

BEYOND THE BOOKCLUB

We Are The Books We Must Read

Essays

Experiential Activities

Workbook

Journal

RUTHIE LANDIS

WITH THE HELP OF MIND, BODY, HEART,
NATURE, THE ENNEAGRAM, INTUITION,
AND THE CREATIVE FORCE



Beyond the Bookclub: We are the Books we must Read

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Dedication

For my great mentor, Dr. Robert S. Breen, who “saw” me, taught me how to learn, and how to stimulate learning in others.

You are with me always.

And for my father, who was my constant learning companion and friend.

And for my mother, who stood by me and never stopped believing in me.

What the Experts Are Saying . . .

*“Beyond the Bookclub is more than a handbook for personal evolution. It’s also a wealth of resources to support any change-maker leading a community of introspective activists, something desperately needed in today’s challenging times. Written with a reverence for the wisdom of the integral self, the Enneagram and the natural and creative world, the reader is able to explore their human experience through a diverse exploration of perspectives. Ruthie expertly guides the reader using a heartfelt narrative, a grounded sense of humor and an ability to gently dig deep into the tough questions we all need to ask to consciously evolve. Throughout the book, I often felt as if I was engaging in an intimate and meaningful conversation with Ruthie herself, allowing me to reflect on my own vulnerabilities with compassion. As Ruthie writes: “We read books to learn more and expand our consciousness and perspective. We read ourselves to do the same. We must commit to shining light in the dark places of our psyche.” Fortunately for us, Ruthie has provided us with a personal torch in **Beyond the Bookclub** to illuminate our way in taking action toward positive transformation.”*

—**Emanuel Kuntzelman**, philosopher, writer, public speaker, social entrepreneur and founder and president of the Chicago-based non-profit **Greenheart International**, and a founder of the **Global Purpose Movement**. He is the author of **Riding the Wave of Global Purpose** and contributing author and editor of **Purpose Rising: A Global Movement of Transformation and Meaning**

“Whereas I am the king of content, Ruthie is the princess of process. But now in Beyond the Bookclub she has combined content and process in a double helix, interactional manner and has become an alchemist of experiential learning, tendering transformation through her reflections and exercises. Gathering

Ruthie Landis

material from her many workshops, Ruthie has put together a magician's manual to bring about personal understanding and change. While the activities she offers are intended for and enhanced by a group setting, they can also be done by one's self. Thanks, Ruthie, for this user-friendly compendium of thoughts and practices."

—**Jerry Wagner, Ph.D.** is the author of the **Enneagram Spectrum of Personality Styles, Nine Lenses on the World: the Enneagram Perspective**, and the **Wagner Enneagram Personality Style Scales (WE PSS)**

"This is a book for seekers who both pursue information and then want to act on it. Ruthie Landis has created an innovative and comprehensive structured way to read oneself like a book and then make the changes needed for transformation and freedom. Relying on ancient maps of consciousness such as the Enneagram and other source materials, Landis' book is filled with wisdom and effective methods for self-transformation. A master of storytelling and a superb teacher she guides the reader on a journey of self-liberation requiring self-observation and self-disclosure. This is not an ordinary book nor will it produce ordinary results."

—**Jose Luis Stevens** is the author of **Awaken The Inner Shaman, Encounters With Power**, and **The Power Path**. He is the founder of **The Power Path** and **The Power Path School of Shamanism**

*"There is a need today that many sense, but few see clearly. Even fewer have done the necessary inner work to intelligently and actively address that need. Ruthie Landis is one of those few. For years now she has been engaged in skillfully building conscious community. Whether it is book clubs, seminars, counseling, teaching, learning together, or simply sitting in stillness, she recognizes that our innate potentials are magnified when we find ourselves harmoniously in each other's presence. Her new book, *Beyond the Bookclub*, and the tools it provides is a wonderful gift and the natural outcome of her years of work."*

—**Tim Boyd** is President of the International Theosophical Society and an inspirational Teacher and Lecturer

What the Experts Are Saying . . .

"An offbeat, inspired self-help handbook that recreates the experiences of unusual book clubs/workshops. Filtered through the Enneagram's system of personality styles the book offers many wise insights and useful practices for growing and changing for the better. And Landis writes in a personable chatty tone that functions like an encouraging friend happy for the progress you will make."

—**Thomas Condon**, teacher and author, **The Dynamic Enneagram**

"At a time when so many of us are looking for a sense of purpose and meaning this timely book provides a roadmap and effective tools to support us to transform ourselves and reach our full potential. In Beyond the Bookclub: We Are The Books We Must Read, Ruthie Landis uses the power of story and experiential activities to help the readers consciously explore how to navigate through many of life's challenges in an effective and meaningful way."

—**Katia Petersen Ph.D.** is a two-time Emmy award recipient, clinical psychotherapist, motivational speaker, author, and former Executive Director of Education at the Institute of Noetic Sciences

How Participants feel about the Gatherings

“I come hungry and leave full.”—Susan, mom

“Ruthie Landis is a true creative. Love to experience how she designs ways for folks to be together for a few hours, to reach down into their very depths to discover truths about themselves and others. Magical!”—Lynn, writer, astrologer, teacher

“I learn how to look deeply at myself with loving eyes.”—Cynthia, sales manager

“Ruthie’s gatherings offer me both inner solace to weather the storms of my everyday life, and inner strength to discover and deepen my inner resources. Being able to have these conversations with other women of all ages fills me with connection and community in a real way unlike social media interactions. My ability to spread kindness and compassion as a healer out in the world is renewed through these gatherings.”— Pam, Hospice Nurse

“I am very emotional and coming to this gathering helped me to navigate the full range of emotions I feel.”—Lois, 18-year-old student

*“What a gift to allow myself to be in a safe space, and to take the time to be present and reflect. We explore living, feeling, sensing and dreaming. We go with the flow, making me feel at ease, and connected to others and myself.”
—Christina, dance artist*

“This honest experiential exploration of my inner landscape alongside others allows me to open up lifelong blockages. I do this from my own sense of strength and agency. True empowerment comes from within and Ruthie’s

Ruthie Landis

gatherings show us that everyone can reach beyond the reality they've always known, and intentionally make room for the reality they dream of."
—Yelena, non-profit professional and artist

"So powerful. I feel wonderful!"—Jean, retired graphic designer

"Ruthie creates a safe space to explore self in community. It is a time of revelation, illumination, and renewal, framed with soul and heart."—Reva, nurse counselor

"I love the opportunity to delve into this powerful, organic, likeminded group of wise women with the veil lifted. Ruthie sets the tone and the energy with activities, and experiences that are empowering. It feels like we can all be our authentic selves and learn from each other. I am so grateful for Ruthie for creating this powerful experience and for the women who attend."—Amy, Creative Arts Consultant, Animal Reiki Practitioner and Dot Connector

"Delicious discovery at each meeting."—Pam, performer and teacher

In Gratitude

FIRST AND FOREMOST I want to thank all of the Participants of the many workshops and gatherings I have given over these many years. Your courage and commitment to doing personal introspection, showing up for yourself and others, is a constant inspiration to me. I have learned so much from each of you and you have helped me grow as a person and as a facilitator with your openness and brave honesty. Thank you to all of my clients who have given me the honor of allowing me to witness their growth and healing. What a sacred trust you have blessed me with. Each new awareness born from *you* was transmitted to *my own* consciousness. I am so very fortunate. You all make the world a better place. You each are like stones thrown into the ocean, rippling outward in all directions with your discoveries and kinder ways to all the corners of this great earth. Keep growing. Keep rippling. We need you.

Thank you to **all** my teachers, the delightful ones and the dark ones. You have nourished me and invited me to grow if I chose to do so.

I offer profound gratitude to Lorraine Poirier who has walked next to me through this whole process as a friend, guide, sounding board, editor, and mirror. I could not have made this happen without your gentle and encouraging support. I am deeply grateful to my husband, Ed Letchinger, who always believes in my work and shows such delight with the magic that the Creative Force brings through it. Your excellent ear for clarity through your editing has been invaluable to me. You are my number one feedback person, no matter how receptive I may or may not seem at times. That's on me. Thank you Kathryn O'Day for your insights and observations, as well as your fresh and open eyes.

They say to never judge a book by its cover, and yet the cover is what first engages a reader. It opens the door, consciously or unconsciously. The cover sets the tone of what lies within. I thank you, Brian McNulty, for listening deeply to my needs and vision, and bringing that to life with understanding, patience, and artistry.

Ruthie Landis

I will be forever grateful to Joy Becher, who for the last twenty-five years has nourished me as a mentor, best friend, and soul sister. Gracefully, patiently and persistently she nudged me toward things I needed to know. Thank you, Lisa Sorce, for our ongoing friendship and collaboration, which, in 2009, seeded the idea to create a book that allows people to build and shape their very own learning communities. What a gift.

I am so very grateful to Francis Rothluebber who agreed to write my Foreword. You are a model to me of what the 'New Human' can be: generous, aware, connected, resoundingly resonant, and always paying attention to when Truth emerges.

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Untitled by Angela Miles 2003

Medium: Spray paint, rice, and rubber washers on canvas.

Breadth and Depth by Ruthie For You

*How deep do you want to go into the ocean of your psyche?
Do you want to come deep sea diving with me? Our backpacks are waterproof.
Do you want to see all the unseen places down under, the hidden places,
your eyes filled with wonder and awe?*

*We leave Judgment at the shore to sun bathe with itself.
So come with me and see there is nothing to hide from in this rich sea of our
souls.
The Beauty and the Mysteries of all things Human are waiting to be seen and
known.*

Come with me.

*And after exploring within we swim upwards in this water womb of pure potential.
We birth the newly seen parts of ourselves, giving them breath in acceptance,
love and light.
Out of the shadows we emerge.*

*Then fly with me to the top of the mountain
And see this Life of ours from all directions.
Like a condor we see differently as we soar from above, as expansive as we went
deep.*

*My great teacher Charlotte Selver would ask
“How long am I? How wide am I? How deep am I?”*

*If you long for depth and breadth,
If you are someone who has done much work already,
Traveled great distances,
Either with teachers within yourself or outside of yourself,
You understand the well has no end.
Your Destination **Is** the Journey.
The explorations are magnificent and infinite.
If you long to love yourself and others
In ways you never imagined possible,
Come with me. We are on the same adventure.
Long, Wide, and Deep.
I am you and you are me.
Let's go!*

Foreword

HAVE YOU EVER received a book that looked promising, but you set it on a shelf until you found time to read it? What a surprise, in fact, shock, it would be to learn this very book held the keys to your becoming fully alive, to your living the most meaningful, peaceful, creative life you could experience.

This “book” is the gift of your life, the greatest gift, on or off the shelf, you will ever receive.

The printed book you are holding, as you read these first sentences, is ***Beyond the Bookclub: We are the Books we must Read.***

The author is Ruthie Landis, a very intense, creative, experienced guide in helping Individuals and groups discover the amazing depth of this gift of life. She will never accept the casual, mindless flipping of life pages or the idle glancing at photos of the past. What she knows is the importance and significance of every person in the human family.

That you absorb ***Beyond the Bookclub*** now is incredibly important and significant. The human family, at this time of global crisis, is at the tipping point of realizing a new unfolding, a new surge of human consciousness. The invisible but very real Source of All Consciousness is evolving a new creation, the New Human. There are indications this new phase in human consciousness is beginning to happen. More individuals and groups are awakening. More are needed to awaken or the process will be delayed.

Delay at this time of increasing suffering and violence is unthinkable.

The way of Conscious Love is to invite us, not force us, to participate in this unique new creation. We are free to respond or ignore, if we can. However, when we realize that we are already a participant in this one Collective Consciousness and that even now our every thought either advances or hinders this new creation, we pause. Change is necessary.

Ideas alone do not bring about change. We can carry many stale ideas with us. Ideas need feelings to move into action. We need to be amazed or grateful,

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feel another's suffering as our own, experience the joy of a new creation before we move into action. Feelings arise as we interiorize an idea; awaken the deeper heart meaning of an experience.

If you are, or have been, realizing a growing desire to become more truly yourself, to develop your potential as a New Human, to participate with others in designing a new way of human living on this Earth, a new culture with new values, you are probably asking, "Where do I begin?"

Beyond the Bookclub is one way to begin. The author knows the power of groups, how persons who share this desire to change, who gather regularly, can awaken and intensify the conscious energy of each other.

Here an experienced guide not only prepares you and the group to realize the many personal powers and gifts you have to develop, but has created twelve remarkable designs for gatherings around the very real life questions that arise.

If you follow the way of this book, you can experience one of the deepest joys life offers, the joy of assisting each other to become New Humans.

Francis Rothluebber

August 7. 2018

*Francis Rothluebber, educator and author, is an experienced facilitator with individuals and groups in Life process work. Her latest book is **Who Creates the Future: Discovering the Essential Energy of Co-Creation**. Her focus is the development of evolutionary spirituality. Currently, she is helping to create an awareness of the significance of co-creating a new human future. Francis lives in Idyllwild, California.*

INTRODUCTION AND INTENTION

The Purpose

IN 2009, MICHELLE Obama made a speech in which she said that we each needed to step up and be of service if we truly wanted real change and a better world. I was motivated. How could I serve? At that time I and my dear friend and colleague, Lisa Sorce, decided to offer a year of monthly *pro bono* workshops for women as our gift of service; a gift of planting idea-seeds of consciousness in an underserved and neglected, yet undeniably and enormously impactful demographic of our society: women. We called it “Reconnecting with the Woman Behind the Mother: a Journey Back to Self.” Participants did not literally need to be mothers to understand and embody the Mother Energy and all that goes with it. All women of any age were invited, and each had her wisdom to share. Both Lisa and I are mothers and knew the challenge of staying connected to our own needs and personal growth in the midst of the demands of motherhood. And we knew it was essential to mothering or being a nurturing member of society to know how to mother and nurture ourselves.

It was a wondrous year of exploration and I thank again each woman that showed up and embarked on her own inner adventure, self reflection, and sharing with us. I grew so much from this important collaboration, as it served me every bit as much as I believe it fed others. Lisa and I downloaded inspirations from the Universe and from our own life challenges. Then we gave form and embodiment to our inquiries through different monthly topics. It was our intention to compile these workshop designs into a book where women everywhere, from the U.S. to Uganda, could meet up and play with the activities provided and find nourishment with each other, growing intimate and meaningful tribes. We imagined them taking their discoveries into their lives and communities, allowing the wisdom they now owned to resound in all corners of the world. We believed that our

offering would feed women in more profound ways than just meeting up over a glass of wine and talking briefly about a book that, perhaps, only some might have had the time to read. It is hard to take time out to read a book cover to cover in our busy, digitally informed lives.

What if the book we really needed to take time to read, was ourselves? The book of ourselves is not sitting on a shelf but is with us each and every moment of the day. So we envisioned a book that went beyond the book club. Life took its twists and turns; Lisa got pregnant with and gave birth to her magnificent second son, my parents journeyed through severe illnesses to eventual passing, and so did hers. The dream of this book had been put away, dusty, yet germinating, on an energetic shelf.

Fast forward. I could not let go of my desire to bring forth this supportive growth container, knowing and having witnessed the value of these gatherings. Over the years I had continued to give my own regular workshops in the states and abroad, as Lisa formed her own beautiful women's circles. And, all the while, the world around me kept shifting and changing, with society becoming more and more divisive. What could I do? How could I be of service in these present trying times? What could I offer *right now*?

What I have always known is that change begins *with me*. Being human is hard. Life is a constant workshop, always offering opportunities for learning and growing. If we perceive it this way we will certainly be more present to what life offers, being stimulated, challenged, and maybe even being entertained while we learn. Finding the time to intentionally dive in to ourselves appears to be limited by our daily routines and schedules. We often have to be moved by a crisis that may force us to face our unseen places. And then again, we may distract, numb, or avoid even more during these provocative, yet richly *testing times*. There is always gold to be found in the human experience if we choose to mine it. Providing a container and structure that encourages memorable communal participation and commitment is called for in a big way *right now*. And so this year I began another yearlong free monthly workshop/gathering for women and I call it "Beyond the Bookclub: We are the Books we must Read." I chose women again because they seem to be most receptive to this kind of work, yet all the topics we explore could be done with no gender or age boundaries. Even teens love the activities. And a generationally mixed group enriches these explorations. This book contains the fruits of these gatherings, as they touched me and inspired me to go even further into my own self-awareness.

The Purpose

I believe we learn best experientially, while working through the lens of an issue or theme that is familiar to us. Because we may not be in crisis mode, these issues may have receded to the background, unattended to, like old clothes in the back of our closet that we forgot we even owned. In each workshop/gathering I provide a provocative essay, stimulating and deep experimental activities, questions and quotes. The combination of these encourages meaningful dialogue and connection with self and others. I allow these dismissed and forgotten human concerns, like the old clothes, to move to the foreground: to be seen, reclaimed, and worn with acceptance. These topics never go out of style.

I always serve a light brunch or some delectables. Food brings us together. We break bread as we break into ourselves. I have found that most of us resist carving out time to learn and grow unless we are required to do so, either by our careers, a crisis where we may need some help and new knowledge, or school itself. We do seem to know that balancing our lives with social and communal activities is important. It feeds us so we can bring more energy to other aspects of our lives. So combining learning with building friendships is an efficient and gratifying experience. Sharing food together enhances the experience.

These monthly “powwows” are unforgettable. We are never the same after each gathering. Participants say, *“I came here empty and I leave full.”* And *“What I learned here feeds me the rest of the month until we meet again.”*

So nourish yourselves. It is my fervent hope that you seize this opportunity to gather together in homes with this book as a guide and inspiration, or in spiritual environments, or learning communities: anywhere that people wish to build self knowledge, empathy, generosity, and a greater understanding of our complex human experience. Though these gatherings were originally designed for women, you will see that the monthly topics and activities are universal, cross gender and fluid, inclusive culturally, and could even be done with couples and families. Coaches and therapists can use this material. Teachers in schools from grade school to graduate school can use this book to stimulate learning and growing Emotional and Social Intelligence. Teachers, who are giving every day, can use this book to create a powerful and safe space to grow themselves and become closer with their fellow teachers. Any gathering of two to twenty can embark on this journey together. In fact, you can even work with most of the essays and experiential activities alone with your own imagination.

So what if you make *the decision*? Get started! You have read this far into this book so continue reading and get inspired. Imagine what you can create. What if you just invite some people over and move forward, inviting them to read this

book and themselves, right alongside of you? This is a guilt-free venture. You cannot do it wrong. You can do it easily and manifest rich experiences each time. Use the essays and activities as a point of departure to create what you want and need. Be as simple or elaborate as you want. Even the next chapter, **Bones of the Book**, could be broken into seven separate gatherings, as it explores my seven collaborators through essays: Mind, Body, Heart, Nature, The Enneagram, Intuition, and the Creative Force.

What if you spend more than one gathering on a given topic and want to go deeper with the theme? Why not? You could work with that topic for two or three gatherings. What if you just want to discuss the essays and forego the activities? Great! What if you use only one or two of the experiential experiments I have provided? That could be enough. What if you use one of my questions as a catalyst to create your own exploration? It's all good. Take turns hosting and facilitating, or choose to be the primary host/facilitator. Empower yourselves. Be creative. Grow through having these gatherings and take your awakened selves into a world that needs you desperately.

That is the purpose of this book. Sharing these essays and designs is my form of activism to create a kinder, more compassionate, and consciously connected world. This is what I can do. And this is what you can do.

The Bones of this Book

YOU MIGHT NOTICE as you read on that a committee wrote this book. I, Ruthie, consciously collaborated with Body, Mind, Heart, the Enneagram, Nature, Intuition, and the Creative Force. It is not an accident that it says so on the cover. So we all wrote the essays and created the Gathering Designs together. One must give credit where credit is due. I carry their wisdom with me wherever I go. Any time I am exploring something that is elusive to me, my said collaborators arise to bring clarity. So they are a part of each exploration and create the learning structure. They are available to add to your personal “backpack” as well.

About my collaborators...

The Body



Photo of my friends by Ruthie

The Body never lies. It speaks to us from our most authentic place, holding our deepest truths, though mostly we take it for granted. It's just there doing its thing: moving us, thinking, feeling, taking action, sleeping, touching and being touched. It is our constant companion and yet we rarely take the time to listen to it as we might a best friend. It sometimes has to resort to getting our attention through pain, fatigue, or dis-ease. Maybe we trip and break a bone. "Hellooooo! Here I am," says the body. "Pay attention to me!" Or when we feel particularly well, energized, euphoric or pleased, surprisingly comfortable, or peaceful, maybe we pause and take notice in gratitude. I would guess those times are few and far between.

A wonderful teacher and shamanic practitioner and counselor, Jose Stevens, recommends that we say "good morning" and "thank you" to each body part, from head to toe, inside and out, every day. When I am in "presence" and not rushing around unconsciously, I incorporate this into my morning shower ritual. Good morning and thank you brain and nervous system, heart, blood and circulatory system. Good morning bones, muscles, fascia, skin, and pores. Thank you! Good morning eyes, ears, mouth, taste buds, tongue, teeth, nose. Infinite gratitude for all that you give me! Good morning hands, feet, legs, arms, neck, shoulders, knees and toes! Thank you for the gift of touch! Deepest gratitude to you! Good morning skin, hair, and nails. I am forever indebted! Good morning esophagus, intestines, stomach, spleen, gall bladder, liver, digestive system. Bless you! How good you are to me! Good morning lungs, endocrine system, lymphatic and immune system. Thank you for the miracle of you! Good morning kidneys and bladder, renal and urinary system, genitals. I appreciate you! I cannot live without you!

Beyond the fact that we cannot exist as humans without our bodies, at least at this stage of our evolution, the body is a consistently accurate database. It gives us gobs of information around all the layers of our being. It tells us where fear lives, what hurt feelings are being stored away, grudges kept, love felt, and speaks in continuous metaphor regarding all our emotions and belief systems.

In holistic work every part of the self is seamlessly interwoven. When we tell "stories" about our past or our present challenges and successes we are bound by belief systems and perceptions that may limit us, keep us stuck, or cause us pain. The thing is, we may not even be fully aware of our "stories" unless we listen to the unconscious language of sensation/feeling experienced through our bodies. If we get the full story, the whole truth and nothing but the truth from our physical selves, we may be able to free ourselves from those

The Bones of this Book

limitations or unhealed places by re-perceiving, re-framing, re-scripting, or even re-sculpting these “stories” through our bodies. This is ultimate and embodied transformation, not just intellectual ‘head talk.’

The stories we tell ourselves about ourselves are told to us both through our bodies and our thinking minds. In fact “mind” lives in every cell of our physical being and all our memories are embedded there. Observing what is arising in the body at any moment reveals both our conscious stories and our unconscious motivations and perceptions. Unconscious belief systems need to be brought into the light so they no longer sabotage or thwart us. We do not judge them because they were our means of survival, programmed and reinforced by our DNA, personalities, all life and our response to it. By learning the language of the body and engaging with it, we reveal our blind spots. Isn’t that what self—awareness is all about? We bring the unconscious into our conscious attention. One of the most effective, efficient, and accurate ways of doing that is by giving the many parts of our body a voice. Through engaging in dialogue with our bodies we reveal the unseen. We bring our forgotten and neglected places out of hiding and into the light.

So we will **reconnect and pay attention to our bodies** in each of our gatherings. We will not just move them a certain way, reposition them, or orchestrate our breathing, as we might in a yoga or tai chi class. We will ask our bodies to teach us, just as they are.

Mind



Ruthie Landis

*“As a single footstep will
not make a path on the earth,
so a single thought will not
make a pathway in the mind.
To make a deep physical path,
we walk again and again.
To make a deep mental path,
we must think over and over
the kind of thoughts we wish
to dominate our lives.”*

—Henry David Thoreau

It is often thought that the brain and the mind are one and the same thing, especially in the realm of popular science. People lump them into the same category but I see them in Partnership. Is there mind without the brain? Perhaps. Can a brain be mindless? Maybe. The brain is palpable, extraordinary, and still greatly unknown territory. Some call it the new frontier, as there is so much still to understand about its miraculous workings and capacity. The mind is more elusive, unseen, filled with beliefs and creativity, transcendent. It is a place where both knowledge and its more mature friend, wisdom, abide. The brain is definitely a part of the body. I believe the mind can reside in the brain, and in the gut, and in all parts of the body, in our energetic field, and beyond, in a timeless, limitless place. The mind can sense feelings and access intuition, as well as being able to aid in cognition and rational thought. Both the brain and the mind seem necessary for clear communication.

Someone gave me a photograph they had taken in Bali that said Mind your Head, apparently to avoid hitting your noggin. If the mind only lived in the brain, which lives in the head, how could it mind itself?

The mind is somehow connected to an observer self that brings forth our awareness of others, our environment, our experiences and thoughts. The mind helps us process and understand, come to conclusions, make assumptions, reason, discern, worry, and judge. It helps us learn, integrate new skills, gather information and apply it intentionally, and sometimes unintentionally.

Some ancient civilizations equated the mind with the soul, that which animates the person. Some thought the mind lived in the lungs. We might think of “inspiration,” to breathe in knowing. Some believed soul/mind lived in the heart, a collective compassion of inter-connectedness with all sentient beings,

The Bones of this Book

and with life itself. Descartes believed mind lived in the pineal gland in the brain, as he constructed the human in a mechanistic way. I wonder if the mind is the holder of both the soul or higher self, and the ego structure. Is it how we perceive ourselves, and our identity in context with the world we live in? I wonder if one primary role of the mind is to be the womb that births awe and wonderment.

What I know well, either from my brain or my mind –you choose– is that they both want to participate in any learning process. They love questions and inquiry. They want to understand and know and have answers. That’s why people will have transformative energy work and believe nothing happened or changed, because their mind was invited to go offline, and when it woke up, it needed to be informed about what happened.

So we will always **engage in questions** as part of all our workshop/gatherings. We may not find all the answers, but we will open the door to the mind’s engagement with the subject. The good news is that the mind follows you wherever you go, so even after the gathering is over the mind will keep busy, sometimes relentlessly.

The Heart



Photo of natural rock by Ruthie

*“Your visions will become clear
only when you can look into your own heart.*

*Who looks outside, dreams;
who looks inside, awakes.”*

—Carl Jung

The heart is the first organ to develop immediately after conception. It is our first intelligence before the brain evolves. There is research that the heart guides the brain rather than the other way around. The heart is made up of the same kind of neurons that make up the cerebral system. According to the HeartMath Institute, “the heart and brain maintain a continuous two-way dialogue, each influencing the other’s functioning.” Neuro-scientists have come to see that the heart is an organ of great intelligence beyond its capacity to tirelessly and heroically pump our life-blood.

And yet how often do we consult with our heart? Do we ask our children—“What is your heart saying in this moment?” What emphasis does school curriculum put on heart intelligence? And when did we all learn to abandon our hearts, setting aside its deep wisdom for the preferable realm of the intellect? And going even further, when did we learn to shun it, to judge its communications to us as sappy, worth belittling and ignoring? Too emotional! Too sensitive! Irrational! Perhaps the deep secret is that we are terrified of it and of the wide range of experience and wisdom it offers us. Can you imagine a corporation or even a family saying “Okay, it’s heart time.” Could we even fathom in a “town hall” meeting, a presidential candidate being asked, “How would your heart participate in your leadership?” What would any kind of peace talk look like if the heart were involved? I wonder.

How often do we bring our attention to this magnificent part of our being instead of relegating it to the back of the bus? When do we create a sacred time and space for this essential part of us that is too often set aside for productivity, ‘busy-ness’ and a distorted sense of survival? Are we willing to re-connect to that which is a brilliant guide and the very center of our life force? Are we willing to give ourselves **heart-time**? Too much of modern psychotherapy is analytical, using the mind to control the heart, instead of finding safe ways to deeply listen to the heart. Are we willing to take note of all the automatic ways we protect ourselves, and why? Are we willing to be brave enough to take the road less travelled and dive into the emptiness we fear, the disappointments we distract from, the losses we won’t lean into? Are we willing to let our hearts relish in joy and celebration as well? Are we willing to experience “happy” for even a moment? What would the world look like if the heart didn’t have to be sneaky about its voice, and rather was celebrated as the primary link to ancestral wisdom and our humanness?

So as we gather together **the heart will be a welcome participant**. We will make space for her and have patience with her. We will tune into her wisdom.

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We will give her music to wake her up, or a poem to honor her depth. The heart will sit in a place of honor at our banquet table.

Nature



Moose Siting Photo by Ruthie

The natural world is a mirror into our own nature. This big fella was meandering down the road in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. What had he come to tell me? In the book *Animal Speaks* by Ted Andrews, the moose is capable of “shape shifting camouflage” in spite of its size and power. It can hide or it can feel magical when it allows itself to be seen. The writing of this book is my moving from invisibility to visibility. I think this moose came to agree with an eagle who visited me and told me it was time for me to fly. This moose was telling me it was Time for me to be seen. This Moose was telling me the divine feminine was supporting me in my creativity, intuition, and the ability to illuminate.

Often I will invite a client to search my garden for a plant or nature object that calls out to them in the moment. They hold the Nature being in their hand and begin to describe it to itself, “You are this or you are that.” Or they give it its own voice that says, “I am this or that.” It never fails. This dialoguing technique (a form of Gestalt and other therapies) nails the client’s own personal experience at this time in their lives. It illuminates a pain point, a wanting, or strength in themselves. The client has chosen this very plant, or rock, or pinecone that speaks to their crisis, issue, or growing edge. Nature becomes the bridge back to themselves, and a guide to their healing. Nature is the poem that gives clarity

Ruthie Landis

to our existence and life experience. If you haven't discovered my long time favorite poet Mary Oliver, run, don't walk, to your nearest bookstore. Her poetry is dedicated to using the natural world for self-exploration.

*"All important ideas must include the trees,
the mountains, and the rivers.*

*To understand many things you must reach out
of your own condition.*

*For how many years did I wander slowly
through the forest. What wonder and
glory I would have missed had I ever been
in a hurry!"*

—excerpt from the poem *Leaves and Blossoms Along the Way*,
by Mary Oliver, from her book **Felicity**

Recently I was listening to an interview by Krista Tippett on her wonderful program "On Being" on public radio. I encourage you to download her podcasts. I had just heard her interview with Mary Oliver, and the next one I listened to was with the philosopher, poet and corporate consultant David Whyte, another of my favorites. He said that Nature is just itself. A tree is just a tree and knows who it is. People struggle against their own true nature and essence, then construct a mask and then start to believe this mask is who they are. This idea of forgetting our true self is explored in the Enneagram as well, which is the essay that follows this one, another collaborator for our "backpack." Bringing the Enneagram and Nature together is one powerful combination for re-mem-bering, (putting the puzzle of ourselves together) and reclaiming our natural selves.

Nature is a powerful and complex mirror for us. When we are in Nature it is true that we can experience peace and our interconnectedness to creation and the cosmos. And it is also true that it is wild and dangerous, at times, for us humans. It can destroy our homes, and be a catalyst to pain and suffering as it storms, and shakes our foundation, the very ground we rely on for support. Nature can feel violent and cruel and it can feel also gentle, nourishing and Divine. Sound familiar? Certainly we humans are the same.

I've decided: Pain is fertilizer. It helps you grow. While it is present, it feels like shit. Yes, there is an earthy, stinky quality to it, like driving on a road through

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green, lush fields and farms, enjoying the blessed beauty, and all of a sudden, the intense *difference* in the air cuts through your reverie, jars you, wakes you up...what is that awful smell? Ah yes, fertilizer!

When I was a little girl, driving with my mom, dad, and brother in the country to visit my grandparents each Sunday, a family member in the car would inevitably say, while squinching up their nose..."Okay who did that?!" We'd each look around for someone to blame for the stench, someone to blame when no one was at fault, just cows doing what they do. "Not me. I didn't make that stink." If the dog was in the car too, we'd point to her. Of course, no one just took in a deep breath, and with gusto said, "Wow! Just inhale that splendid, natural, organic fertilizer. Love it! Makes things grow."

And so it is in life. Who wants to take in a deep breath and inhale the pain, the reek of the losses, aroma of disappointments, the whiff of fear, and the scent of tough times, with gusto? Nope. We only want to inhale the well being and exhale the pain. We want to breathe in the joy and breathe out the discomfort. I know. I have created many individualized hypnosis pieces for people undergoing surgery, or childbirth, and you know those recordings do help to diminish the experience of pain. They are very effective and there is surely a place for them. Why not give a strong directive to the unconscious to banish pain for good? Because, my friends, pain, physical and emotional discomfort, is a part of life and growth. Sometimes it acts as a warning, a way the body and the soul can talk to us, cutting through the humdrum and alerting us concretely: "Check this out. Person needs attending to. Time to pay attention. Time to turn toward yourself. This is a part of life, too. We can't have it only one way." Once again Nature cannot disguise death or road-kill, nor does it want to. It is merely its own self with no preference. It embraces decay, the imbalances of the elements, and the cold and hot seasons of life.

These days so many people are in pain around me. Losses and challenges for people are everywhere around the world. Turn on the news if you dare. War, illness, jobs gone and poverty, violence, divorce, loved ones transitioning, old international wounds rising up. "How are you doing?" I might say to someone, truly wanting to know, truly interested in his or her unique human experience right now. "Oh, I'm fine. I have to be. Gotta be strong." OK. I wonder why we are so programmed to say that, so automatically, so quick to reframe or deny. Are we afraid if we acknowledge that we feel lousy, more "lousy" will come our way? Be aware of what I might call a New Age trap: "We are co-creators with the Universe and lousy begets lousy, fear begets fear. *Better to say it's not there.*

Or maybe, heaven help us, it will turn from pain to suffering, and we might even *become* the suffering itself, identify with it, attach to it, and never be free of it." Let's not swallow that transcendent bypass.

Someone I loved very much who died way too early, had one horrible thing happen to her after another. She was an amazing woman, good and kind and smart. We adored her. And then when my husband and I would see her and hear her next tragic Jobian plight, a nervous giggle would rise up in us, not because we weren't compassionate, loving, or wanting to support her, but because we just had to create a little distance or numbness from her dreadful and painful reality. Also we responded this way secretly. We weren't obvious. But she herself never seemed to acknowledge the horrors that were happening to her. She just spoke them aloud with a matter of fact tone and a smile. I never even saw tears in her eyes. If only there were tears I could have held her and said it was beyond belief these constant struggles that befell her. But that would have been intrusive, and projecting on my part. So we just listened and created the same distance from the pain that she appeared to want.

Maybe we think if we answer, "I felt so lousy I didn't get out of bed today" others will judge us, shut us down, and too quickly reframe our mood for us. Or worse yet, they might think of us as pariahs and stay very far away for fear that our "lousy" might even be contagious. Somehow we have come to believe owning our painful experience is a failure on our part, that we are not "evolved" enough, successful, perfectly balanced humans: strong, resilient, positive, grateful, and happy. Books and seminars that help us transcend our pain are everywhere to be found. When can we be as interested to learn how to sit in the fertilizer just long enough to grow from it?

Pain is fertilizer. It helps us grow. It is sprinkled by the Universe onto our little personal garden plots to enrich the soil of our existence. It is a natural, organic part of life. It also allows for harvest and for colorful, fragrant blooms bursting forth in their time. New life always grows from it. Have you ever meandered through a rainforest and witnessed the massive, rotting, fallen tree that has strong new multiple trees growing up right out of it? They call the fallen giants "nurse trees." When we turn toward the natural world it reminds us that we can endure, and that all of life has its seasons of pain and healing. At the Nature center nearby they set fires yearly to burn away what is unwanted and fortify new growth.

For a time, if there is an inordinate amount of pain in our lives, over-fertilized so to speak, the soil can become too intense, too concentrated, and can't, at this

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time be nutritious in its excess. During times like these, as humans, we might numb out, be encompassed by a void, or distract ourselves endlessly looking for relief. The soil might lie dormant for a time, and need to rest, as soil does, patiently. Grief enriches this trodden earth, and inevitably, the soil of our lives will find its way to balance again; things will come alive, bloom and thrive, in their own perfect timing.

I think back at the years behind me. I certainly don't recall, "Oh yes, 1999 was such a happy year. I was joyous all year long." But I will remember distinctly 2012, and the series of challenges, and changes, including the death of my beloved father, the increased dementia and decline of my mother, and perhaps I might even connect it to the profound growth in me that followed. I might celebrate my resourcefulness, what rose up in me to manage those trying times, which would include allowing myself to feel. I might allow ALL that I felt, seeing the dark humor at times, laughing and crying at life's absurdity, and allowing myself to collapse when needed. I could excavate the soil of the pure and complex experience in gratitude, instead of wildly running to find a new plot of garden where only sunflowers grow...somewhere over the rainbow.

Nature holds it all. It has no preference. In Chinese Five Element Theory, (the basis of acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine) the seasons, the elements, human emotions, and every part of the body are interconnected and in a constant dance with each other. The ancient Chinese sages knew the value of recognizing this and identifying the excesses and deficiencies, the energetic balances and imbalances of the human being. They put those imbalances in context with the world she or he inhabited. Their principles embraced Nature and human nature into one whole circle of existence. That is why, to this day, acupuncture and the five elements are an intensely encompassing healing modality.

So in each gathering we will incorporate **the profound teachings of Nature**. We will look for the metaphors that surround us and remind us that everything has a season: sunshine and storms, gentle waves and raucous ones, and that all is unfolding perfectly, however it feels.

The Enneagram



9 Paths to Oneness—By Ruthie

Over twenty years ago my dear friend introduced me to The Enneagram model, though, at first, my clinging ego resisted it with a vengeance. It has grown to be a constant companion and dear friend. In my therapy and coaching practice it has saved marriages, united families, and healed broken friendships. I intuit that I will use it and continue to study it until my last breath. It is an essential in my “Backpack” as I journey through my life. It gives me clarity around how I am seeing and experiencing life, and I suppose it will be there for me even as I approach my death. I gave a workshop called *Finding Our Way Home*, using the Enneagram to understand our varying experiences of mortality. Every aspect of living and dying can be better understood with the help of the Enneagram. I believe it is more than a tool of personality, and more than a compass of motivations and beliefs. It is a precious reminder of how we have forgotten who we *really are* underneath our masks, reactions, and behaviors. It is the foundation in developing our empathic imagination. It reminds us of our connectedness to each other and all that is.

The Enneagram is an inspired map of nine world-views. Some believe its principles and insights date conceptually back to ancient Egypt. The word Enneagram refers to the nine points on the Enneagram model. Its derivation is from the Greek words ennea (“nine”) and gram (“something written or drawn”).

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The Enneagram is a conceptual approach for recognizing the various ways that people view the world and life. It reminds us that our point of view is not the only point of view. Accepting this fact, understanding and acknowledging other viewpoints expressed in this model, enhances our ability to communicate effectively and resolve conflicts, personally and professionally. The Enneagram, in its purest interpretation, does not stereotype or limit, but rather encourages us ultimately to embrace the good in each of the points of view. We can then explore and own those other sensibilities in ourselves. It is an invaluable instrument for all relationships, self-mastery, team building, successful and compassionate leadership, conflict resolution, and for growing emotional intelligence. The Enneagram has innumerable applications, among them business, sales, psychotherapy, medicine, law, writing, acting and entertainment, education, and spirituality. It has even been used for rehabilitation in prisons.



The Enneagram Diagram

The Enneagram is a model of nine core paradigms: their psychological, physical, emotional, and energetic tendencies. It is a dynamic system in which we move from our core lens or filter to a different lens at various times. These movements to other numbers of the Enneagram model are sometimes triggered unconsciously in response to threat or change. They can also occur intuitively or can be consciously chosen for self-development. Identifying our core motivations, value and belief systems, and moment-to-moment perceptions

helps us become more aware of how our filter, distortion, or lens is informing each moment of our lives. It informs how we treat ourselves, how we behave in relationships, and how we function in our careers.

The body is a marvelous way to move from oblivious to aware, confusion to clarity, and to spot our Enneagram number's tendencies. Since thought patterns lead to emotional reactions and arise in us automatically, these patterns are rooted in our Enneagram style. It is valuable to have a means of intercepting those automatic reactions, in the moment, if possible. Recognizing our Enneagram disposition helps us spot the patterns. Of course, our life history and neurological programming inform each moment as well. Having a depth of intellectual understanding can help us interpret our emotional reactions after the fact. Better yet, we can expand our awareness and emotional intelligence (EQ) *by using our body cues* to tune in on an emotional reaction as it is arising. Then we can make different choices, take care of ourselves, before responding to a challenging situation. We can potentially interrupt our habitual reactive response with self-care and self-acceptance. We therefore don't need to repress or override the initial emotional response. From this "whole" place we may also be able to see the situation from a broader, more neutral perspective and be more receptive to others and their points of view.

You will notice in the diagram that there are arrows joining numbers to other numbers. I call these arrows a charting of access points. So a #2 connects to #8 and #4, and has two "wings" or next-door neighbors, #3 and #1. So we hop around, usually unconsciously, with the energies of these other numbers informing our experience, as well as our core number. This is what keeps the Enneagram model dynamic. No one is locked into a box. In fact, we ourselves create our very own box. "This is just who I am," we believe. Rather we have the opportunity to use other numbers, other worldviews, to develop and expand our ability to experience life in a more expansive way.

There are many brilliant teachers of the Enneagram that have taught me so much. I am indebted to them and all the ways they have brought the Enneagram into visibility. There is a list of reading recommendations at the end of this book called **Resources** for you to dive deeper into understanding its nuances and dimensions. I encourage you to do this, as you may fall in love with it. Each teacher that has written a book on the Enneagram brings their own number, their own set of beliefs and tone to their descriptions and insights, as do I. How could we do otherwise? That is why you might resonate more with one author than another. Finally, what I know to be true is that all the

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answers we might be looking for in a book already live inside of us. **We are the books we must read**, first and foremost. We are already the embodiment of the Enneagram principles. If you really know yourself you already know your Enneagram style. Using the Enneagram merely gives us signposts to recognize our habits and patterns of mental perceptions, and emotional and physical reactions. It also invites us to understand, from head, heart, and body the other worldviews.

*“Knowing others is intelligence;
knowing yourself is true wisdom.
Mastering others is strength;
mastering yourself is true power.*

*If you realize that you have enough,
you are truly rich.
If you stay in the center
and embrace death with your whole heart,
you will endure forever.”*

Tao Te Ching, *Lao-tzu, translation by Stephen Mitchell*

To benefit from my Essays and Gathering Designs, it is not necessary to be an expert on the Enneagram. Not at all. I have been working with it for twenty plus years and still learn more each day. We need to be the expert of ourself. That is what is important. So I will only briefly share with you the essences of each style, as I see it, through some inner monologues. See what feels true to you in the stories these numbers tell themselves, and how they see their beliefs reflected in their behaviors.

In the next chapter called **Getting Started** I give you a link to a free online test. Take it. It doesn't take long and the questions alone will get you thinking. It will begin to take you into the rich Enneagram world. I try to make the entrance accessible to you, easy, because I know how useful it is, and want you to experience its magic without resistance. Relax around encountering this jewel. It will sparkle through you and enhance your life's journey.

I caution you to not get caught up in the behaviors of Enneagram styles. There are many “look alike” Enneagram numbers that can behave in similar ways. Behaviors are the strategies that cover up our secrets. Behaviors are also

just expressions of our general humanity. The Enneagram is a motivational map that reveals our deepest beliefs and the thoughts and feelings that accompany those beliefs. The Enneagram can point us to our distortions and triggers. The Enneagram model shows us what is driving us.

I use the Enneagram in the Gathering Designs to enrich your connection with the topic for that gathering. Whether we are exploring Speaking our Truth, Decision Making, or Receiving, the Enneagram helps us understand our reactions to these topics. I urge you strongly to use this gift to explore *yourself*, and refrain from Enneagram typing the others in the gatherings. Every powerful tool has its dangers as well as its rewards. One must be very careful when using a power saw when you are building something. It is useful and yet it can cut deep. This is true when people use the Enneagram to judge or assume things about others. When people use their minimal knowledge to poke fun or limit others, they are misusing this tool. One must be intentional and compassionate when using the Enneagram and its treasures. I caution you not to deflect to others, but stay at home with yourself. The Enneagram is helping you read *your* book, not someone else's.

And the Enneagram can be a bridge to help you understand, resonate, and empathize with someone else's book. As we begin to accept without judgment and "own" each of the sensibilities that live in us, whether they are over-developed or under-developed, we become clearer about what we are projecting onto the world (in the way we perceive an event) and how we respond to the world (in how we communicate and react from our filters). Once we identify and understand our core style (including its strengths, excesses, and deficiencies) we can begin to see how we unconsciously present ourselves to the world, and how we interact with others and ourselves.

The Enneagram invites us to ask: (feel free to answer these questions and write in the book)

How do I perceive myself?
