

2020

*social media
retreat*

nov. 26 - jan. 1





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“

what image of ourselves
are we prisoner to?

what difficult arrested state
are we wrestling with, pining after,
disturbing each time we reach for it?

what phase of self -
born from the wounds of family
or relationships -
keeps us from knowing the world?

what part of us must die
so that we can be free?

”

- Mark Nepo -

THE EXQUISITE RISK: DARING TO LIVE AN AUTHENTIC LIFE

welcome

Why are you here? Self-improvement? Self-discovery? Just desperately needing to get away from social media's succubus energy, having boxed yourself in with pixels and posts? That sounds so dramatic, but I'd rather dramatize, than normalize the incessant scrolling, posting, liking, and sharing.

I am by no means an expert on anything except my own experiences and abilities (and even that's still a work in progress). But I hope this time away from The Apps and with my words gives you more space to come back into your own. To uncover things you've known but maybe forgotten about you, your needs, and how you choose to react to the ever-changing world around you.

The only constant is change and when we put stock into our image, rather than our person, we bank on becoming fixed and palatable to an audience. If you're here on this social media retreat, then you probably aren't interested in becoming your image. You know you don't have to accept the narratives that other people write for you, but stories can get muddled with all the noise around us.

And of course it's good to be changed and to react to our environment, but where does our environment and and we begin? Social media has blurred this line, allowing us to put ourselves in the middle of any conversation happening around the world. But should the conversation be centered around us?

Social media seems to be hyper-focussed on our reactions and how quickly we can share them, taking time and energy away from the issues we're reacting to. Whether that be through liking and commenting, or actively posting--it's the two sides of the same coin of reaction. Expectations have been established on these platforms and I think, like many American expectations, they refuse us the paradoxes and malleability of our own humanity.

You're not irrelevant or selfish when you log off. You're not ignoring the world. You're shutting the hell up and keeping to yourself and I think that's beautiful because I don't do that enough. My actions and reactions become less about how validated they can be by numbers of likes and retweets, and more focussed on unpacking how and why I came to these conclusions. It's like the internet version of thinking before you speak.

I don't expect to reveal anything new to you over these next 5 weeks, but it's my hope that my words and suggestions remind you of what you already know. I just want you to spend time with yourself because I know you're wonderful and deserve such precious attention. Do what you need to do over these next few weeks and do it all with more intention, presence, and mindfulness than you've been able to give yourself throughout the year.

Listen to what resonates and leave the rest. Slow down and listen to yourself more than you've been listening to all those voices you doom-scrolled through. Overall, be kind, gentle, and patient with yourself throughout this time. From Thanksg*ving to the New Year, focus on releasing judgment around any feelings that might arise. Remember that no feeling is "bad," it is just information -- sit in quiet focus with these feelings long enough to decipher the message they're trying to give you.

It is safe to release parts of ourselves that have become dead weight--there is no need to carry them around just because it fits someone else's narrative of you. You are freed of the need to live and die by the screen and what is transmitted through it. Pixels cannot convey your ever-expanding beauty and it is good to keep that beauty to yourself every once in a while. You are safe. You are loved. And you are supported in exploring yourself.

goals of the retreat

1. reflect and take inventory of last year's energies without judgment, looking at all that happened with the kind and curious eyes of someone who has made it to the other side of whatever got in your way
2. identify areas of your life you'd like to give more time and attention in 2021
3. practice gratitude for how far you've come, understanding that each past version of self has led you to who you are now
4. assess and adjust how you react to change
5. calibrate your definitions of success and failure for the next year according to your current resources and personality and not what you think the world expects of you at this point in time
6. be more present with yourself (and your loved ones) to create more intentional social interactions and life experience
7. set achievable goals and intentions for 2021 that are based only on who you are and what you want, not what anyone else thinks you should do and be
8. get a better look at your coping mechanisms and discover the most beneficial, least harmful (or numbing) ways to cope with the stress of downtime



suggestions

keep a journal of thoughts and feelings during this time.
call it “twitter,” i dunno.

tell your friends that you’re logging off and why. maybe
ask them to come on this journey with you because misery
loves company. but really, having someone to keep you
accountable is so helpful.

taking a complete break from social media is so freeing that
it’s almost surreal, but if you can’t cut it all out or your job
requires you to stay logged in, then focus on cutting back as
much as possible. wiggle yourself out of The Apps
as frequently as you can.

focus on staying present and avoid numbing
or distracting yourself from your feelings.

and above all else: go at your own pace, do what
feels right to you and leave the rest. this retreat is
all about you spending time with yourself.



week 1

gratitude

Like most themes I plan to explore in this social media retreat, you've probably heard the word thrown around online, but have you sat with the concepts or scrolled them away into oblivion and misinterpretations? Theorizing and meme-making is a wonderful start, but contemplation and practice is where the magic happens. Gratitude seems like an easy one, a concept that was probably introduced around this time of year ages ago through some worksheet that also included colonizer propaganda.

We can easily rattle off a list of things we are thankful for or what we believe we should be thankful for, but what does gratitude really feel like when we allow ourselves to get lost in it? When we notice and understand how many things had to go right to support our existence? When we thank each atom in our body for doing its job? When we thank each electron, proton, and neutron that makes up everything in this universe? When we recognize the interdependence of all systems?

I could wax poetic on what practicing gratitude does for me, but that'd take all the transcendental fun out of letting the waves of thanks wash over you in a mundane moment. I believe this kind of gratitude requires a mystical awareness and presence in the current moment that we often steal from ourselves because it suits our cultural norms. To look out at the world and instinctively recognize that there is something to give thanks for rather than to critique is a powerful shift in perspective which will make this time of year more potent in your personal growth.

If comparison is the thief of joy, then instagram is the most efficient pick-pocket in town. Even when I've attempted ~mindfully~ scrolling, making sure I really enjoy the content I'm consuming, it never ends well for me. I feel a sense of scarcity arise when I see someone enjoying something I don't have--even if I don't actually /want/ what they have. Inspiration and connection gives way to jealousy and competition. No one wins ~ except people buying ads and controlling the algorithm.

Being off socials removes some of this subconsciously addictive compare and contrast that we use to fill each and every second of downtime. It might be uncomfortable at first. Or maybe it's a lightness and ease with which you haven't felt since childhood. Whatever you're feeling by allowing yourself to focus on the atoms within the moment at hand, just feel it. Be a witness to your feelings, not a jury. You're not there to judge what comes up for you. Feel free to record the feelings of today (each and every today).

And as an added challenge, thank every feeling that comes up. Thank the discomfort and the downtime and the boredom. Thank the emotions and sensations you want to judge as "bad," because they might just be telling you something that you haven't sat still long enough to hear before. Thank yourself for inviting these emotions to the forefront of your mind. Thank the experience for presenting itself and thank yourself for showing up as you are.

I understand Thanksg*ving can be difficult for many, especially compounded with the intensity and grief of this year. Don't judge that either. Just be with the difficulty and whatever emotions it brings. Break the present moment down into its simplest parts -- can you thank the water for coming out of the faucet? Your ability to smile (or frown)? Your breath? Feet that can take you from point A to point B?

Just be present today, don't worry about doing any of the suggested practices just yet. Let the excitement and sacredness of your offline journey set in (and thank that too). It can seem silly and small to be off social media, but it can also be as divine as you make it to be. Thank yourself for all the choices you've made to get you this far. Be thankful and proud of the blades of grass for growing and be proud of yourself for the same.

week 1

praxis

*suggested activities that you should feel no pressure
to do but might find helpful
~ take what works and leave the rest*



1. Thank the water coming out of the faucet everytime you wash your hands. And thank your hands for cleaning themselves! Bonus points for thanking the toilet as it flushes your negative energy away. Continue thanking every little thing in your life that you usually take for granted--how does that feel?
2. Make a list of all the people, things, events, interactions, life-lessons, etc. that have come into your life this year that you're thankful for. Just take as much stock as you can about all of your blessings. Read the list back to yourself and let the feelings of gratitude wash over you for each thing you wrote about -- don't rush, just feel.
3. Write yourself a thank you letter! Here are some prompts for this self-gratitude practice:
 - a) Thank your current self. Look back on 2020 and just exhale like you finished a marathon. Pat yourself on the back (no, literally...it'll feel good). Write your letter and give yourself a hug--your hard work deserves to be recognized and celebrated.
 - b) Write to who you were at this time last year. Thank yourself for all the work you did in 2019 (and all the years prior).
 - c) Write a thank you letter to you 5 weeks from now, to be read through out this social media retreat as a motivator to not log back into The Apps. Thank yourself for all the dedication and respect you've given to yourself.
 - d) Write as 80-year-old you speaking to you now. Thank this current self as if what you did this year was vital to your life-long process of growing and learning.
 - e) Or just be in this current moment and thank one of your body parts-- your eyes for seeing, your stomach for digesting food and keeping you energized, your feet for taking you on long walks -- whatever it may be.
4. Make a list of all your plans that were sidetracked this year. Grieve what still needs to be felt. While you release these feelings and thwarted desires -- do you see a new light of gratitude? Can you thank fate, god, yourself, your farts, the universe, whomever/whatever for your journey turning out just as it did? Try your best to be thankful for experiences that didn't go as you'd planned.



week 2

awareness

You can't solve a problem you don't know anything about. It can be daunting to discover all that we harbor in our subconscious...or worse, issues floating in the conscious mind that we run away from through distraction after distraction. Sometimes, we might even practice being present but end up judging the moment, spending time categorizing and classifying it as "good" or "bad," rather than just experiencing whatever life has put in front of us.

This year I've found myself in the midst of many readings, videos, and podcasts on *trauma.* I think it's because this year (or maybe more appropriately, these last 4 years...oh 400 years?) has been outright. traumatizing. And I know this collective American trauma is not something you or I can solve just by logging off of IG and twitter for a while. But it is my hope that this time away can help us all reflect on the relationship that social media has with trauma, culture, self-awareness, and cognitive dissonance.

And of course there is so much more to be aware of than just our pain. But with a year like we've had, if we don't recognize the need to heal the knot we get in our stomach when we see crowds of mask-less people, then we might carry that trauma around for years (generations) to come. Despite how hard I've tried, ignoring feelings does not make them go away. Ignoring just means we deny that voice in our head, that discomfort in our body that tells us when something is wrong. This denial can breed a dangerous disconnection from ourselves, leaving us unable to identify what it is that we need.

Don't ~try~ to ~do~ anything this week. Just notice yourself, your world, and everything in between. Get a base sample of who you are and what you feel, why you feel it and when. Let yourself REST!! God, please let yourself rest!!!!!! Maybe I'm projecting with all those exclamation points because I did have a lot of time to rest this year, but it never felt restful, only shameful--and for what!? Because I was surviving a pandemic? Because I was doing what my body and mind were asking of me?

American culture thrives on shame and shame makes it easier for us to deny ourselves, our truth, and our needs. For fear of coming off as needy or lazy or rude, we settle, sell ourselves short, shrinking into cookie-cutter expectations. We don't go out and get what we know our body is asking of us because we "should" be okay with pushing through.

Social media enforces this shame as the platforms become a shouting match, pointing the finger, and calling people, situations, or choices problematic. This may look like awareness, but it toes the line of delusion. Awareness and shame are not synonymous no matter how much the internet wants them to be. It is important to stay informed, but when we become hyper-aware of the ills of the world and center this information within our personal responsibility, rather than the proper context of global issues, we can lose sight of our own power and sphere of influence in our community.

Your decisions do have a powerful impact, but they are not life or death for the entire planet. Most issues we're facing require collective solutions. We can't make people care about others and we can't force anyone to make better decisions, but we most certainly can bring more awareness and intention into our own care and decisions. This might not seem like a lot, but what is it that really matters to you? What is the meaning of your life? Knowing who you are, what you need, and what you can do is going to set you up to not only be the change you want to see, but actually see that change. Change is the only constant and it's constantly happening, maybe on a micro scale, but if we lose sight of the small wins, the big wins will be invisible as well.

week 2

praxis

*suggested activities that you should feel no pressure
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~ take what works and leave the rest*



1. Pick up a physical practice that puts you in your body -- make an effort to stretch, dance, run, jump-rope, sing, or whatever feels good for you to connect with your body and become aware of its abilities.
2. Take an emotional shower. Name what every aspect of it will be (i.e. the water is cleansing, the soap is confidence, my wash cloth is wisdom, etc.). Intentionally and emotionally wash your body with whatever it is you need. Wash whomever and whatever out of your hair and recognize that it is going down the drain. Pay attention to how the water and the soap feels. Is your body asking you for more scrubbing? More sudsing? More love? Can you give it what it needs?
3. Cook an emotional meal. Like the shower, name each and every ingredient as things you need. Stay off your phone completely and bring intense awareness to each action from washing your hands, to chopping the vegetables, all the way to doing the dishes. How many meals this week can you cook like this? Do you usually cook? Why or why not? How does bringing awareness to cooking change how you feel about cooking?
4. Go outside. Lay on the grass. Pay attention to your body and the way it interacts with the world. Is this enjoyable? Stressful? Just notice.
5. Unclench your jaw and relax your shoulders right now and scan your body for other places it might be holding tension. Set a reminder on your phone to do this everyday if you have to. Look up various body scan meditations to find one that helps you.
6. Pick a day to not only be hyper-aware of your body but also hyper-involved with its processes. Try to pick a day without work where you can just be at home with yourself. Eat your meals in silence, really focussing on the chewing, swallowing, and digesting processes. Walk slowly and barefoot anywhere you can, noticing how your heel hits the ground and how your toes leave it. Pay as much attention as you can to yourself and your needs.
7. Hug. your. self. My therapist told me to do this at the beginning of the lockdowns and I cannot even begin to describe the comfort, pleasure, and awareness this brings to me. And the relief comes so so quickly. Bonus points: sit on the ground, holding yourself, tuck your chin into your elbow and cry.
8. Drink water! Plenty of water!!! Name the water “confidence,” “forgiveness,” or whatever else you need and drink it all with the awareness that you are giving yourself what you need emotionally and physically.



week 3

identity

Identity can be so tricky because of its very nature, requiring you to be the subject and the observer all in one. Through awareness of your inner and outer world, however, your identity can become more clear. Because ultimately, who you are is a choice. I do not want to over-simplify this because there are infinite decisions out of our control, but our reactions to them can be chosen, even if our options form a very short list. Sometimes, the only choice we have is our attitude or perspective of the situation.

I was ignorant of how much social media influences the way I choose to view and present myself because I like to think that I'm authentic and vulnerable online. Although I do make conscious decisions to portray myself honestly, it is still ultimately a portrayal--an abstracted and compartmentalized version of my full self. At the beginning of every break I take from socials, my identity feels lost and distorted like I don't know who I am without the constant feedback from others.

Eventually, without the messages of what I could or should be, I am able to center myself in a less self-centered way. As I type this, I've been offline for 7 weeks, which I think is the longest I've been away from IG or twitter since I joined 8 years ago. And the message I'm getting this time is that my identity is not fixed. I feel brand new every single morning. This can be confusing, alarming, and disorienting; but maybe that's because I am not used to such personal freedom and self-intimacy.

Without the pressure to share and maintain an identity online, my real-life, flesh and blood personhood gets the rightful context it deserves. The context of mistakes and an ever-changing mind who acts and reacts imperfectly. A body, soul, and mind connecting with each other in a vast and complex world. I have nothing to prove to myself. I can just be present with all of who I am and what I'm not. Without anyone else's two-cents, I really fucking like myself. Yes, even when I screw up, because I know how far I've come and how much further I'm going to go.

Hillel the Elder has a quote: "If I am not for myself, who will be for me?" For a marketing project, I once adapted this quote to make a comment about social media: "if I am not for my selfie, who will even like me?" Maybe that's a corny adaptation, but my point was to replace the self with the selfie because that is how many people identify us now--as an abstract canvas to project their ideas, wants, needs, and rules onto. It is the observer who creates the meaning of what they're viewing. And this happens over and over again with each post we share. What narratives are you writing about yourself? What narratives are you writing about everyone else?

Brené Brown has a good checklist to see if you're being vulnerable with someone to strengthen the connection, or to get a reaction/some attention. These self-check questions might as well have been written explicitly about social media presence and determining what content you share and why. These questions, which originally appear in "Daring Greatly" are listed here:

Why am I sharing this?

What outcome am I hoping for?

What emotions am I experiencing?

Do my intentions align with my values?

Is there an outcome, response, or lack of a response that will hurt my feelings?

Is this sharing in the service of connection?

Am I genuinely asking the people in my life for what I need?

Like I said in the intro to this retreat, "the only constant is change," and this applies to your humanity, how you experience it, and how you translate it and share it to others. Take this week to examine who you are, what you like, and who you want to be. How do you show up for yourself? How do you show up for others? Is it the same self? The same kindness? Why or why not? How does social media influence this perception of self?

week 3

praxis

*suggested activities that you should feel no pressure
to do but might find helpful
~ take what works and leave the rest*



1. Write down your core values. I'm tempted to write mine as positive 10 commandments, so instead of "thou shalt not..." try "when I act from the best parts of myself, I am..." or "I have the potential to be more..." or "I love how I handle x, y, and z." Whatever works for you, get 'em on paper, see what moves you and what you want to further move into.
2. List 3 friends who know you, who support you and don't shame you for being yourself. Write how you know their love to be true. Recall a story when they held you accountable and reminded you who the fuck you are. Mail them a letter or give them a call :)
3. Every day this week make eye contact with yourself in the mirror for 15 minutes (or as long as you can). Imagine your younger self is there too, looking at you now. Imagine that your older self shows up as well. How does it feel to be in their presence? Do they recognize you? What makes them proud of you?
4. Write 10 things you love about yourself. Can you use these to start a daily practice of self-affirmation? ~ I highly recommend daily affirmations. They suck at first. It was almost impossible to look in the mirror and tell myself "I deserve love," but it really really works.
5. Write 10 things about yourself that you're ashamed of. How can you undo this shame, acknowledge your resilience, and thank your shadow self for doing its best at the time? The shame probably won't be released in one day--that's fine, you're laying a foundation for further self-exploration and acceptance which is not only beautiful, but also an act of strength.
6. Write a letter to someone who totally misunderstood you. Let it all out on the page and explain yourself how you've always wanted to. Understand that some people will never "get" you and that's okay. Don't worry about sounding petty, childish, or silly, the goal is not to send the letter, but rather, admit to yourself how it feels to be misinterpreted and release some of that pain.
7. Write out your personal story. Like a caterpillar becomes a butterfly, our past selves might be unrecognizable to who we are now. Trace how each stage of your personal metamorphosis informed the steps before and after it. Draw the thread that links all versions of yourself together.



week 4

reflect

It may seem redundant to take this whole week to ~reflect~ as if that hasn't been the underlying goal this entire time. But let's kick it up a notch. Get back to center. Contemplate and question what it is that you actually need and want. These seem easy enough to identify, but whenever I've taken a break from socials, it is about this fourth week where the question of what I need begins to breathe into its own.

How do I know what I need?

What information helps me to come to understand what I need?

And how do I know when, where, why, and how to act on this knowledge?

As someone whose identity is shaped by her authenticity and individuality, I still often fall into the trap set by society and social media to distort these ideals from my own personal definition into a commodification. I let the distracted and reactionary energy of the times influence my definitions of what it means to be authentic and how to own and express (or be ashamed of) my individual talents.

It's easy to scroll through Instagram, claiming that we're staying inspired and keeping up with news, but more often than not, this scrolling is feeding the voice of comparison in our head until it screams that we're not doing enough or that our life is shit simply because it doesn't look exactly like everyone else's. It seems counterintuitive and contradictory to the narrative we try to write for ourselves. But it is only human that there be some yearning to fit in and be accepted--to not only be successful and understood, but to be validated because it is something we have "earned." There is nothing, absolutely nothing, wrong with these yearnings. But it is the dominance they begin to have on our personal narrative that can trip us up.

My growth often feels unflattering and disjointed so I usually shame myself into denying that I ever existed as any version of self before this very moment. But this is robbing myself of my personal growth, erasing the hard work I've done to become a better person and face my shadows. I'll admit that shame easily gets in the way of doing this. It is not easy to look back on our mistakes and contextualize them as "part of our path," when we'd rather just forget anything embarrassing happened or avoid responsibility.

It is not a mistake to love someone who couldn't love you back. It is not a mistake to pass up an opportunity you didn't think you were ready for. It is not a mistake to try something out and fail at it. These were choices, not mistakes. Were they beneficial? Where are you now as opposed to when you made these decisions? As long as it feels like steady ground and a centered heart, then I'd say you made an alright choice, kiddo! Don't let your current, wiser self second-guess or shame your past self because you didn't know any better. If it's true that we're always trying our best, then how can you accept the times when your best wasn't as good as it is now?

When reflecting back, pay special attention to this last year. Let any unhealed pain come back up and move through you. If you're unfamiliar with this sort of healing or if anything feels too much, too soon, please reach out to a friend, a therapist, a guided meditation, a book, or any other resource that will help you stay grounded and clear of mind. It is strong to know your limits and to reach out when you need support. Move at your pace. Be thorough. Don't rush your healing.

In past years, this reflection time has been centered on what I could've done better or what I wished I'd done to be align myself with who I want to be. But the energies of 2020 have me feeling like I just need to grieve. A lot was lost this past year and the losses occurred so rapidly and with so many extenuating circumstances that my focus was simply to cope and survive, putting off the important processing and healing. Is it safe now to break down and release the sadness behind these changes?

I see healing as a journey through a spiral labyrinth. Sometimes we think we've totally released blockages and ached those life lessons, but there is always more room to expand--that is the beauty of life. Don't worry if your reflections bring you back to painful or embarrassing memories; remind yourself that you're no longer there and that you did your best when you were. Can you thank the shame for coming to the table? Can you ask the shame why it's there and what it needs to feel better? Can you recognize that your shame once might have helped you stay out of trouble, but now it is no longer serving its purpose?

week 4

praxis

*suggested activities that you should feel no pressure
to do but might find helpful
~ take what works and leave the rest*



1. Look back at it! Go through this year's diaries, journals, voice memos, photos, or whatever documentation you have from this year. Recall the feelings behind the content you made for yourself and let yourself laugh, cry, dance, schedule an appointment with a therapist, or whatever you need to do. Your body will know, so just tap in and follow its wisdom.
2. Shit, look back on any writings, photos, or voice memos you've taken from the past 3 weeks. Reflect on your time offline and what you've noticed about yourself.
3. Find a picture of yourself from the beginning of 2020 and one from within the last month--put them side by side and just notice. Notice the similarities, the differences in looks, energy, and emotions. Maybe even try to recreate the picture from the beginning of the year and see what it feels like to be the same person in a different place (or a different person in the same place, depending on how you look at it).
4. Make a list of all of your successes throughout this past year. There are no small successes--showering while depressed is a very big success and you should write it down! Staying hopeful, optimistic, and tapping into your imagination for a brighter future is also a success! Finding new ways to cope when covid-19 safety guidelines prevented you from implementing your usual anti-depression routine is an incredible feat and you did it and you deserve to celebrate that success and all other successes.
5. Throw yourself a party where only you attend. Decorate your place however you see fit. Pick up a special meal, make a playlist of your favorite feel-good songs, and dress up. Incorporate any of the knowledge or lists or letters you've written during this social media retreat that could help you celebrate the highs and the lows of this past year.



week 5

game plan

Goal-setting has always been really tricky for me because I like to set impossible standards and then shame myself relentlessly when I don't meet them ala masochism. I finally noticed this pattern of self-sabotage about 3 years ago and began to reframe New Year's Resolutions into yearly themes, intentions, vibes, small goals, etc. instead.

I once wrote an essay about how I don't "resolve," for anything to come to fruition, because that approach makes me rigid and increases my need to control everything. Resolutions inspired a state of mind that wasn't conducive to creativity or productivity for me because I was full of shame and frozen in fear of failing.

I'm beginning to safely explore the murky waters of concrete goals again, but only because I rebelled against them religiously for 3 years. Either way, and whatever helps you stick to a plan of growth or path towards personal success, figure out what's best for you and write it down.

Choosing a theme for the year is a solid way to work on personal growth that allows for spontaneity and happenstance. For example, my theme in 2018 was "discomfort," because I'd noticed myself restricting in fear whenever I thought I wasn't ready or I experienced something new. Throughout the year, I actively sought out people, books, and conversations that helped me unpack, understand, and take action in the realm of my yearly theme. I let these themes guide me and teach me something new about myself. It really helped to center my goals around my process, rather than what I thought success should be.

My metric of success was based on how I approached discomfort, and less about what I did or didn't achieve in my career. My depression and anxiety really appreciated this new approach and if it's resonating with you, I hope you put the resolutions away this year and have a go at themes or intentions or something that works for you and your sweet brain and body.

As someone whose older sister has an Emmy nomination, while I have never had a full-time job, it is really easy for me to want to Show, Prove, or Perform my success. There are soooo many reasons for this and even more to explain why I "haven't" been able to "achieve" it, but I really don't think any of that is "the point." The whole reason we logged off for these 5 weeks was to get back to center--to realize what we want without the input or pressure from others. Because you're not living your life for an audience, you're living it for yourself.

I think it's natural--especially with social media--to want to share your goals and your successes. And there is nothing wrong with that, but I know for me, it's really hard to detach from the pressure to perform and the shame of falling short. I keep reminding myself that some talents and successes are not Content, they are Real Life--they are little, intangible moments--they are feelings and smiles and cooked meals and advice given and miles run and no amount of likes or comments can make them more or less of a success because they are yours and not meant to be shared. And that is okay!!

I know it might not feel like you're "living for likes," but if you took this time away from social media, then you admit that the likes and scrolling and comparison were influencing your reality in a way that was not conducive to your truth or your goals. Good for you!!! And now what're you gonna do about it? You know how to set yourself up for success, but what does success look like to you? Have you started an ongoing conversation with yourself about what you need? What's some insight you uncovered during this retreat that you want to take with you when you log back on?

week 5

praxis

suggested activities that you should feel no pressure to do but might find helpful
~ take what works and leave the rest



1. Give yourself an intention/manifestation/goal-setting ritual; here's how it's worked best for me, but do what works for you and leave the rest.
 - a) Reflect on all the reflecting you did last week and just begin to write out any intense feelings that come up--what feels good? What feels full of shame? I like to light a candle and recite a poem before I get going on this part.
 - b) Do something with the energy and intention of control and change. A simple scrubbing of your tub or putting away all of the clothes that have piled up on that chair are beautiful places to start. Don't just do this action, do it with all of your heart as a symbol of your commitment to yourself.
 - c) Come back to your journal where you just reflected. Rip out a clean sheet of paper and write your goals/intentions on their own sheets of paper. I like to break things down into 3 categories (career, romance, spiritual, etc.) and write my goals as mantras, using a lot of "I will..." and "I am..." statements.
 - d) Now dance. Or sing. Or run. Or play an instrument. Do something physical that feels freeing, where you can release control and just flow with whatever emotions arise.
 - e) After all of this, I like to recite another poem and draw myself a bubble bath. Where I bathe in my intentions, placing each piece of paper into the bath after reading it aloud.
 - f) When the bath is over, I give myself a hug and when the papers have dried, I put them in a special place in my room.
 - g) I also go on a cleanse on New Year's Eve and Day, so do whatever helps you release the old and step into the new.
2. Chat with a very good and supportive friend. Tell them about this ritual, or don't, but I do encourage you to share your goals and intentions for the next year. It is so much easier to stick with it when we know someone is rooting for us.
3. Write out your own specific definition of success in as much detail as you can. Either what that means for a successful life or simply your life one year from now.
4. Write out your definition of failure. Mine is usually: "I fail when I don't try." And it can be as simple as that. I find it very helpful to know my own success parameters that reflect my current resources.



that's all, folks!

Feel free to log back in and scroll your heart out. I like to wait until January first, but just like everything else in these pages--do what works for you and leave the rest.

I really appreciate you taking these past 5 weeks to reconnect with yourself! I believe the world needs a lot of healing and a shift in culture. And from what I've been reading this year, that process starts with the individual and spreads through how we live our lives (on and off screen).

Again, not to dramatize the power of social media, but I'd rather not normalize its sneaky affect on our subconscious. Even when we dance to the beat of our own drum, we might not realize we're implementing some moves we saw on TikTok (a metaphor, sure, but is it really, though??).

Taking a step back and a look inside ourselves is always so incredibly powerful. And if you haven't noticed by now, you're not really missing anything either. The world still burns without your opinion on how we should douse the flames. Is that perspective helpful or anxiety-inducing? It's supposed to be a joke, but it hits a little too close to home.

What I'm trying to say and what I've been hoping to convey over the past 5 weeks is the importance of you! Yes, you!!!! You are so powerful and so capable of dealing with all the shit this world flings at you. Because -- spoiler alert -- you've handled all the shit flung thus far.

There are an infinite number of important causes to give our time, attention, energy, and money to, but how much of your own resources are you spending on yourself? I'm not saying to give less of a shit about global issues or donate less money, but I am asking you to put more intention into all of it. Really spend time and energy to process your emotions about each tragedy. Only take on causes that you have the emotional bandwidth to carry. You can't solve everything and while that truth is disheartening, it should only be humanizing. I worry that I sound selfish just for suggesting that!! And that's the stinker right there.

But I know my story and I know what I'm doing to better myself so I can connect with my community who will work together to create sustainable, loving systems of change and growth. These efforts are intangible, not shareable, and therefore feel less impactful, but over the past 5 weeks, I've reminded myself that this is a false narrative. Impact is hardly liked or retweeted, but it can be felt for generations to come.

I love you so much!
Thanks for taking this break with me.

Lots of love always,
Chuck

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