic or so ingrained that you can't even imagine not doing them (eg. taking care of someone, being kind to animals, etc).

10 Reasons to Create Personal Meaning in Your Life

1. **Sense of Purpose:** Meaning provides a clear sense of purpose, giving direction and focus to your life. It helps answer the fundamental question of why you do what you do.
2. **Motivation:** A meaningful life can serve as a powerful motivator. When you have a sense of purpose, you are more likely to set goals and work towards achieving them with determination.
3. **Resilience:** Meaning can enhance your ability to cope with challenges and setbacks. When faced with difficulties, individuals with a strong sense of meaning may find it easier to bounce back and persevere.
4. **Improved Mental Health:** Studies suggest that people who feel their lives have meaning are often less prone to depression and anxiety. Having a purpose can contribute to a positive mindset and better mental health.
5. **Increased Well-Being:** A meaningful life is often associated with higher levels of overall well-being. This includes a sense of contentment, satisfaction, and happiness with one's life.
6. **Enhanced Relationships:** Meaningful connections with others are often a significant source of meaning in life. Building and maintaining deep, meaningful relationships can contribute to a more fulfilling existence.
7. **Altruism and Generosity:** A sense of meaning is often linked to acts of kindness, generosity, and altruism. Helping others and making a positive impact can provide a deep sense of fulfillment.
8. **Health Benefits:** Some research suggests that individuals with a strong sense of meaning may experience better physical health. This can be attributed to the positive effects of purpose on stress levels and immune function.
9. **Increased Productivity:** Knowing why you do what you do can lead to increased productivity. A sense of meaning can help you stay focused and committed to your tasks and goals.
10. **Longevity:** Studies suggest that having a purpose in life may be associated with a longer lifespan. Living a meaningful life may contribute to overall health and well-being, which in turn can impact longevity.

Does it still fit?

We know it is normal to outgrow habits and behaviors as we move from childhood to adolescence.

As adults we often find we have outgrown our old homes, relationships, clothing styles, interests, and hobbies, but we keep doing them out of a feeling of obligation or it just seems easier to stay the same or avoid rocking the boat.

Make a list of values, habits and behaviors you want to keep and a list which simply no longer seem relevant or important to you. Here are some ideas of values/habits/behaviors you might want to keep: walking the dog, eating a healthy breakfast, chatting with the neighbors, daily journaling, painting. Here are some ideas of values/habits/behaviors you might want to let go: people pleasing, going out with certain people, ignoring your health, staying up late, drinking, scrolling on social media, etc.

Write your lists below.

Values/Habits/Behaviors to Keep

Values/Habits/Behaviors to Let Go

REFLECTION

What do you think so far about meaning making? Does it excite you or pique your curiosity? Perhaps it brings up fears and anxiety? Sometime when women begin the work of meaning and values, they start judging themselves for not having found meaning sooner. Other times, women struggle because they have pushed their desires down for so long, they are uncertain what would bring them pleasure or meaning. There is a third option - be pleased that you are here now. There is no right or wrong way to think and no "right" time for being here. The observations you have about your reaction is just information. Remember, thoughts are not facts!

Reflect on your mindset - what is your reaction to meaning making thus far?



The Path to 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. 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 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. The goal is to make your decisions and actions based on values instead of feelings or reactions to situations or others.

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.

We do not think of it every day but we never forget it: the beloved shall grow old, or ill, and be taken away finally. No matter how ferociously we fight, how tenderly we love, how bitterly we argue, how pervasively we berate the universe, how cunningly we hide, this is what shall happen. In the wide circles of timelessness, everything material and temporal will fail, including the manifestation of the beloved. In this universe we are given two gifts: the ability to love, and the ability to ask questions. Which are, at the same time, the fires that warm us and the fires that scorch us.

-Mary Oliver, poet

THE MODERN CREATIVE WOMAN MEANING & PURPOSE

DEFINE YOUR VALUES AND WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU THESE DAYS. CHOOSE WHATEVER YOU DESIRE AND TRY TO AVOID WRITING ANSWERS THAT YOU "THINK" WOULD BE DESIRABLE ANSWERS. NOBODY IS GOING TO READ THIS, SO BE COMPLETELY HONEST.

THREE THINGS THAT ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO ME RIGHT NOW

1

2

3

WHAT ARE WAYS YOU CAN DEMONSTRATE THESE VALUES? IF WE DON'T ACT ON OUR VALUES, THEY ARE JUST DREAMS. A COMMITTED ACTION REQUIRES YOU TO BEHAVE IN LINE WITH YOUR VALUES. PICK FOUR ACTIONS YOU CAN INCORPORATE THIS MONTH TO MOVE YOU TOWARDS WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT.

1.

2.

3.

4.

WHICH ONE OF THESE ACTIONS
WILL I DO THIS WEEK? NOT ALL OF
THEM- JUST ONE!

ONE THOUGHT I AM AWARE OF
RIGHT NOW

I am a woman who...

PRESENT MOMENT DOODLE

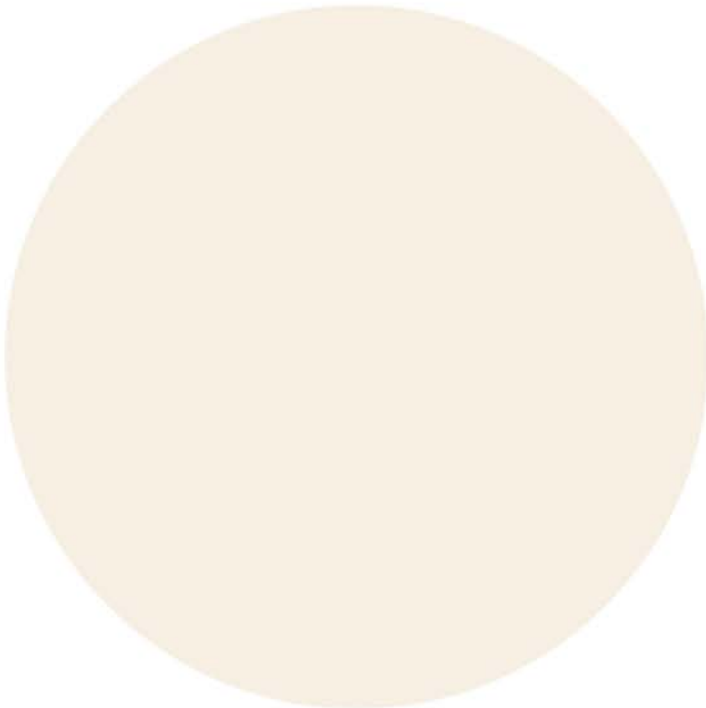
THE MODERN CREATIVE WOMAN

Your Modern Creative Why

Take a few deep breaths and think about your Modern Creative Why. Reflect on what you value the most, why you do what you do, and what inspires you. Imagine you are fully living your “Why”.

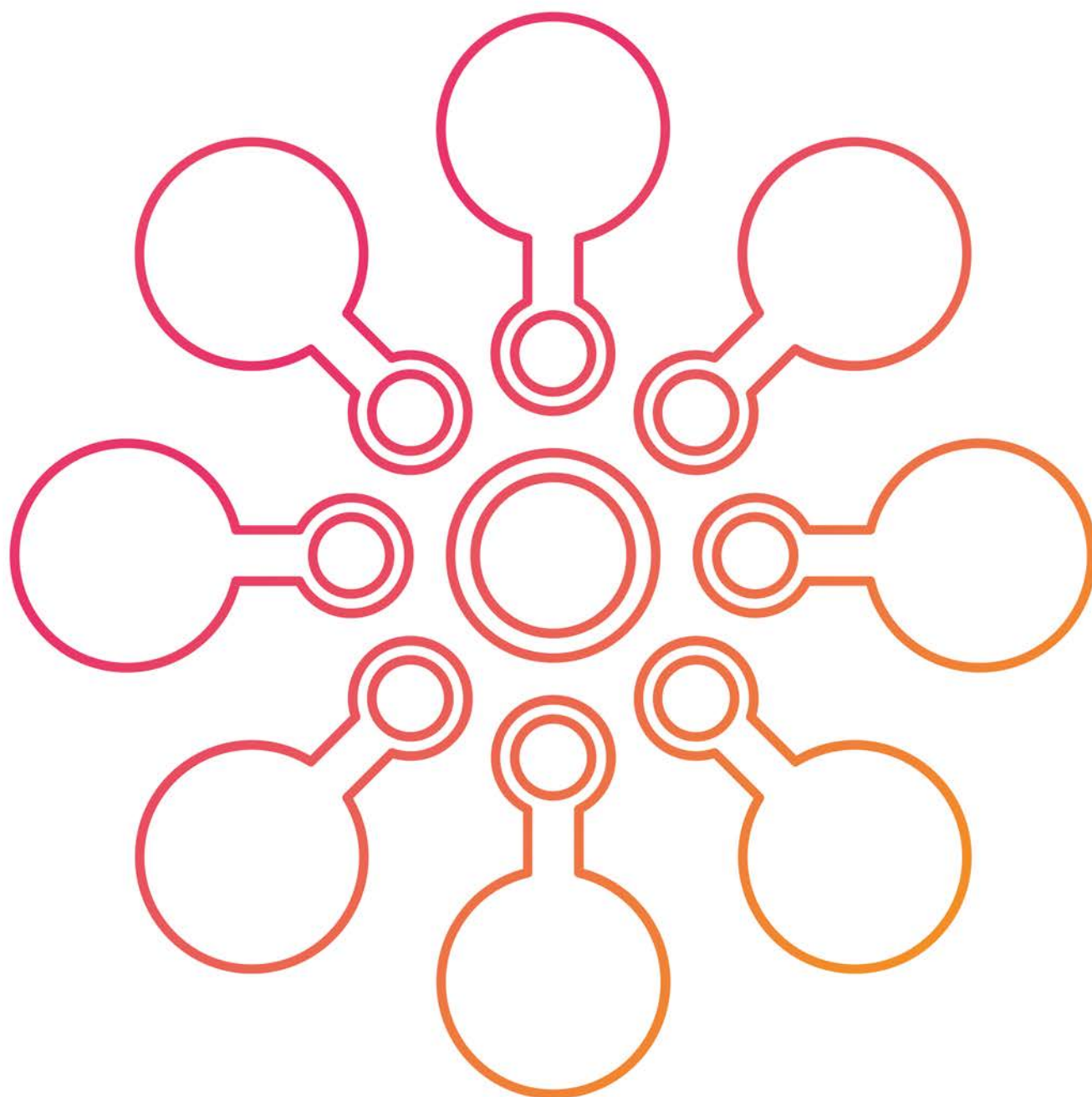
What thoughts will you need to think, and what feelings will you need to cultivate to live your why? What would you be doing today if you are living your “Why”? If you are stuck, remember this is just a draft and you are just being curious about what emerges.

Create a simple design inside the circle to reflect on your embodied “Why”. Be spontaneous. Write down three words to describe your design and give it a title.



Mind Map of Your Why

How will you know how to move towards your why? Write your Modern Creative Why in the middle of the Mind Map. Fill in the circles with words and/or art to get really clear what your Why entails. If your current “Why” is about your work, you might fill in the circles with - keeping up with industry, having fun, scheduling retreats, taking care of your body with sleep/exercise/nutrition. You can branch out the mind map in any direction to get granular in the details.



REFLECTION

What was it like to make contact with meaning and purpose? What are the surprising benefits you noticed? What challenges did you encounter? What do you know now about yourself that you did not know before? What will you do next? How will you carry meaning forward?



YOUR CREATIVE INTEGRATION

Meaning

You have completed a month focused on your Modern Creative Why and making meaning in your life! These exercises hopefully opened you to new ways of focusing on and attending to your life.

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 lived in the moment!

If you are excited about continuing this work, I would love to support you. Reach out to The Modern Creative Woman for a list of programs, workshops and retreats. For the ultimate creative glow-up, consider a custom-designed VIP package in San Francisco, Paris or online.



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

Celebrate Yourself!



**How I
increased my
presence this
month...**



**How I changed
my mindset this
month...**



**How I moved
towards my
purpose this
month...**

How I will celebrate myself:

Resources



Personal Development

- **Coaching:** Creativity is everything! Focus on developing your creative thinking to excel in your work, love and presence in the world.
- Creativity Intensives online, in San Francisco and Paris.
- Complementary consultations.



Stay in Touch!

- Instagram @dramybackos
- Join me each Friday at noon PST while I gently guide you to strategies to live a creative and joyful life.
- DM me with questions or topics you want to see covered!



Learn more!

- **Podcast:** The Modern Creative Woman.
- **Book:** ACT Art Therapy by Dr. Amy Backos
- **Book:** PTSD and Art Therapy by Dr. Amy Backos.
- **Book:** Emerging Perspectives in Art Therapy by Drs. Amy Backos & Richard Carolan

