

Coming Home Again

Years ago, one of the women at an Infinite Boundaries™ retreat approached the Site Director and said, "This has been great, but now I wonder what do I do when I wake up on Monday morning and I'm back in the real world?" The long term impact of the retreat on you as you return home will vary, depending upon your expectations; your interactions with other retreat participants and the retreat team; your degree of involvement and commitment to the retreat process, and the quality of your experience.

The elements of the Infinite Boundaries™ retreat you attended are reiterated here and hopefully will remind you to choose one or more of the healing practices from your retreat and incorporate it into your life.

Most participants of Infinite Boundaries™ want to retain some type of connection to their retreat experience after reentry into their daily lives. Making those mindful connections after you return home is a challenge and it becomes your *responsibility* to plan realistic steps to achieve that goal.

If the retreat experience left you asking questions about yourself, your life and/or your work—take concrete steps to integrate new practices into your life. If you are searching for answers, don't hesitate to seek the help of a professional to guide you.

The staff and volunteers of Breast Cancer Recovery hope that this booklet provides you with thoughts and ideas to help you carry your retreat experience with you.

Find your balance and stand with it. Find your song and sing it out. Find your cadence and let it appear like a dance. Find the questions that only you know how to ask and the answers that you are content to not know.

Mary Anne Radmacher

Setting Your Intention

You can create your intention for the day/week/year. Keep coming back to your intention: the purpose you have in mind, the invisible guiding force behind your actions.

Make your intention purpose-based rather than fear-based. Fear can motivate us into action. However, as time passes and old habits return; our motivation may begin to dwindle. If your intention is purpose-based rather than fear-based, e.g. beginning an exercise program in order to feel better, to reduce stress and to improve wellbeing; you are more likely to continue your commitment to wellness.

In order to find inspiration to nurture your intention, you need a sacred space. Alexandra Stoddard tells us: "Your sacred space is where you will find tranquility, where you will relish moments of rich solitude. In my earliest childhood I would go to the hay loft in our red barn and lie down quietly, away from the 'busyness' of our large active family. The other sacred place for me was my mother's flower garden and later, my own. It is a clear danger sign whenever any of us neglects the need for our own sacred space."

Joseph Campbell said, "In your sacred space things are working in terms of *your* dynamic and not anybody else's. Your sacred space is where you can find yourself again and again." He teaches us that you can turn any place into a sacred space. Your place could be a bench in a garden/park; a chair in your home, your favorite coffee shop, or even a nook in the library.

Setting aside time alone on a regular basis helps put your life in perspective. When we feel "down" or without hope is when we need to restore our own balance. We need to take the time to establish our intentions and find our place away from the daily bustle.

When we are continually on the go, giving away pieces of ourselves without taking time to replenish our spirits, we cannot feel the calm at the center.

Joseph Campbell

Establish a goal

Aspects to remember while setting a SMART goal:

Specific

Measurable

Attainable

Realistic

Timely

Steps to meet my short-term goal This week I will:	How I will do this:	After completing this step, to celebrate moving towards my goal, I will:
1) Spend time journaling my innermost thoughts in my sacred space.	I will set aside 15 minutes of writing time on Mondays and Thursdays before anyone else in the house is awake.	Take my kids/grandkids to the park and play <i>with</i> them on the jungle gym.
2)		
3)		

Journal

Numerous studies show that the practice of writing provides a sense of well-being and provides health benefits such as pain reduction, stress relief, lowered blood pressure, and improved physical health.

Remember the basics:

- A beautiful journal is not necessary... you can write on anything!
- *Keep your hand moving*; don't pause to reread the lines you've written. Write what comes to mind without stalling or trying to be in control of what you are saying.
- *Do not cross out words or sentences*. Even if you write something you did not mean to write, leave it.
- *Do not worry about spelling, punctuation, grammar*.
- *Lose control*; turn off your inner critic.
- *Do not think*; do not try to be logical.
- *Go for the jugular!* If something comes up in your writing that is scary or naked, dive right into it. It probably has lots of energy.

If you are having trouble starting, try these prompts:

What surprised me today?

I wish I could see...

When I let my thoughts wander, what do I find myself thinking about?

I guess at...

Write about the last time you laughed at yourself.

Write about the kindest thing you did for someone or someone did for you.

Thoughts disentangle themselves when they pass through your fingertips.

Dawson Trotman

Practice Mindfulness

Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way, being on purpose, in the present moment, and it is nonjudgmental.

Practicing mindfulness is enormously enriching. Mindfulness practice helps us to become more calm, more energized and refreshed. In the long term, it helps us to develop more awareness so that we have more freedom to choose what our responses are going to be in any given situation. Mindfulness can help us to live in the present, develop patience, and trust in ourselves and others, with openness.

Consider integrating mindful breathing for a few minutes several times throughout the day. Then consider adding three more days...or a week!

After you master mindful breathing you may consider branching out to another mindful practice, such as: mindful eating, mindful walking, imagery, or meditation.

Mindful Breathing:

- Sit comfortably, with your eyes closed, your spine reasonably straight, and your feet on the floor.
- Direct your attention to your breathing. Be aware of the sensations in your body as you breathe; observe what parts of your body move as you breathe and the sound of your breath and so on.
- When thoughts, emotions, physical feelings or external sounds occur, simply accept them, giving them the space to come and go without judging or getting involved with them.
- When you notice that your attention has drifted off and you are becoming caught up in thoughts or feelings, simply note that the attention has drifted, and then gently bring the attention back to your breathing. Distractedness is an inevitable part of the process of meditating and not a sign of failure.

Healing and Music

Scientific research supports the idea that listening to the appropriate music can promote relaxation, reduce anxiety and pain, improve mood and appetite, and promote well-being. Music can also improve physical therapy, improve energy levels, help encourage sleep, reduce nausea and vomiting, and even boost immune function.

Elizabeth Miles, MA, author of *Tune Your Brain: Using Music to Manage Your Mind, Body, and Mood*, asserts that certain qualities of music such as speed, volume, rhythm, and pitch can influence the mind, body, and mood. For example, she says that slow, soft music with a regular rhythm and easy pulse can be used to relax before a treatment or to control pain, while comfortably loud music with a quick tempo, and a lively loud beat would work to drive exercise and movement and can mask intense localized pain. The music from the movie, *Rocky*, is a great example of music driving exercise.

Miles suggests the right type of music can be used to energize, relax, cleanse negative emotions, uplift, and improve focus and clarity. Given these benefits, music can be a powerful component of cancer care and healing. Anyone can benefit from simply listening to music. You don't have to find a music therapist. "Most people have a collection of music they love," she says. "They just have to learn to use it."

Music has powerful therapeutic effects. It can induce multiple responses—physiological, movement, mood, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral.

Susan Hallam, PhD

Move

We are built for movement, and our health depends on it. Movement increases energy levels, relieves stress, decreases anxiety and depression, builds muscle and encourages bone formation. Moving energizes the muscles and nerves in the whole body, and stimulates the brain to be alert.

The important thing is not necessarily what type of exercise you do, but that you do exercise and exercise regularly. It doesn't have to be expensive, adventuresome, social, or pretty (no spandex necessary). It just has to happen.

You won't have to do it in the same way every day or commit to a lot of expensive equipment or memberships, although if that's fun for you, then go for it.

What sort of movement is already a part of your life?

- Consider starting or building on your movement: walking, biking, dancing, yoga, water aerobics, slow stretching exercises, or parking further away from entrances to buildings, are all great first-steps.
- Feeling strapped for time? Commit to a five minute break every couple of hours to walk up and down a flight or two of stairs, or take walk outside and breathe in fresh air. Other options include altering your position throughout the day by standing up, sitting down, jumping, hopping, skipping, marching, or balancing on one foot.
- Exercising with a friend may be more enjoyable and may make you more accountable.

Jumping for joy is good exercise.

Unknown

Be Creative

It is important to remember that the creative process provides an opportunity for healing. It is difficult to worry or obsess about an issue if you are truly engaged in a creative project.

Creativity requires absorption. Being completely involved in a creative 'project', unplugging from the external world (day- to -day worries, fears, etc.) and connecting with your *creative self* through an activity can be very healing.

Being creative is about the process and not necessarily the product, allowing access to yet another doorway into an experience with the true self, releasing and energizing the soul. This slow, deep, meditative process provides an opportunity to be open to the moment and create personal sanctuary amidst the hectic pace of life, allowing us to shift our perspective.

It is about the process of opening up and enjoying what "bubbles up" during that process.

The beauty of creativity is that it can take many forms. It can be relaxing or invigorating; an outlet for whatever you are feeling: happy, sad, angry, or content.

Examples to get you started include beading, scrapbooking, knitting, making cards, painting, basket weaving, stained glass, writing, or expanding your boundaries by taking that class you've heard or read about.

New ideas germinate faster in the loose soil of soft thinking, which finds similarities and connection among different things or situations.

Roger von Oech

Don't Ignore the Difficult Feelings

The toughest choices require internal discipline, not imposed from the outside. It is when we choose to dig deeper into ourselves - our nature, personality, character, and values - that we make useful discoveries about the meaning of our *own* life.

Many of us get "stuck" at the level on which emotional healing needs to take place. Most of us are frightened and uncomfortable about the prospect of doing deep emotional healing work. We are afraid of dredging up old pain and perhaps being overwhelmed by it. We wonder what the point is in focusing on unresolved emotional issues and uncomfortable feelings. We don't realize that effective emotional healing will actually free us from dragging that pain around for the rest of our lives.

- Stay current with your feelings- make time to check in with yourself.
- Know that whatever you're feeling is normal; no one can tell you how to feel.
- Are you caught in the "tyranny of positive thinking"?
- You don't have to dwell on or get stuck in difficult feelings.



Desktop Finger Labyrinth

Keep this labyrinth on your desk. When you are stressed and need to relax, use your finger to slowly trace the path into the center and then out to the entrance. The spiraling path of the labyrinth teaches us to slow down and refocus as we become more centered and balanced.

Infinite Boundaries™ Retreats are a program of:
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