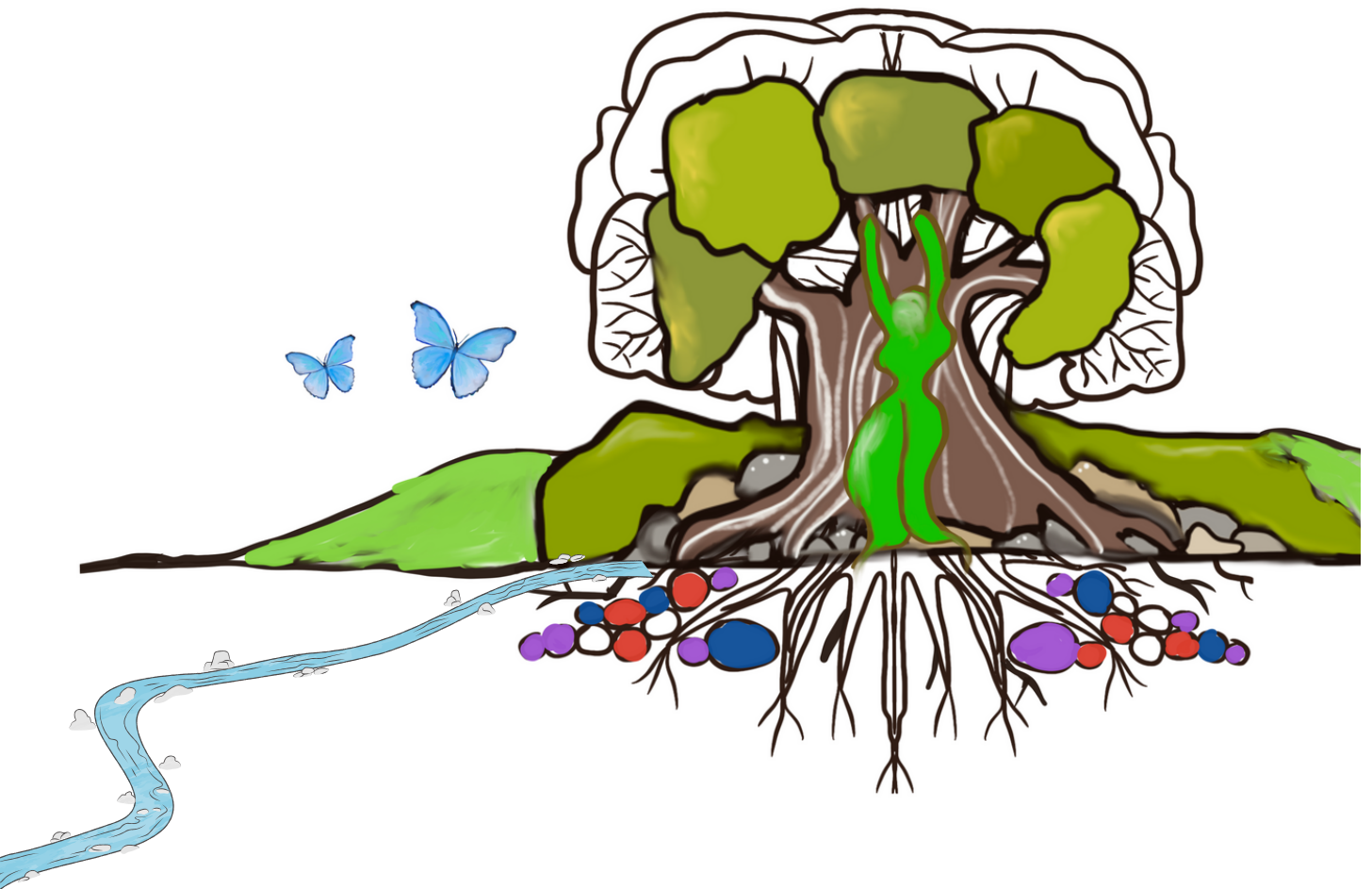
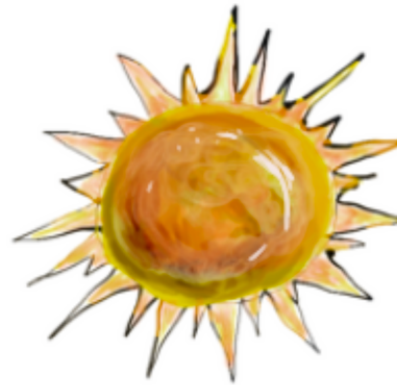


Four Elements for Grounding

Reducing Stress Using
Simple Tools
Mind, Body & Art

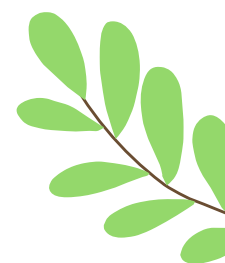




How to use this workbook

Humans are innately connected to nature and the four elements (Logan & Selub, 2012). This workbook is designed to work with your body, your mind, and your creativity with art. I created this based on Elan Shapiro's stress-reduction model (Shapiro, 2014). Feel free to use just a single section, go through one of the four elements individually, or work through all four elements in one sitting.

The 4-Elements exercises were designed to start at the feet and go up to the head. The idea is that the more we use and practice these simple exercises, the easier they will be to use in times of stress.





EARTH

MIND

Being grounded to the earth can also mean being present with what's happening in your body.

Grounding Exercises:

Place one hand on the crown of your head, then place all your awareness on the bottom of your feet. Breathe.

Notice any sensations and silently say to yourself.

I am safe right now.

This will fade away.

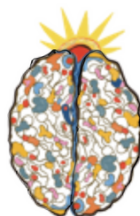
This is a natural response.

I am getting air by deeply breathing.

I am starting to relax.

I feel calmer.

I am going to be okay.





EARTH

BODY

Your body, just like the earth, is your literal foundation of life. Signs you're ungrounded: distracted, spacing out, over-thinking, excessive worry.

Body Exercise:

Stand like a tree with your feet parallel, shoulder-width apart, spine straight, and chin tucked. Sink your body into the ground. Imagine roots growing out the bottom of your feet, expanding deep into the earth (Barton, 2017).

Bonus for doing this outside on the actual earth





EARTH

ART

Create an Image of Your Tree of Life

The Ground

Write down the things you choose to do every week on the ground. These should not be things you are forced to do but rather things you have chosen to do for yourself.

The Trunk

Write your skills and values on the trunk. Starting at the base of the trunk and going up.

The Branches

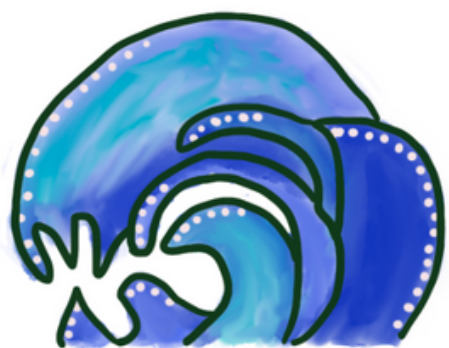
Write down your hopes, dreams, and wishes on the branches. These can be personal, communal, or general to all of mankind. Think both long and short term. Spread them around the various branches.

The Leaves

Write down the names of those who are significant to you in a positive way. Your friends, family, pets, heroes, etc.

Write down the legacies that have been passed on to you. You can begin by looking at the names you just wrote on leaves and thinking about the impact they've had on you and what they've given to you over the years. This can be material, such as an inheritance, but most often, this will attribute such as courage, generosity, kindness, etc.





WATER

MIND

Notice how emotions flow through our bodies like waves. They come, and they go. When we're in the sympathetic nervous system, we're in fight or flight. Our mouth becomes dry, our extremities can become cold, and our muscles become tight. We're preparing ourselves to either battle off a predator or run away.

On the other hand, the parasympathetic nervous system helps to create calm. This nervous system is often called the rest and digest nervous system. We can activate this nervous system by creating more water or saliva in our mouths. We can do this in any number of ways by thinking about a delicious meal, by chewing gum or drinking tea, or just by simply rotating our tongue clockwise or counterclockwise in our mouth.

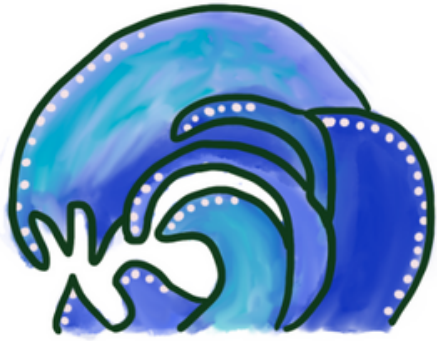




WATER

We cannot live without water. Water is an inescapable component of life; it covers 70% (Cassardo & Jones, 2011) of the world's surface and 60% of our bodies and is the basis for 100% of the food we eat. Take a moment to notice all the ways our bodies are affected by flow and water. If you think about a delicious meal, you can feel saliva forming in your mouth, which helps to create digestion within our bodies. When we feel sad or overjoyed, tears can represent our emotions. Water is a massive part of who we are and what makes up our bodies.





WATER

ART

Watercolor Exploration:

Watercolor paper, watercolors, and brushes in various sizes.

Try creating art using watercolors and watercolor paper and making sure the paper is wet before you begin. Notice how colors expand in the water. Now try creating art on dry paper and see what happens.

Emotions as a Wave:

One of the most important things to know about emotions is that they have a beginning, middle, and end. Emotions come in waves, and the purpose of that wave is to try to create an urge to act on the emotion. First, the emotion and urge intensify. Then, the urge slowly reduces. The most critical point in the wave is the middle, labeled as the “high distress zone.”

Create a piece of art that represents your wave with these three levels of emotions. Using words, line shapes, and color, draw these three zones.





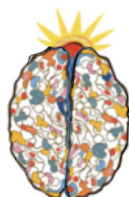
AIR

MIND

Any time your thoughts get away from you, practice returning to your breath, even if it's for one singular inhale and exhale with your full attention.

Remember the intention of this isn't to sit and listen for 10 to 15 minutes a day and then go on as you have in the past. This is designed to deliver simple practices that you can incorporate throughout your day to create change.

That only happens if you practice this and change your habits.





AIR

BODY

Your breath is constantly communicating with your nervous system.

So when you switch your breathing from the autonomic to a breath of awareness, you are essentially opening the door to feel your way into a more restful, calm state.



The importance of this practice is to bring you back in line so that you're in a calm state of rest and digestion, your hormones become more regulated, and your heart rate is calm.

There are many different forms of breath patterns, and as you become more aware, you'll see that emotions hold different breath patterns. Long-held trauma or sustained stressful states hold their breath patterns.

The first step to unlearning a breath pattern is self-awareness.

The one thing we always have with us is our breath. If you're willing to listen, our breath is a beautiful teacher.

Take an inventory of how you feel before you do this exercise, and then notice what you feel after.

Breathing Exercise

Sit or lie down comfortably.

Take deep, slow breaths from your nose and notice where you carry the stress in your body. When you breathe, track where this breath goes in your body. You can't breathe in the past or the future. You can only breathe right here in the present moment. This is the start of your mind training. Your breath is your most reliable tool to reclaim your power.



AIR

ART

Draw your breath:

Large white paper, oil pastels, crayons, or color markers. Start with the breathing exercise above and notice the length of the inhale and the exhale. Draw using lines and colors what your breath looks like.

Wings:

Create a set of wings that hold a secret. You can either draw, paint or use clay to hide these secrets, worries, or dreams. Think about how you could release these secrets into the wind and have them carried away.

Straw Art:

Diluted tempera paint, straws, paper, a dropper or pipette, small containers to hold paint, and a tray to hold the paper. Using the dropper, place paint onto the paper, then use the straw and your breath to move the colors. Once dry, step back and see what you can find within the art. Use colored pencils to create images out of the paint splatters.





FIRE

Next, let's explore how to ignite your imagination and light up your thoughts with the fire element.

Einstein said this about imagination: Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Dream in circles around the world.

Igniting our imagination is one of our most powerful tools. It's the gateway to creativity and transformation.

Using your mind to activate your imagination can be as simple as spending time in nature and observing. Looking at things with openness and the possibility to create change can also help ignite our imagination. For example, looking at a simple paper clip and thinking about all the different ways you could transform and use that paper clip can help ignite your imagination.





FiRE

The fire energy inside us helps bind the atoms together; it converts food into fat, creating stored energy and muscle. Fire energy also helps to create digestion which allows the body to gain nutrients and energy. This fire energy also helps us to transform our bodies and create change.

One of the easiest ways to create and feel this fire inside is by rapidly rubbing our hands together to create friction. After rubbing your hands together, you can place them gently over your eyes and feel the heat soothe distressed eyes and increase blood circulation around the eyes. This exercise, also known as palming, is perfect for relaxing the eyes, mind, and body.





FiRE

ART

Ignite your imagination:

Paper, colored pens, or pencils.

Have someone you know create a simple scribble. Use their scribble and turn it into something you can understand. You could even have them create a simple stack of one-line scribbles with a short phrase or a word.

30 Circles:

Paper and pens.

Draw out 30 circles on white paper and set a three-minute timer. Challenge yourself to fill in as many circles as possible, with the aim being quantity, not quality. Maybe all your processes are variations on a theme. After the exercise, reflect on the similarities. This exercise is designed to help you stop censoring yourself, allowing creativity to flourish and ignite your imagination.





Questions to Ponder & Art Invitations

(create images using lines, shapes & color)

Earth

What does it feel like to be grounded?

Water

What does it feel like to flow like water?

Air

What does it feel like to breathe deeply?

Fire

What does it feel like to be creative and inspired?

Flip your paper over

&

Write about why you chose

that element and what you noticed within your art.



Gestalt Questions To Ask Your Art

Pick any part of your art that interests you.

Notice what you see.

Give this part a name.

Ask this part what it's like to be you.

If you could think of other words or phrases to describe this part what would you say?

Is there anything this part would want to say if it could speak?

What is challenging about being this part of your art?

Does this describe you or any part of you?

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