

PRAISE FOR PEACE WITHIN

"Peace Within is an essential and generous gift for humanity, arriving at a critical moment in the evolution of consciousness on Earth. This remarkable book will support and empower you to embody your true nature through the wise full-spectrum teachings. Here is a beautifully-designed instructional manual and map that will enable you to engage with the magic of your life – body, heart, mind, and soul - through the power of the breath, radical self-awareness, emotional mastery, and compassionate love. DeMaria's uplifting work, encourages you to take a life-changing adventure, inspired by, and spurred on, by his own courageous and transformational personal stories. Prepare to wake-up to the startling simplicity of your own inner life in ways you never imagined possible."

-Chloe Goodchild, Voice Pioneer, Author, *The Naked Voice - Transform your Life through the Power of Sound*

"In *Peace Within*, Dr. Michael DeMaria offers a manual that can guide the reader toward the elusive peace and equanimity we all seek...Grounded in ancient and contemporary wisdom, DeMaria posits that we can find peace within wherever we are – peace within life, peace within relationships, peace within illness, and even peace within death. He offers clear and detailed practices to get us moving toward a more joyful and meaningful life. He does this with honesty, courage, and wisdom."

-Allan Lokos, founder and Guiding Teacher, Community Meditation Center in NYC; Author of *Pocket Peace, Patience, and Through the Flames*

"Dr. Michael DeMaria has assembled a unique and powerful workbook to help us find peace and healing, plus freedom from excessive negative feelings. He skillfully integrates practices he has developed over decades as a superior therapist, meditation teacher, yoga instructor, wilderness guide, and musician. With this wonder-

ful manual one discovers ways to improve the health, effectiveness, and pleasure of body, mind, heart, self, soul, and relationships with others and the world.

-William Mikulas, Ph.D.; Professor Emeritus; author of *The Way Beyond* and *Taming the Drunken Monkey*

“Michael DeMaria is the best kind of teacher. His wisdom (and it is profound) comes directly from what he has suffered and learned himself, and his teaching is at once far-reaching, direct, and compassionate. With exercises that build on one another to inform every aspect of an individual’s life, this book is an important guide to personal transformation.”

-Trebbe Johnson, author of *The World Is a Waiting Lover* and *Aphrodite at the Landfill*

“In our chaotic and frightening world, finding peace and joy in our everyday lives seems increasingly out of reach. Yet, Dr. Michael DeMaria, through his incredible journey of spirit and life, has gifted us with this wonderful manual for finding the keys to *Peace Within*. The Māori koru is a perfect symbol for this work, representing the dynamic spiral of life unfurling, ever changing, yet maintaining the core of peace at its center. In his new book, Dr. DeMaria has shared deeply of his own personal journey, while delivering a practical set of modules for bringing us back to what is real: our own individual journeys to the spiral’s center.

-Martha Sarasua, M.D., Ph.D., Psychiatrist, Consciousness Researcher & Author *Healer’s Journey*

“Dr. DeMaria combines his superb credentials, expertise and compassion to make this an essential book for those looking for inner peace. It has practical advice in each module to help you reconnect with your soul. I recommend it to my friends and my patients, and if you are on the path of healing, you owe this book to yourself.”

-Jorge M. Peláez, MD, *Neurologist, Functional/integrative Medicine, and Fellow in Anti-Aging & Regenerative Medicine*

“Through *Peace Within*, Dr. Michael DeMaria shares his compassionate heart, his wisdom and his vulnerability, in being human. For those who are truly ready to begin living a life filled with deeper peace and compassion for themselves and others, *Peace Within* is a practical, creative and scientifically sound blueprint which has the potential to serve as a timeless resource for one’s life’s journey.

-Cindy L’Abbe, MSW, CFMN, ACC, *Therapist, Meditation Teacher, Educator*

“Dr. Michael DeMaria takes you on a courageous journey sharing his darkest moments. It’s a rare professional that can share so deeply and publicly of him or herself to bring you a clear and well-constructed guide to your own journey within. I cried. I pondered. I meditated. *Peace Within* is for everyone whether suffering from PTSD or just finding your way in a busy over-stimulated techno world.

-Elise Treff Gordon MD, *Captain, Navy Medical Core, flight surgeon*

“In the world of personal enrichment resources, everyone wants to show you a path. In this overcrowded world, it is difficult to give a sterling recommendation. *Peace Within* is truly one of those great resources. Dr DeMaria provides a guiding hand, but one that subtly reinforces the deep knowledge that we already know what we need to make our lives whole. As with Dr. Spock, who tapped the intrinsic knowledge of mothers in the 1950’s, providing the catalyst for a change from regimented child rearing methods to a freer and more compassionate approach, DeMaria draws upon the same deep knowledge we all have to bring about our own transformation. Where many teach self-knowledge, DeMaria emphasizes self-compassion, while providing a set of extremely well-developed exercises to carry you thru the process that he knows so well.

-Clint Goss, Ph.D. *Author, Researcher and Recording Artist*

“This is a beautiful book, written from the heart. It’s also a practical and user friendly guide of how each and every one of us can heal ourselves, our communities, and the world. I recommend it very highly!”

-Bonnie McLean O.M.D., A.P., M.A., B.S.N., *Acupuncturist, Author, and Healer*

“Dr. DeMaria comes from an exquisitely sensitive place, offering the benefit of both his professional expertise and personal life lessons learned. The result is a book filled with profound wisdom and practical exercises to remind each of us who we really are and how to stay connected to that genuine source of Peace Within - the only place it can truly be found.”

-Dave Berman, Certified Hypnotherapist, Laughter Ambassador, and Author of *Laughter for the Health of It*

“*Peace Within*, is a unique step-by-step guide to experience peace, healing, health, and wholeness. DeMaria’s book helps you create a personal growth retreat, in the comfort of your own home, by giving you tools and practices that help you find *Peace Within* your body, mind, heart, and life. I love this book and highly recommend it to everyone who is seeking inner peace.”

-Ann McIndoo *CEO/Founder and Bestselling Author*

“*Peace Within* is an encouraging, life-altering work, helping you discover that no matter what life throws at you, you can claim the subtle river of peace that is already flowing deep within you. Allow this book to be your inspiration and motivation to seek a happier, healthier life, inside and out, by grasping the peace that is yours for the taking, despite any circumstances you encounter.”

-Autumn J. Conley, Editor

PEACE *Within*

Clear Your Mind, Open Your Heart,
Embrace Your Soul, and Heal Your Life

MICHAEL BRANT DEMARIA, PH.D.

*To my mother,
Jacqueline
for the ever present gift of life;
whose deep love is with me,
in each beat of my heart
and breath I take...*

*and to my father,
Francesco
in deep appreciation of
his greatest gift to me,
the love of life itself.*

*Thank you both...for your love,
and spirit which transcends
life and death...*

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Any omissions, errors, inconsistencies, are purely my fault and I apologize for any oversights that the astute reader might find. In true organic fashion if you do find any and let me know, they will be corrected in future editions.

THE SPIRAL KORU



Since childhood, I've drawn spirals. It has been one of the constants in my life. Whenever I was stressed, bored, or lost, I would spontaneously draw these shapes, which would evolve, grow, and eventually take over the whole page. I did this quite subconsciously until in graduate school when I began reading about the archetypal meaning of spirals. I discovered that there are five ancient petroglyphs found throughout the world, but the spiral is the only one found in every continent of the ancient world. Not only that, but it's widely considered the archetypal symbol of the soul's journey.

Many years later, when I was going through a very difficult period in my life, I had a dream where I 'heard' a voice telling me to paint spirals. So I did. Since then, I have painted spirals of all types, in all colors and shapes and sizes. These have played a crucial part in lifting me whenever I fall into darkness and putting me back on the road to light heartedness again.

When I began working on this project I wanted a symbol to express the simplicity and depth of the *Peace Within* process. I finally settled on an image inspired by the Koru spiral of the New Zealand Māori people. It is at once a spiral, a circle, a wave and the image of growth, birth and new life. The spiral shape is inspired by the

first stages of the unfurling of the silver fern frond. It symbolizes new life, growth, strength, and peace. The spiral, enclosed within a circle, also expresses the idea of perpetual movement, while the inner coil suggests a constant return to the point of origin.

In this way, it is also a fractal for me—an infinitely complex, never-ending pattern. I always liked the way my early drawings also resembled a fern perpetually growing, one frond after another — beautiful, changing, while its essence remains the same. For me, this is also how the breath works: a perpetual movement, with a constant return to a center of peace.

The Māori Koru image highlights key points throughout the book, and at the introduction of each chapter. I'm thrilled to have it featured so prominently in this work and to share its deep meaning with you.

The Māori Koru represents peace, tranquility, personal growth, positive change, new life, and harmony. My prayer is that these blessings will come your way.

PRELUDE

In 2004, at the age of 42, I found myself plunged into a spiritual and emotional emergency, an all-encompassing dissolution that impacted every area of my being. My life as a successful author, teacher, and psychotherapist seemed over. I didn't know where to turn for help. I thought I'd hit rock bottom, and then the waters came. A hurricane slammed into our Gulf Coast town, and a fifteen-foot wall of water engulfed our neighborhood and destroyed most of what my family and I called home.

I'd dedicated my life to helping others, but none of my experience or degrees were of any help to me. Within hours the flood had come and gone, leaving in its wake the devastated rubble of my former existence.

As I surveyed the ruins, I was unsure whether I'd ever be able to rebuild my life or regain the peace I'd lost even before the storm's devastation. But, as I was to discover, breakdowns often lead to extraordinary breakthroughs.

Everything flows. From the smallest sub-atomic particle to the largest galaxy whirling through the vastness of space, all is in motion. In our daily lives, we encounter what appear to be solid objects, but are, in fact, configurations of energy. Our very earth spins at

an incredible speed, yet appears to be perfectly still. Ancient cultures understood this fluidity of reality through the simple process of meditation and the close observation of consciousness.

The health of our bodies also depends on a constant circulation of blood and air in order to maintain balance and health. Our emotional and physical selves are a sublime arrangement of thoughts, feelings, and sensations. We become ill when we resist or become attached to these emotions instead of allowing them to flow through our consciousness. This simple principle has informed my personal and professional life.

The best way to tend to our bodies, minds, and hearts is not by trying to control their innate wisdom, but by trusting it. In this way, we unite the components of ourselves in an elegant, orchestrated microcosm — just as the dance of Earth, water, sky, and sun converges to produce life on our planet.

While everything flows, life also grows, transforms, then dies, like the life cycle of a butterfly or the endless seasons of the year. We move through ever-unfolding stages of growth, shedding what no longer serves us. We go within to transform, then reemerge—renewed, wiser, and more compassionate. Eventually, we're ready to take flight—freeing our minds, opening our hearts, and flowing with the music of all creation.

This was what I had to learn all over again.

INTRODUCTION

The source of peace resides within each of us. The great struggle and tragedy of modern life is that we continually seek outside of us instead.

Our culture perpetuates the great lie that peace can be found elsewhere. The seduction of the outside world is greater than ever before, with smart phones, cars, and televisions. Our lives are so fast paced, hectic, and overwhelming that we suffer from future shock, data smog, and information overload.

*“The only
journey is the
one within.”*

*-Rainer Maria
Rilke*

We repeatedly seek, search, and hope that perhaps this time, this job, relationship, home, or experience will bring us the lasting peace we need; yet these devices and possessions only distance us and keep the focus outside of ourselves.

This has been the core dilemma faced by most of the people I’ve worked with over the last thirty years, from every walk of life. However, there is an antidote: *Turn within*, for that is where the path to true peace abides.

I have also struggled deeply with letting go of the cultural conditioning that told me peace had to be created on the outside. However, time and self-compassion eventually renewed my connection to the deep, inward ocean of peace I had thought was lost.

How do we journey to the source of peace that is available to us

each moment of the day? This is the question I have heard from clients and students for over three decades. It is the question I had to once again ask myself, and I had to rediscover the answer one step at a time.

This is the reason I'm writing this book and sharing some personal accounts of my own journey. I know the most deeply personal often resonates with what is most universal. My hope is that these will serve as touchstones to your own journey.

I am honored to share my path with you. Come take the most amazing, most adventurous journey of your lifetime and explore the ocean of peace that lies within *you*!

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

I have used the term *module* instead of chapter to reinforce the fact that this is a hands-on guidebook. You may start anywhere within it, anyplace you desire.

Although working through the modules sequentially is recommended, each can be explored individually, depending upon the issues you are confronting. Perhaps you're struggling in a relationship and are drawn to Module 6, on *Peace Within Your Relationship*. By all means, jump in and start there! As you work through, make a concerted effort to eventually complete the other modules as well.

Modules may also be completed at your own pace so you can fit them into your life in a way that works for you. It is possible to spend a week, two weeks, or even a month on the practices within each module. At the very least, I suggest that you allow a week per module. It takes about thirty days for something to become a habit, and my hope is many of these practices will stay with you for the rest of your life. I ask you to make a commitment to your health and well-being by making a contract with yourself to try these practices and complete the program and see what a difference they can make.¹

CONTRACT

I _____ make a commitment to myself to do the exercises, readings and meditations on a regular basis for the duration of the *Peace Within Program*.

In order to maximize the *Peace Within Program* and healing process, I commit myself to self-nurturance and care through adequate sleep, healthy diet and exercise.

(signature)

(date)

(completion date)

CORE PRINCIPLES

The Core Principles of the Peace Within Process that follow are the essence of the program. Keeping them in mind will help you maneuver through the details of each module and exercise. These serve as the foundation of the journey to find and experience peace in each moment. I'd like you to read them each day during your self-paced *Peace Within Program* and see how your understanding of them grows and develops over the next three months.

1. Peace is our natural state and our true nature.
2. We lose our connection to this natural state through living in a world of duality and polarization (culturally and socially).
3. This natural state of peace remains, like a hidden underground sea, beneath conditioned thoughts, feelings and beliefs inherited from culture, family, and society, as well as from trauma and wounding.
4. This natural indwelling peace is as dynamic and fluid as water and has the character of energy that animates the body.
5. We can't will ourselves to experience this natural indwelling peace, but we can create the conditions where it arises, like a spring in the desert.
6. This natural state is very similar to a childlike openness to what is present in each moment and has the quality of curiosity and compassion (receptivity, openness, and welcoming).
7. Peace dependent upon external circumstances is fleeting.
8. Peace grounded from within (arising from knowing and connecting to our natural state) is freeing and healing and helps us discover who we really are.
9. The breath is a river that we can travel at any time, back to the ocean of peace, which is its source. This is experienced as a deep sense of interconnection and love for self, others, and life at large.

MY STORY

At the age of 42, my life began coming apart at the seams: personally, professionally, and emotionally. From the outside, I appeared to be the model of success. I had a thriving psychotherapy practice, a lovely wife of 22 years, an amazing 17-year-old daughter, and a beautiful home on the Florida Gulf Coast.

I'd grown up a whiz kid who loved an intellectual and physical challenge: I earned two B.A. degrees in philosophy and psychology by the age of 20, a M.A. in psychology at 21, and a Ph.D. in clinical psychology at 25. I was also a black belt who taught martial arts and meditation.

The middle of three sons of an immigrant father and a mother who'd grown up in foster homes, I was definitely my father's son. He was an Italian overachiever who'd survived World War II, dodging bullets, bombs and starvation before finding his way to America—his life-long dream—at the ripe age of 19. Arriving in Brooklyn, barely knowing English, he sold rags on the streets to survive, and in nine short years had earned a Ph.D. in chemical engineering. He was my hero and role model.

I'd also been on a spiritual path for as long as I could remember, eventually working with indigenous and spiritual healers from around the world. Despite this, in midlife, my life had begun crumbling from within and I seemed unable to stop it.

I faced a number of painful challenges that year, but the main cause of my descent was a knee and back injury that required surgery and triggered unresolved trauma from surgeries I'd had as a young child.

I had often been ill as a boy, including undergoing several surgeries that terrified me. Back then, doctors felt it was better *not* to tell a child he was having an operation until the day of the procedure. So, whether it was for a tonsillectomy or abdominal surgery for a double hernia, I was picked up at school by my mother, only to find that she'd packed a bag and we that were headed again to the hospital.

I have vivid memories of moments before the abdominal surgery, of being left on a cold metal gurney outside the operating room, all by myself and feeling as though I was about to die. Masked figures appeared and pressed a mask over my mouth and nose as the noxiously sweet smell of ether poured into my lungs. They asked me to count backwards from ten. I struggled not to take a breath, and felt sure I was dying.

Suddenly, I disappeared into a terrifying vortex and felt the sensation of leaving my body and going off to another world – a near-death like experience. When I awoke, I was in a recovery room, surrounded by screaming children, and in terrible pain. These events all had a profound, traumatic effect on my highly sensitive nature.

Those feelings of panic and dread returned, in the form of a full-blown post-traumatic stress reaction as I approached new surgeries as an adult.

After spending so much of my life specializing in the area of trauma and loss, here I was experiencing it myself, losing control of my mind and emotions. Depression, fear, and anxiety: I felt them all again. Images of clients I had worked with who'd 'lost it' filled my mind as I found myself whirling into the same abyss. It was like being trapped waist deep in quicksand: The harder I struggled, the deeper I sank.

It felt as if my mind, heart and life had turned against me. I struggled to find some solid ground, some sure footing, but I continued spiraling down.

Since the age of 18, I'd practiced a type of meditation to calm my mind and help me deal with dark times. I had created a beautiful meditation space in my home, a large walk in closet with important images and objects from my life journey, as well as my beloved meditation cushion. Unfortunately, my injuries made it impossible for me to sit in my meditation space and on my cushion. So, I simply stopped meditating, which only aggravated the situation.

In the span of a year, I experienced more loss than I had in the previous forty-two years of my life. The year that changed

me forever began when a client of mine committed suicide, an experience that shattered me emotionally. Within a few months, a business associate, professional colleague, and friend who had worked with me for close to a decade was arrested. Their crimes, which I'd known nothing about, were suddenly very public and put my professional reputation, livelihood and family in jeopardy. A few weeks later, I suffered a knee and back injury, which made it very difficult for me to work and required surgery.

Then, one by one, my associates began to leave the large group practice I managed, eventually leaving me alone with my office manager. The day before my surgery, my office manager informed me that she would also be gone when I returned.

I felt completely lost and alone. I didn't think it could get any worse, but it did.

As I began my painful postsurgical rehabilitation, Hurricane Ivan roared up the Gulf Coast. My family had already survived two previous hurricanes, but this was the most devastating: Swirling debris, a tower of water, and winds that sounded like a freight train. The hurricane decimated our entire neighborhood. My family was forced to move into the back rooms of my office downtown. As insurance claims poured in from the disaster, our insurance company fell into bankruptcy. I felt defeated.

My greatest pain during this battle was feeling exiled from the inner peace that had always been readily available to me. I had dealt with plenty of adversity and outward struggle in my life, but my saving grace was that I could always retreat and rejuvenate through meditation, yoga, and time spent in nature. Now, though, with my injuries and post-traumatic stress, I simply could not find my way home to myself.

In the modules that follow, I'll share the steps I took that eventually led me back from the brink to the meaningful, peaceful life I thought I'd lost forever. I share my story, not because I think it's important, but to illustrate how each of us can be undone by events we never imagined possible. Most of all, I want you to see that, we can return to our deep selves again, no matter the trauma and tragedy we have encountered, if we have a way forward.

I'd utilized the core principles I present here many times in the past, but now I had to relearn them, again, in an even deeper way. I also had to come to terms with central components of my own life's traumas, embrace my heart's deepest calling, and heal my life.

As I struggled each day over the next four years, I reevaluated everything about my work and my understanding of who I was. Most importantly, I began to let go of my expectations and beliefs about myself, others, and reality. My pain, grief, and despair eventually led to a powerful transformation.

I experienced blinding moments of insight and awakening over the coming weeks and months, as well as painful setbacks and new challenges. Through it all, something new grew within me. I truly felt like the proverbial caterpillar being turned inside out and upside down in a chrysalis, to finally reemerge, transformed, stronger, and more whole than before.

Although I'd experienced inner peace before, this time was different. Instead of occasional moments of it, I discovered a pathway to an endless ocean of peace. It stretched into infinity and could be visited at any time.

Within you also lies such an ocean. No matter what you are struggling with, your life has a stillness and silence beneath the chaotic surface. No matter how hectic your world, this ocean of peace is always there to refresh, revive, and nourish you – if you take the time to discover it. Sometimes it begins as a small trickle of water in the desert, but if you are persistent, take your time, and practice – you, too, will discover it. It's truly as natural as breathing, and breath is the river we travel down to merge once again with that endless ocean of peace.

THE PEACE WITHIN PROCESS

What do I mean by *Peace Within*? Although it refers to what most people think of as inner peace, there is a difference. For many, inner peace involves getting *away from life*: going on a retreat, escaping to a mountain getaway, or an ashram, monastery, or yoga class. Although all of these can help us become acquainted with a taste of peace, what I'm referring to by *Peace Within* is finding peace wherever you are: *Peace Within life*, within relationships, within the workplace, within illness, within struggle, and even *Peace Within death*. This is the vision that grew in me and has become my practice with each breath.

In my 30's, I'd guided wilderness-based vision fasts, retreating into the wilderness in order to escape the noise and clutter of the outside world, and guiding others there as well. These journeys were valuable, important and some of the most powerful work I've ever done. However, after going through my transformation and awakening, I found I could discover the same peace everywhere I turned. There is no need for me to hike miles into the wilderness or to fast; this peace is available everywhere once you tune your mind, heart, and soul to its current.

Peace Within is an inner state that is not dependent upon external circumstances. Because life is always changing and moving like a river, *peace within* is actually a dynamic process that requires

improvisation and skillful maneuvering through the rapids of life.

This comprehensive, integrative process addresses mind, body, heart, and soul. Unlike many other approaches it merges Eastern and Western practices.

Each module of the book deals with a different dimension of being human and finding *Peace Within*:

The Peace Within Process

Peace Within Your Self

Peace Within Your Day

Peace Within Your Soul

Peace Within Your Body

Peace Within Your Relationship

Peace Within Your Mind

Peace Within Life

Peace Within Your Heart

Peace Within Death

As you read the text and practice the exercises, remember that *Peace Within* refers to a dynamic, living, integrative peace that grows from the inside out. In time, your inner peace will become less and less dependent upon external circumstances; rather, it will grow from the inside-out emerging from the great ocean of peace that is always available to all of us, if you know how to access it.

My journey from despair to awakening and living in deeper alignment with the ocean of peace that informs my life, day in and day out, has been nothing short of amazing! In the following pages, I have refined the essential elements of what I discovered on my journey into a format that I hope will resonate with you and help you find your *Peace Within*.



MODULE I

This module introduces you to the main concepts in the peace within process, core principles, core tools – and an overview of the modules and how best to work through them. You will learn about the emotional circulatory system, and the dual components of deep breathing and compassionate awareness to bring more peace into your life and relationships.

1: THE PEACE WITHIN PROCESS

I was born in the wilds of southwestern Connecticut, an hour out of New York City by train, but surrounded by deep, dense woods that could have come straight out of *The Last of the Mohicans*. Ancient fruit orchards, brooks, and boulders provided fertile ground for my explorations. I left the house for the woods whenever the world became too much for me.

My inner life was always more compelling to me than the outer one. As a child, I often experienced feelings that seemed too large and deep for words. Maybe that's why I didn't speak until I was nearly 3.

During these treks in nature, I sensed something great and ancient around me: I felt connected to a nameless, palpable presence. My breathing slowed, and my heart opened; I was filled with joy and contentment.

In the intuitive way of a child, I was involved in the major components of the *Peace Within* practice— a deep, relaxed breath, a state of meditation that

quieted my mind in focus and contemplation, and a mindfulness that allowed me to experience whatever was before me: a maple tree, a singing bird, or the cloud-filled sky.

It is this deep, joy-filled peace that I want to help you cultivate in your own life – a peace and presence closely akin to the wonder, awe, and mystery we experienced as young children.

THE EMOTIONAL CIRCULATORY SYSTEM

The *emotional circulatory system* is a concept I've coined to describe the *Peace Within* process at work. The great enemy of inner peace is not emotions themselves, but the way we deal with them. Emotions come and go constantly all day, like the weather. When the emotional circulatory system is working well, we can allow the emotions to move through us, without repressing them or acting them out. The emotions themselves are less the issue than our reaction to them. As the saying goes here on the Florida Gulf Coast, "If you don't like the weather, just wait a minute."

In life, *time* is often all we need to *feel better*.¹

In this module, I'll provide an overview and road map for the practices we'll be going into more deeply as we explore the emotional circulatory system.

Module 2, *Peace Within the Body*, will focus on working with sensations; Module 3, *Peace Within the Mind*, will focus on working with thoughts in the emotional circulatory system; and Module 4, *Peace Within the Heart*, will explore working with feelings.

THOUGHTS, FEELINGS AND SENSATIONS

In the human cardiopulmonary circulatory system, there are two main components: the heart and lungs. I like to think of the emotional circulatory system in a similar way. Instead of pumping blood, we are pumping experiences. Instead of oxygenating the blood, we are bringing compassionate, heart-centered awareness to our experiences.²

Just as blood is made up of three main components—plasma, red and white blood cells, and platelets—so also are experiences made up of three parts: *thoughts, feelings and sensations*. All you experience and all that passes through your consciousness can be categorized into one of these.³

Our physical circulatory system is in constant motion. The rhythm of the heart and lungs circulates in a beautifully orchestrated rhythm. Our lives are also based on flow and circulation. Movement *is* life. It's when we become stuck in one idea about who we are, where we are, and what is happening that we suffer. In order to remain vitally alive, and healthy we must let these elements flow through us.

In meditation, we call becoming stuck *attachment*. Whenever we become attached to an idea, feeling, person, object, or drug we cease to flow. Then the emotional circulatory system becomes unbalanced, and suffering ensues.

Compassionate awareness is like oxygen for our emotional hearts and souls. The root of the *peace within process* is learning to move from the imbalance and suffering that occurs from a dysfunctional relationship with your consciousness towards a healthy, natural, regulation of it. This occurs when you learn to allow your feelings, thoughts, and sensations to circulate naturally and effortlessly, while resting in compassionate awareness.⁴

How do we draw oxygen into the blood in order to nourish the constant stream of life? The breath! It is the same with the emotional circulatory system. Deep diaphragmatic breathing helps bring compassionate awareness to our experiences and their accompanying thoughts, feelings, and sensations.

In this way, the two main components of the emotional circulatory system are *compassionate awareness* (the heart of the system) and *diaphragmatic breathing* (the lungs of the system)(See *Diagram 1*).

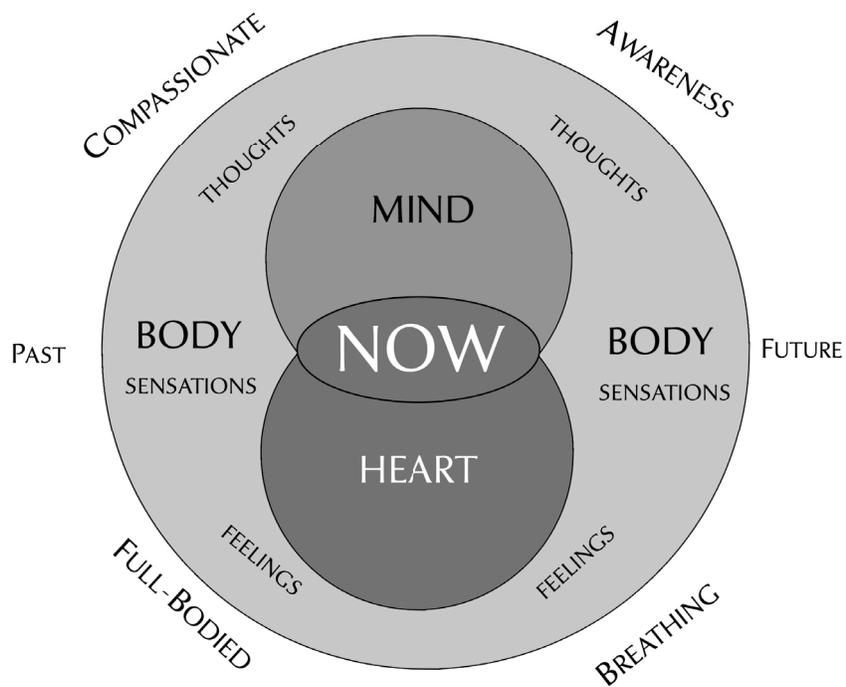
Throughout the modules, I'll introduce you to practices that help the emotional circulatory system run smoothly. There are micro-meditations and exercises, as well as longer guided and unguided meditations. The micro-meditations and exercises can

be done at any time and are meant to punctuate your day with moments of peace.

These practices provide you with immediate tools to quickly quiet the mind, open the heart, and allow experience to flow through you. A quiet mind and open heart in this context does not necessarily mean there are no thoughts or feelings present – only that you are not *attaching* to them and are allowing them to move through you.

As you understand more about how the emotional circulatory system works you'll begin to realize how everything is ceaselessly arising in awareness, passing through it, then dissolving or dropping out of consciousness. This occurs just as the breath rises and falls, the day turns to night, and the seasons of the year come and go. When you begin to focus on the rising and falling and less on the contents of consciousness, you begin to experience the *natural state of peace* that resides within, not the drama the mind creates. Once this has happened, the journey has begun.

EMOTIONAL CIRCULATORY SYSTEM



The emotional circulatory system improves when we bring compassionate awareness and full-bodied breathing to our moment to moment experience without pushing away the unpleasant, nor clinging to the pleasant.

DIAGRAM 1

THE CORE TOOLS

Although our goal is to experience a deep inner peace that is not dependent on external circumstances, we initially need to cultivate these practices in a place that helps induce this state. Once we become familiar with shifting our consciousness, becoming mindful and self-compassionate in a quiet, safe space, we can then carry these skills out into the world.

Your *Peace Within* journal and your *Peace Within* space are two core tools in this process.

One way I like to think about this is that before you embark on open-water diving, you typically practice and learn about diving in a shallow swimming pool. In this way, you can become acquainted with the tools of diving, such as the breathing apparatus, the regulator that allows you to breathe underwater, the weight system, and buoyancy control.

The *Peace Within* process ‘pool’ creates a safe, sacred space where you can practice meditations, breathwork, mindfulness, and journaling in a relaxed, safe, and focused way. This is also a place to digitally detox by moving away from your computer, digital tablet, and smartphone. My *Peace Within* space is a walk-in closet, but it could be the corner of a bedroom, or even something portable, such as a yoga or Pilates mat.

YOUR PEACE WITHIN SPACE

Find a place where you can practice the exercises in this book, as quiet and out of the way as possible. Although a room dedicated to this is ideal, for many this may be unrealistic. The size is less important than having a regular place where you can retreat from the world to practice.

Essential elements include:

1. *A cushion, bolster, or meditation bench for sitting meditation*
2. *Yoga or Pilates mat for lying-down meditation*

Optional elements are:

3. *Objects important from your life journey: photographs, drawings, writings, etc.*
4. *Candle (Be careful with open flames!)*
5. *An MP3 player for playing guided meditations*
6. *Eye pillow or mask to block out light and soothe eyes*

YOUR PEACE WITHIN JOURNAL

The *Peace Within* journal provides a foundation for your journey and a log of your progress. Reverting to our diving analogy: A diver's 'log' is an indispensable part of training, so the diver can

record her progress as she learns to dive deeper, and use different equipment. It also serves as a priceless personal document.

A typical dive log notes the date, time, number, and location of the dive, the conditions, what equipment was used, depth of the dive and any personal experiences. All of this can be written in your *Peace Within* journal; however, your writing here will be much more than this, because the journal exercises themselves *are* dives!

In fact, the word *journal* comes from the root word *jour*, the same used in journey and French for “day.” At its best, a journal is a journey within. Just as I had people journal when I guided them on vision quests deep into the wilderness, this process is also a journey into your inner nature. You will truly discover who you are beneath conditioned thoughts, and culturally conditioned emotions that come from a lifetime of exposure to mass media, advertising, and corporate culture. At times, you might feel overwhelmed, or disoriented, but the journal will help keep you on track as you document your journey.

The journal will also be a place where you can explore spontaneous, unedited, uncensored writing in exercises to help you identify your own process and let go of emotions. For me, the journal is a critical component of coming to realize you are not your thoughts, feelings, or even the stories you tell yourself. You are the flow itself.

First, you need to acquire an actual journal that appeals to you,

one you'll feel comfortable writing in. It could be as simple as a black composition book, or you may prefer a beautiful leather-bound journal. Whatever you choose, listen to your heart; it will be a wonderful touchstone for you as we journey together.

If you're a techy and want to keep your journal on your computer, that's fine, though it is best to password-protect it. Some people find writing longhand works better for them, particularly when journaling about their meditation practice, but this isn't necessary.

Essential elements include:

1. *Acquire an appealing journal.*
2. *Keep a number of writing utensils handy with your journal for whenever you might feel like writing.*
3. *Write your intention in the front of the journal, then sign and date it. You might even make a copy of your 'commitment contract' and place it in the front of the journal.*
4. *Optional – You might want to decorate the inside or outside of your journal in a way that is pleasing and meaningful to you.*

Both the *Peace Within* space and journal help you create the proper mindset to approach this journey. In doing so, you are honoring your experience and yourself in a way that promotes and fosters your personal healing and growth through this process.

BREATHWORK

Breath forms the foundation of our lives. It is the first thing we do when we come into the world and the last thing we do before we leave it. In most cultures, breath is synonymous with the soul, as in the words spirit (English) *qi/chi* (Chinese), *prana* (Sanskrit), *psyche* (Greek), *mana* (Polynesian), and *ruach* (Hebrew).

Still, when I first heard the word *breathwork* at the age of 18, it sounded strange. “Isn’t breathing involuntary, the most effortless act in the world? Why should anyone work at it?” I asked myself. As my first meditation class taught me, although we all breathe without thinking about it, few of us breathe correctly. I soon realized how powerful exploring my breath could be. Over the decades, I have learned the extraordinary varieties of breath exercises.

*The breath is
the
intersection
of the body
and mind.*

—*Thich Nhat
Hanh*

It is important to begin to develop an ongoing practice of breathwork that helps you breathe deeply and enriches your body with nourishing oxygen. Learning to breathe effectively, will take some effort. Becoming conscious of how you breathe and developing healthier breathing practices helps you take care of your body, while deepening your experience of inner peace.

We all arrive in the world breathing well and deeply. Watch an infant, cat, or dog; they instinctively use a natural, deeper form of respiration called abdominal, diaphragmatic, or belly breathing.

However, once we start school, and spend our days sitting at desks, focusing on our minds, we begin shallow breathing. We become divorced from our natural full-bodied respiration and begin to breathe from our chests. By adulthood, our stress-filled lives have fostered chronic, chest breathing. The good news is that by practicing breathwork, you can train your body to breathe properly through the abdomen.

*When you own
your breath,
nobody can steal
your peace.*

—Unknown

This kind of work involves waking up to the moment-to-moment miracle of breathing. This includes simple breath awareness, deep diaphragmatic breathing, and any other practice that focuses primarily on breathing. Breathing is the one bodily function that is both under voluntary and involuntary control. Its ceaseless contraction and expansion beautifully mirrors the balance that we find throughout nature and our lives—night and day, birth and decay, waking and sleeping, life and death.

Breathing well and mindfully is always the river that takes us back to the ocean of peace that lies inside us. We will explore this in great detail throughout our journey together; however, because it is the epicenter of the *Peace Within* process, it is important to emphasize it from the very start.

As you breathe in at this moment, I want you to be aware of the fact that you are getting to know a bit more about who you really are with each inhale and exhale. What if you were not your body, but the breath that animates the body? How differently would

you explore, touch, connect, and be invested in breathing deeply, well and fully? It is said indigenous people around the world feared white conquerors because they seemed completely unaware of their breathing; that meant they were disconnected from their environment, hearts, and souls. I continue to find this to be true. Many people come into my office or my meditation and yoga classes, and it amazes me how few are really present in their breathing.

Although I'll be guiding you through meditations to formally practice at different times of the day, it's just as important to be aware of your breath and the rising and falling of the belly at all times

BELLY BREATHING

Belly breathing, also known as abdominal or diaphragmatic breathing, is the way to optimize breathwork and facilitate the proper functioning of both the cardiopulmonary and emotional circulatory systems. The natural present moment awareness we had as children was accompanied by belly breathing—our natural breathing style.

The diaphragm is a large, dome-shaped muscle that lies just below the lungs, the most efficient muscle used in respiration.

Breathing from the chest is a very shallow form of respiration in

which we only use the top portion of our lungs. Most of the blood vessels that provide oxygen to our bodies are in the neglected bottom half of the lungs, so chest breathing takes in less oxygen. This makes us breathe more rapidly and increases the body's stress response. Chest breathing also upsets the body's blood oxygen/carbon dioxide balance and can actually lead to all sorts of physical symptoms, from headaches and fatigue to anxiety and even panic attacks. During my many years of meditating and playing indigenous flute, I have frequently experienced the stress reducing, energizing, and healing power of belly breathing.

Deep breathing encourages complete oxygen exchange. As a result of filling the bottom third of the lungs, which often fail to fill in shallow chest breathing, deep breathing encourages complete oxygen exchange. This outflow of carbon dioxide and inflow of oxygen slows the heart rate and reduces or stabilizes blood pressure. It also interrupts the body's flight-or-flight response, induces natural relaxation responses by turning off the sympathetic nervous system (the body's accelerator), and engages the parasympathetic nervous system (the body's brake).

As a culture we revere 'six-pack abs,' the 'washboard stomach,' which restricts breathing from the belly. The result of all this shallow breathing is increased stress, tension, and anxiety.

Unfortunately, most people I work with only breathe shallowly, particularly those who have been traumatized or who experience

chronic anxiety and stress. Deep breathing, our most natural self-healing technique, simply feels unnatural.

We literally tighten the belly to keep ourselves from allowing feelings to move through us. When we repress feelings and strong emotions, we subconsciously breathe shallowly or, even worse, hold our breath.

One of the primary reasons deep breathing seems so unnatural is the cultural message that we should ‘bottle up’ emotions – particularly strong ones. Women are taught not to express or show anger, and men are often instructed to bottle up grief and to never cry.

This was certainly the case in my own family. My father seldom cried, and could not only be stubborn but also launch into frightening rages that I later understood were related to PTSD from his years at war. Although, he was not supportive of my creative interests, I was always involved in music and particularly enjoyed singing in the church choir. The music director chose beautiful songs for us right out of the early Gregorian chants. I loved this ethereal music, so other-worldly while also touching the heart and the soul.

I was excited about the first concert we were to give to the congregation. It was a mystical night, with the sanctuary lit only by candles giving it the feel of a medieval monastery. As we began singing, I saw my father’s face in the front row streaming with

tears. Of all the things I had ever done, he'd never had that reaction before.

After the concert, his eyes were still moist as he gave me one of the biggest hugs I could remember. He told me he was proud of me and how the singing brought back memories of his childhood in Italy before the war. I felt something deep within me open and breathe in pleasure and relief.

That encounter told me a great deal about him and what innocence he had lost through the war and his move to a new country. I saw that under his rages lay a tender heart, full of great love and feeling. Healing happened for both of us that evening, through the breath and by allowing the tears and feelings to flow freely between us. It was also one of many instances in my life where music served as the midwife for healing.

BELLY BREATHING EXERCISE

Find a relaxed, quiet, and peaceful place where you can either sit or lie down without being disturbed.

Place one hand on your chest and one on your belly. I like to put my right hand over my heart and the left hand over the belly, but do whatever feels most comfortable (*See Diagram 2*).

Breathing in through the nose, imagine the air coming into your nose, traveling all the way down into your belly and expanding it like a bellows. As you do so, feel the hand on your belly rise. Then breathe out through your mouth or nose, whichever feels more comfortable, and feel the bellows empty and the belly fall. Continue to breathe in this way, then alternate with shallow breathing just from the chest.

You'll notice how the shallow chest breath will feel constricted and tense, while belly breathing brings a deep state of relaxation.

Breathing deep, full bodied belly breaths is a wonderful practice to do before any formal meditation, before sleep, or upon awakening. Throughout this book, whenever I refer to taking *deep breaths* or *breathwork*, I am referring to techniques based on this basic component of diaphragmatic breathing.

You are now ready to move onto the second major component of the emotional circulatory system: *mindfulness*.



DIAGRAM 2

MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness has been my central practice for the last three decades. Even as a child, I practiced it, though I wasn't aware that there was a name for this activity.

As a boy, I was a highly sensitive dreamer, quiet and introverted. My parents used to say I would sit so intently, silently gazing out at the woods and nature, that they would make jokes that I was watching the grass grow. I remember long hours beholding the world from my favorite maple tree that grew in our front yard. I retreated to her (I always thought of this tree as female) whenever the adult world became too much.

Today, the practice of mindfulness is a topic of interest in fields ranging from physics to psychology, even making the cover of *Time Magazine* in February, 2014, which declared the birth of "The Mindful Revolution." Science has revealed how extremely effective mindfulness is in alleviating many physical and emotional disorders, from anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) to depression and drug addiction. I was fortunate to be introduced to the practice in 1980 by one of the world authorities on mindfulness and meditation, Dr. William Mikulas.⁵

Simply put, mindfulness is non-judgmental, present moment awareness of what is. Where meditation usually involves focusing on an object of attention to develop concentration, mindfulness is

simply being present to whatever emotions, thoughts, and sensations are passing through consciousness without judgment. Like breathwork, we will be going into this in greater detail throughout the book. Each practice has a mindfulness component. The more you practice and experience the power of mindfulness, the more you will organically and naturally foster a deep connection with the natural state of peace that is your birthright and truest nature.

COMPASSIONATE AWARENESS

今
now
心
heart-mind

念

There is an additional component to mindfulness that is often missing in most discussions today: *compassionate awareness*.

In our culture I find it's crucial to include this heart dimension in order to experience a deep well of peace. The Chinese character for mindfulness is actually made up of the character for 'now' and 'heart-mind':

Because Western culture and languages are primarily thinking oriented, we don't even have an adequate word to capture the depth of the original meaning of mindfulness. So much of meditation and mindfulness practice tends to be thought-based and

intellectual, with the heart left out of the equation. One of the major reasons I wrote this book is to include this heart dimension. In fact, as we progress, you will find that it is the heart dimension, that opens us most readily and directly to the ocean of peace that lies within. In fact, one way to practice compassionate awareness is to say the mantra to yourself: “*Heart-Mind-Now*”.⁶

There are few approaches that deal with our emotional lives, which I believe are at the root of so much violence on the planet. We are not taught in school how to deal skillfully with difficult emotions.

It is my hope that a *Peace Within* process of some kind that incorporates breathwork, meditation, and mindfulness, will one day be an essential part of every child’s education—as important as reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Perhaps in this way as humanity becomes more skillful at cultivating *Peace Within*, we can one day also experience true, genuine, and lasting peace-without.