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# THE WAY OF NATURE

MANUAL FOR FACILITATORS

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SUDERBYN



PERMACULTURE  
ECOVILLAGE



LEARNING FOR CHANGE





"THE WAY OF NATURE – addressing mental health and sustainable well-being of youth through nature-based practices". Funded by the European Erasmus + Programme under Key Action 2 (SMALL-SCALE PARTNERSHIPS IN YOUTH - KA210-YOU)

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# THE TEAM

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### Sweden

A nature-based human development guide, trainer and facilitator. They are devoted to serving the more-than-human world and specialize in weaving deep connections between humans and nature. With a background as a musician, dancer, and storyteller, Toni brings creativity and embodied presence into their work, inviting people to listen, feel, and rediscover their belonging within the living Earth.

For several years, Toni has worked in the field of non-formal education, community building, and regenerative culture. Their path has led them from the concert halls of Brussels, where they earned a Master's degree in classical music performance, to the ecovillages of Northern Europe, where they have been active in education, mentoring, and ecological regeneration. They hold an Ecovillage Design Certificate from Gaia Education and completed the SALTO Training of Trainers for European Erasmus+ Youth and European Solidarity Projects (2023–24).

Toni is passionate about guiding individuals and groups into authentic expression, courageous communication, and collective learning. They create inclusive, safe spaces that welcome diversity, informed by their own experience as a non-binary person. Their favorite fields are human–nature reciprocity, sustainability, active participation, and the art of living together.



## Ognian Gadoulov

### Bulgaria

A passionate naturalist, rock climber, and expert in wildlife, birds, and forests. For 16 years, he has been working in the field of non-formal education and personal development.

Ognian supports people to unfold their full potential in life and to discover themselves. He is a guide with interests and experience in meditation, yoga, and energy practices. His favorite topics are personal development, self-discovery, responsible consumption, human-nature reciprocity. He lives as an activist for cultural evolution, re-sacredtising life and reconnecting people with more-than-human-world. As a participant in the Great Turning, he is known as Death Tracker/Life Breather, dedicated to the Great Work for a fair future for all living and nonliving beings on Earth.

Ognian is certified through Nature-based Wholing and Self-healing Wild Mind Training Programme (WMTP) at Bill Plotkin's Animas Valley Institute, Colorado, USA.



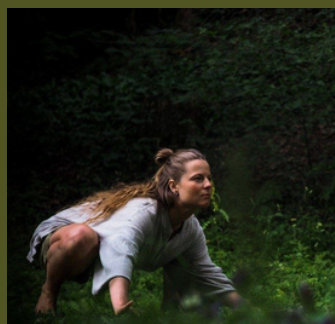
## Sara Floman

### Finland

A wilderness and nature guide, endlessly in love with the more-than-human world. Their heart is beating for their never-ending apprenticeship with the wild others and the big web of Life.

Their community experiences them as a sensitive and caring culture builder, cyclically attuned and fuelled by their inner changing soft, yet fierce landscapes that flourish when sharing their enthusiasm and love for the greater Earth community. They are a dreamer that hold a deep, pulsating longing for a world that is life-enhancing for all beings and thus full of bravery and play, moving from ego-centric to eco-centric.

Sara currently works for the Finnish branch of the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) and is on a re-villaging and re-connecting weaving mission in their daily life.



# TABLE CONTENT

|                                                                   |    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| • PROJECT OVERVIEW                                                | 5  |
| • CONCEPTS AND TERMS                                              | 10 |
| • THE NATURE-BASED MAP OF THE<br>HUMAN PSYCHE                     | 20 |
| • NORTH FACET OF WHOLENESS                                        | 24 |
| • SOUTH FACET OF WHOLENESS                                        | 31 |
| • EAST FACET OF WHOLENESS                                         | 38 |
| • WEST FACET OF WHOLENESS                                         | 45 |
| • GENERAL PRACTICES FOR<br>CULTIVATING ALL FACETS OF<br>WHOLENESS | 51 |
| • METHODOLOGY FOR ACCESSING<br>THE DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS            | 64 |
| • ASSESSMENT TOOLS                                                | 77 |
| • APPENDICES                                                      | 92 |



# OLD MAPS NO LONGER WORK

BY JOYCE RUPP



I keep pulling it out —  
the old map of my inner path.  
I squint closely at it,  
trying to see some hidden road  
that maybe I've missed,  
but there's nothing there now  
except some well-traveled paths.  
they have seen my footsteps often,  
held my laughter, caught my tears.

I keep going over the old map  
but now the roads lead nowhere,  
a meaningless wilderness  
where life is dull and futile.

"toss away the old map," she says  
"you must be kidding!" I reply.  
she looks at me with Sarah eyes  
and repeats, "toss it away.  
it's of no use where you're going."

"I have to have a map!" I cry,  
"even if it takes me nowhere.  
I can't be without direction."  
"but you are without direction,"  
she says, "so why not let go, be free?"

so there I am — tossing away the old map,  
sadly fearfully, putting it behind me.  
"whatever will I do?" wails my security  
"trust me" says my midlife soul.

no map, no specific directions,  
no "this way ahead" or "take a left".  
how will I know where to go?  
how will I find my way? no map!  
but then my midlife soul whispers:  
"there was a time before maps  
when pilgrims traveled by the stars."

It is time for the pilgrim in me  
to travel in the dark,  
to learn to read the stars  
that shine in my soul.  
I will walk deeper  
into the dark of my night.  
I will wait for the stars.  
trust their guidance.  
and let their light be enough for me.

# WHAT IS IN THE MANUAL

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The goal of this Manual is to enrich the understanding of youth workers about the individual development of the young people. Here we present knowledge about personal growth rooted in nature based concepts and more specifically the model of Nature Based Map of Human Psyche (developed by Bill Plotkin, Animas Valley Institute<sup>1</sup> and described in the book WILD MIND<sup>2</sup>). With this, we aim at supporting the establishment of developmental and educational programs fostering personal transformation and social change. We also want to emphasize the role of Nature, somatic intelligence, imagination, emotions and other underdeveloped or suppressed elements as crucial for the effectiveness of learning and maturing.

The Manual is designed in a way that provides theoretical knowledge, and practical recommendations and tools that can be directly implemented in the work with young people.

In the **PROJECT OVERVIEW**, you will find a general description of the project and what motivated us to implement it. In **FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS AND TERMS** we present the big picture and the context of the theory that follows.

The thematic section of the Manual is divided into 3 parts:

**THE NATURE-BASED MAP OF THE HUMAN PSYCHE** – This part covers the description of the Map and the four facets of human wholeness and list of practices to cultivate the qualities and resources of each facet.

**METHODOLOGY: ASSESSING AND ADDRESSING DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS OF YOUTH** – This part outlines specific instruments and methods for putting to practice the concept of the Map, when designing and implementing programs and personal growth planning. It contains a methodology for evaluation of youths developmental needs and deficits and recommendations for addressing them.

In the last part, **APPENDICES**, you will find a list of **Reflective questions for Journaling**, a list of **Recommended Readings** and a list of **References**.

As a separate document you will find a **Session outlines** for practices and methods described in this Manual and **Example templates** for 3, 5 and 7 day outdoor group programs with youth.

# PROJECT OVERVIEW

## Introduction

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This manual is the result of a project in cooperation in the field of human development and nature-based learning between organizations from Bulgaria and Sweden.

In its development, we have relied on our long term experience as practitioners in working with people of different ages, on the scientific achievements of psychology and cognitive science, as well as on the specific models and theories of the Animas Valley Institute in the field of ecocentric psycho-spiritual development and practices for its stimulation.

Our team's great dream is to leave a world behind that is filled with more compassion, understanding, tolerance, love, harmony and acceptance for all beings in the Great Web of Life. Our work to achieve this goal is a reflection of our dedication to this cause.

We believe that in today's rapidly developing and constantly changing world, dynamism and the ability to be flexible in finding solutions are of crucial importance. We chose to adapt the theory and practical models of the work that we offer for use in the field of youth and non-formal learning. This is because this field has the capacity to respond quickly and adequately to the changing needs of young people for learning and developing qualities. Moreover, non-formal learning gives space for developing skills that are often not well represented in formal education or otherwise in society.

The main goal of this project is to present an innovative model for addressing developmental deficits, based on natural practices for the field of youth work and non-formal learning. The model – the Nature-Based Map of the Human Psyche – has been developed over the past 40 years by psychologists, therapists and psychiatrists from the Animas Valley Institute and is described by its main author Bill Plotkin in the book WILD MIND (Plotkin, 2013). The model describes the spectrum of innate qualities and capacities in each person, and allows the assessment of their development and stimulation of their further cultivation. The methods the model offers are mainly nature-based and thus natural for all humans, taking into account our evolutionary potentials and abilities to which we are predisposed.

*We must go far beyond any transformation of contemporary culture. We must go back to the genetic imperative from which human cultures emerged originally and from which they can never be separated without losing their integrity and their survival capacity. None of our existing cultures can deal with this situation out of its own resources. We must invent, or reinvent, a sustainable human culture by a descent into our pre-rational, our instinctive resources. Our cultural resources have lost their integrity. They cannot be trusted. What is needed is not transcendence but “inscendence”, not the brain but the gene.*

Thomas Berry, the Dream of the Earth (Berry, 2015)<sup>3</sup>



This Manual is part of the practical results of the project “The Way of Nature - addressing mental health and sustainable well-being of youth through nature-based practices”, funded by ERASMUS+. It describes the model theoretically; offering a methodology for assessing the needs for psycho-spiritual development in young people, as well as methods and practices for their further development.

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**THE AIM** of the project is to foster quality and multi-dimensional improvements in youth work, in order to address the developmental deficits in young people, thus supporting their transition from youth to adulthood, their integration into the labour market and the chances for social inclusion and education.



## OBJECTIVES

1. To develop innovative effective tools and methods to be used by Youth Workers for recognizing the developmental deficits in young people and addressing them through Nature based practices, thus improving their access, participation and learning outcomes;
2. To enhance the competencies of Youth Workers to be able to use innovative tools based on Developmental and Ecocentric psychology, and Nature based learning;
3. To disseminate and multiply the project results and intellectual outputs for allowing greater synergies across all fields of actions concerning youth.

# Motivation and needs

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With "THE WAY OF NATURE", the partner organizations aim to enhance the quality of youth work, empower youth, and innovate youth workers' training and development.

The MOTIVATION FOR THIS PROJECT stems from the need to address the additional developmental needs of young people beyond those covered by the educational system. Recognizing the inadequacy of the current societal attention to these needs, the "Learning for Change" foundation conducted a comprehensive study in 2019 across five European countries, identifying eight under-addressed developmental needs. These needs, ranging from well-being and belonging to authenticity and purpose, form the project's core focus.

The eight developmental needs that suffer lack of attention in our "modern" youth:

1. **Need for well-being** (need for inner peace, mindfulness, joy, happiness, balance)
2. **Need for belonging** (need to be included, to be accepted, to be appreciated, to be respected, to be supported, to be trusted)
3. **Need for meaningful connection** (need to communicate, to offer compassion, to receive empathy, to enjoy closeness and intimacy)
4. **Need for confidence** (need to feel that you are worthwhile, to feel pride, to show self-love, self-acceptance, to be courageous)
5. **Need for authenticity** (need for integrity, to be true to oneself, to live a life based on your values, to express oneself in a genuine way, to choose freely one's own dreams and ways to realize them, to make independent choices that reflect oneself)
6. **Need for learning** (need to play, to learn, to explore, to grow, to challenge oneself)
7. **Need for mastery** (need to develop competences, find your element, to grow, to be "in the flow")
8. **Need for purpose** (need to have a meaning, need to be motivated, to create, to offer, to raise spirituality)

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The **PRIMARY GOAL OF THE PROJECT** is to increase the capacity of youth workers to support the mental health and sustainable well-being of young people. By leveraging a complementary approach that combines nature-based methods, cognitive and somatic practices, and developmental psychology, the project aims to decrease the risk of behavioral, psychological, and health deviations among youth.

The partners' commitment to enhance the qualifications of youth workers aligns with the broader benefit of improving competencies related to youth employability, mental health, empowerment, and civic engagement. The innovative knowledge and skills offered to youth workers originate from the fields of psychology and alternative pedagogical models.

The project will deepen the partners' efforts to **ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF YOUTH WORK** by expanding training opportunities for youth workers and offering innovative methods at both national and European levels. The long-term perspective is to support the professional development of youth workers, utilizing non-formal and experiential learning, and innovative concepts in youth work, such as Ecocentric development and Nature-based practices.

The partners for this project aim at creating a training program for youth workers focused on a comprehensive approach to support the individual development of young people, specifically addressing the identified needs. The approach combines nature-based methods, cognitive and somatic practices, and developmental psychology, ensuring adaptability to different target groups and social environments.

With this project, the partners aim to contribute to a more just future society characterized by respect for human rights, active citizenship, intercultural dialogue, social inclusion, and solidarity. Through increased competence and professionalism of youth workers, we seek to elevate the quality of youth work offered to young people, fostering their holistic development and well-being.

By increasing the qualifications of youth workers and the interventions, activities and opportunities offered by them, youth work can become a barrier and prevent the occurrence of the developmental deficits and greatly reduce their consequences (exclusion, low life and professional fulfilment, radicalization, depression, etc.).

The activities and knowledge offered by this project are aimed precisely in this direction - the development of youth workers' knowledge about the psycho-spiritual development of young people, the problems with it and their consequences; skills to use innovative youth work methods to support the individual development of young people, prevention of deficits and neutralization of their consequences.

# THE OCCUPATION

## BY ROBERT BRINGHURST

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I will tell you how it was the world changed, she said — and darkness wrapped us round.

I heard her clearly, though I barely heard the words. It was nearly — yes — as if she were singing.

Our job, she was saying, is not to change the world — nor even to keep it from changing.

No, she was saying (the story was over already): our only job is being changed.





# CONCEPTS AND TERMS

## An animate world

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We believe that Earth and all beings are animate and sentient, meaning that not only humans, but all creatures on this planet are alive, perceptive of their surroundings and interact as one large and self-regulating ecosystem. This is also referred to as the Gaia theory which was first formulated by the chemist James Lovelock (Lovelock, J. E., 1972, "Gaia as seen through the atmosphere"). To us, this is essential, as it lays the basis for the intended place of the human race on Earth: not above other species, but alongside them as equals in value.

In this manual, you will often come across the terms "ecocentric" and "nature-based". Since they are not specific to a particular field, we would like to clarify what meaning is given to them in our specific work:

**Ecocentric** – a term to describe a nature-centered worldview and value system that sees all beings on Earth as equally valuable, and as part of one bigger living ecosystem. It stands in opposition to the anthropocentric worldview which is dominant in modern Western culture: the belief that humans are separate from nature and possess a higher intrinsic value than non-human lifeforms. Thoughts and actions deriving from an ecocentric understanding of the world will always include the benefit for the overall Earthly systems, not only the human race. One who has moved from an egocentric and anthropocentric to an ecocentric worldview has gone through a life transformation we call **Eco-awakening**. It is a moment in life where one understands their belonging not only in the human community, but in the web of life. **Eco-awakening** is one of the characteristic of maturation: to be deeply interwoven with the more-than-human world.

The concept of Ecocentric development was created by the American psychologist and therapist Bill Plotkin in the eighties of the twentieth century. The term refers to the ideal harmonious development of a person if it occurs in full synchronization with the natural environment and our inner nature (our innate abilities). Ecocentric development is reflected in the model "Eco-soulcentric Developmental Wheel", described in the book "Nature and the human soul" (Plotkin, 2008).

**Nature-based** – a method or process that uses dependencies or knowledge originating from wild outer nature - the other-than-humans - or from our internal and innate wild nature: our human Body, Emotions, and Imagination. It is not necessary that a practice classified as nature-based includes the natural environment as a medium or tool. An example is the method of Deep Imagery – a meditative process of a guided inner journey. It uses our innate capacity to work with the subconscious through images arising from the Deep Imagination or collective unconscious, including other-than humans . The practice can be performed in a hall or in a room away from wild nature.

# Youth and Maturation

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In his book “Nature and the Human Soul”, (Plotkin, 2008)<sup>4</sup> Bill Plotkin describes an 8 stage model of human development: Eco-soulcentric Developmental Wheel. While we will not go into the depth of the wheel in this handbook, it is important to understand some fundamental moments related to human psycho-spiritual development. As described below, it is important to distinguish between age and psycho-spiritual maturity, between being considered an adult according to national laws, and the psycho-spiritual development from Childhood, to Adolescence, to Adulthood. If you would like to learn more about the model of the soulcentric human developmental wheel than what you will find below, please refer to our previous Manuals

(<https://learningforchange.net/knowledge-base/seeds-of-change-cultivating-of-authentic-growth-of-youth/> ).

We understand the period of **YOUTH**, which includes Childhood and Adolescence, and oftentimes goes far beyond what we understand as the legal age of adulthood as a time of exploration, gaining experience, expanding the comfort zone, developing qualities and getting to know the world. All this happens through the lens of preparation for adult life. Characteristic of this period are:

1. The development of independence, without a sense of responsibility, with lightness and carelessness, the desire for adventure and experimentation, and
2. The capacity to have a role in one’s community that is both authentic to one’s values, ethics and gifts as well as recognized and respected by others.

In his book “Nature and the Human Soul”, (Plotkin, 2008) <sup>4</sup> Bill Plotkin calls the main image of a person in this period of life “Actor”. The most important task of psycho-spiritual development is defined as “creating a secure and authentic social self (one that generates adequate amounts of both social acceptance and self-approval)”<sup>5</sup>.

# Youth and Maturation

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*„The natural and wholesome virtues of a healthy adolescence have become relatively rare, virtues such as the cultivation of personal authenticity that grows hand in hand with social belonging and cooperation; the discovery of the joys and responsibilities of a healthy sexual identity and of erotic embodiment in intimate relationships; the desire and capacities to contribute to and help create a healthy, just, sustainable, imaginative, and life-enhancing human community; and an ever-developing reverence and gratitude for the web of life, with all its creatures and habitats, and a desire and capacity to protect and enhance the Earth community of which we are all natural members. In a healthy, mature culture, these virtues are defining qualities of early adolescence; their development is not postponed until adulthood.*

*This begs the question: What, then, is adulthood, true adulthood?”*

Bill Plotkin, January 2015<sup>6</sup>

**ADULTHOOD** - or more precisely the mature adulthood of the person is not a state that is defined by age, but determined by the degree of psycho-spiritual growth of the individual. They have discovered their place of belonging not only in the human community, but in the web of life, and have changed into the one who is able to embody these gifts for the world. This leads to the second characteristic of true adulthood: to be deeply interwoven with the more-than-human world.

How then does one get closer to the **path to adulthood**? By cultivating what we call **wholeness** - the fullest, most balanced expression of who we are as humans, with access to all our inherent capacities and qualities. A person who has cultivated a sufficient amount of wholeness will be able to act from love more often than from fear. They will be happier, more balanced, and develop a worldview that leads to life-enhancing action for both the human and the more-than-human world. Cultivating wholeness is what this handbook is about, and we will write more about what that means, and how to cultivate it throughout the following chapters.

# The society we are living in today

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We, the authors of this handbook, look at the current human society and observe insatiable consumerism, the depletion of natural resources, the dominance of some cultures over others, of some races over others, of some people over others, constant aggression, militarism, social exclusion, hate speech, war.

Seeing this, we ask ourselves: how can it be that we allow all of this to happen? Why do we collectively jeopardize the future of our own and others' children? Why do we take actions for our own good, knowing the negative impact they will have for another? Why do we kill, accumulate power and wealth, live in greed and gluttony? All these questions are leading to a final question: **Are we living in a culture and society of people that are acting from wholeness? Is this a society where most people above the age of 18 are true adults?** The authors' conclusion is: No.

According to Bill Plotkin, we live in a patho-adolescent society<sup>7</sup>. A culture of people who, due to their detachment from nature (their natural environment for development), accumulate many deficits in their psycho-spiritual growth and remain blocked at the stage of early adolescence. People go through life from the position of a pathological ego-centric adolescence, which leads to a distortion of values and motives in the human culture as a whole. Egocentrism is healthy and even useful for a teenager who strives to gain experience and establish themselves, but it becomes destructive when one is 40-50-60 years old and at the head of a corporation, university, or country. It is unhealthy for the ones who have a family and raise children.

*"In current Western and Westernized societies, in addition to the scarcity of true maturity, many people of adult age suffer from a variety of adolescent psychopathologies — incapacitating social insecurity, identity confusion, extremely low self-esteem, few or no social skills, narcissism, relentless greed, arrested moral development, recurrent physical violence, materialistic obsessions, little or no capacity for intimacy or empathy, substance addictions, and emotional numbness.*

*We see these psychopathologies most glaringly in leaders and celebrities of the Western world: Politicians blatantly motivated by image preservation, reelection prospects, power, wealth, and privilege. Moralizing religious leaders caught with their moral compasses askew. Entertainment icons killing themselves with alcohol, drugs, eating disorders, and cosmetic surgeries. Captains of industry reaching unprecedented nadirs of greed and power obsessions."*

*(From "A Patho-Adolescent Society")<sup>8</sup>*



# The society we are living in today

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Becoming a complete person, gaining integrity and expanding the qualities and capacities of the personality are a derivative of our genetic predispositions (innate talents and intelligences), the environment in which we grow and develop (culture and historical events) and the social systems and structures involved in our development (family, educational system, circles of friends, religion, etc.). Moreover, the psycho-spiritual level of development of our parents, the psychological traumas we experience, the developmental deficits at the level of culture, nation or religious community, the economic factors affecting the particular family, and countless other factors play a role for our journey towards becoming a whole and well-rounded person.

The historical development of a biological species is a slow and continuous process. As John Bowlby writes: *"In the evolution of the living world, each species has developed over millions of years, adapting to a specific habitat in which it flourishes"*. (Bowlby, 1973)<sup>9</sup> Separated from this environment, each individual of a species suffers certain distortions in its individual development and difficulties in revealing its full potential. This can be observed clearly in wild animals born in captivity and subsequently released into the wild.

Fossils and DNA suggest that people looking like us, anatomically modern Homo sapiens, evolved around 300,000 years ago. Back then, homo sapiens lived in, and as part of, the Wild World, surrounded by trees, rivers, caves, desert, sun and rain, and side-by-side with hundreds of other species. I invite you to look around you now. What is the environment you see? What kind of structures are around you? What do you hear and smell? How many other-than-human beings do you interact with on a daily basis? For most of us, living in the relative luxury of modern Europe, the answers to these questions will be something along the lines of "I am sitting with my laptop, on my couch, a potted plant standing in the corner of the room. I see the grey street in front of my house, parked and moving cars, other humans rushing by, one of them speaking on their phone, another one walks with a dog on a leash." The image drawn is a representation of how drastically our habitat has changed over just a few hundreds years. This is a very short time on an evolutionary scale, and certainly not enough for these new environments to become truly natural or nourishing for us.

# The society we are living in today

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*"In our moment of history, perhaps the most sweeping and radical transformation ever to occur on Earth is under way. This "moment" is the twenty-first century, a lifetime from a human perspective, yet a mere dust mote of duration within our planet's 4.5 billion years of exuberant evolution.*

*As is so often the case, the opportunity at the heart of this moment arises from a great crisis. Over the past two hundred years, industrial civilization has been relentlessly undermining Earth's chemistry, water cycles, atmosphere, soils, oceans, and thermal balance. Plainly said, we have been shutting down the major life systems of our planet.*

*Compounding the ecological crisis are decaying economies, ethnic and class conflict, and worldwide warfare. Entwined with, and perhaps underlying, these devastations are epidemic failures in individual human development.*

*True adulthood, or psychological maturity, has become an uncommon achievement in Western and Westernized societies, and genuine elderhood nearly nonexistent. Interwoven with arrested personal development, and perhaps inseparable from it, our everyday lives have drifted vast distances from our species' original intimacy with the natural world and from our own uniquely individual natures, our souls."*

*(From "Crisis and Opportunity")<sup>10</sup>*

It is very likely that this inability to provide the needed environment for natural psycho-spiritual development of people is the reason for the high amount of people struggling with mental health. "Nature-deficit disorder", coined by the journalist Richard Louv, is one of the terms describing the lack of a nurturing environment and the negative consequences on our lives, and especially the development during youth.

# The society we are living in today

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*„So few children grow up in truly optimal environments that we have no idea of the actual parameters of development” (Greenspan, 1998)<sup>11</sup>.*

Considering the above-mentioned qualities of wholeness, it is quite likely that a young person who has not fully addressed these needs or has not developed the necessary qualities, will fail to make the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Or if they do, their developmental deficits will lead to a pathological “maturity” filled with an unhealthy or immature drive to compensate for the shortcomings of their environment.

*“In industrial growth society, however, we have for centuries minimized, suppressed, or entirely ignored the nature task in the first three stages of human development, infancy through early adolescence. This results in an adolescence so out of sync with nature that most people never mature further.*

*Arrested personal growth serves industrial “growth.” By suppressing the nature dimension of human development (through educational systems, social values, advertising, nature-eclipsing vocations and pastimes, city and suburb design, denatured medical and psychological practices, and other means), industrial growth society engenders an immature citizenry unable to imagine a life beyond consumerism and soul-suppressing jobs.”*

*(From “The Wheel of Life”)<sup>12</sup>*

Young people today need support in reconnecting to the web of life from which we have become separated, in order to shift their consciousness from egocentric to ecocentric. And they need our support in addressing the developmental needs that too often have been neglected in their upbringing.

# Eight needs

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In a healthy culture, we would not talk about developmental deficits, because all the factors ensuring a full growth would be present. But what is missing today? Let's take a closer look at the **eight needs (in bold)** that we discuss in this handbook and *the dominant environmental factors that prevent them from being addressed (in cursive)*:

**1 Need for well-being** (need for inner peace, mindfulness, joy, happiness, balance) – *constant stress, presented as normality in the Economic growth society; less and less free time and the transformation of access to healthy food, quality healthcare, recreation and sport into an expensive luxury, lack of access to wilderness;*

**2 Need for belonging** (need to be included, to be accepted, to be appreciated, to be respected, to be supported, to be trusted) – *disintegration of family and community values, growing individualism and egocentrism, disguised as goals of success and career growth (competition, rivalry, comparison);*

**3 Need for meaningful connection** (need to communicate, to offer compassion, to receive empathy, to enjoy closeness and intimacy) – *deepening alienation and isolation, the dominant unnatural communication mediated by devices, the compromise of communication skills, the spread of hate speech and social exclusion, a culture of masking one's true feelings;*

**4 Need for confidence** (need to feel that you are worthwhile, to feel pride, to show self-love, self-acceptance, to be courageous) – *reduction of opportunities for expressing self-confidence and the elevation of the value of obedience in a consumer society, the glorification of conformism and the suppression of personal initiative and one's own opinion, overprotectiveness and guarding of children;*

# Eight needs

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**5 Need for authenticity** (need for integrity, to be true to oneself, to live a life based on your values, to express oneself in a genuine way, to choose freely one's own dreams and ways to realize them, to make independent choices that reflect oneself) – *the complete suppression of individuality and the normalization of need to fit according to the standards of the society and the culture. To be a good worker, to be in sync with the "latest fashion", to correspond to the religion to which one belongs. The constant manipulation of self-perception by "fake" role models through mass (television) and social media;*

**6 Need for learning** (need to play, to learn, to explore, to grow, to challenge oneself) – *lack of quality in formal learning spaces and inability of valuable change in the formal education system, reducing the value of the education offered and its relevance to the real needs of the modern generation, limitation of learning opportunities due to a tight and imposed framework;*

**7 Need for mastery** (need to develop competencies, find your element, to grow, to be "in the flow") – *the predominance of the need to earn money over finding the most fulfilling and inspiring craft/profession;*

**8 Need for purpose** (need to have a meaning, need to be motivated, to create, to offer, to raise spirituality) – *the suppression and distortion of natural spiritual development, the limitation of creativity, the silencing and suppression of civil society.*



# ESCAPE

BY D.H. LAWRENCE

When we get out of the glass bottles of our  
own ego,  
and when we escape like squirrels from  
turning in the cages of our personality  
and get into the forest again,  
we shall shiver with cold and fright  
but things will happen to us  
so that we don't know ourselves.

Cool, unlying life will rush in,  
and passion will make our bodies taut with  
power,  
we shall stamp our feet with new power  
and old things will fall down,  
we shall laugh, and institutions will curl up like  
burnt paper



# THE NATURE-BASED MAP OF THE HUMAN WHOLENESS

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*Adapted from Plotkin, B. (2013), "Wild Mind: A Field Guide to the Human Psyche", New World Library*

# THE NATURE-BASED MAP OF THE HUMAN PSYCHE

## Introduction

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What does it mean to be human? What are the qualities and capacities we all need to be whole (again), meaning to be able to live and act from a place of love rather than protective mechanisms, to express ourselves through life-enhancing actions? How can we grow into human beings that lovingly care for themselves, others, and the more-than-human world, persons that fulfil their life purpose, interwoven into the bigger whole that is all life on this planet? These are the questions that we are seeking answers to with our approach, and we are convinced that every human possesses the potential to grow fully. We all have a collection of inherent qualities and capacities at our disposal. These qualities however need to be nurtured and cultivated which unfortunately is rare in our present westernized culture.

In order to visualize the inherent potentials that we all have, Bill Plotkin created the Nature-Based Map of the Human Psyche. In the center of the Map sits the Ego. The Ego is the driver of our Consciousness, the “I”, the one with which we associate our personal character. The Ego is surrounded by an Inner Village, consisting of a Loving Parent, a Wild Belonging One, a Fool, a Wise One, a Dark Muse-Beloved, and many more. Each of these characters or archetypes represents some of our (potential) qualities. Our potential in the four facets together with the Ego create what Plotkin calls the Self.

Plotkin associates all characters and qualities with natural phenomena. Every component of the Map is thematically tied to the readily observable qualities of the natural world associated with the four cardinal directions, the diurnal cycle (sunrise, noon, sunset, and midnight), and the four seasons.

The characters of our inner village “live” in the four different corners of the Map, and are collected in four groups: the facets of North, East, South and West.

# Introduction

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There are two levels in the Map: firstly, the Map of Wholeness: the map that describes all our strengths and potentials (such as the Nurturing Generative Adult and the Fool), and secondly the Map of Protective Parts which collects another set of characters: Protectors, such as Loyal Soldiers and Wounded Children. The Protectors, immature versions of the facets, are created by our psyche, mostly during childhood, when our needs were not met, in order to keep us safe. They give us advice such as “Be safe and small!” or “Don’t feel!”. We want to notice them with gratitude, as they have brought us this far. At the same, now that we are adults, they are limiting our growth. In this Manual, we will not explore the Map of Woundedness any deeper, but focus on sharing the Map of Wholeness, and practices to expand our potential. There are two reasons for this: firstly, working with protectors is specialised therapeutic work and should be done with support of a qualified professional, and secondly, the best strategy to calm down our protectors is to grow our resources in the four facets. So let’s do that!

Looking at ourselves as we are studying a map allows us to identify our Strengths and Weaknesses and consciously grow ourselves into whole, well-rounded beings. This process is what Plotkin calls “Self-healing and Wholing”. By cultivating resources, and practicing all the qualities that we have the innate possibility to inhabit, we can grow ourselves and become more mature, more capable, and more able to offer our unique gifts according to our human developmental stage.

In the manifestations of all our innate qualities and capacities (our four facets of wholeness, see below), we can define three dimensions:

- **Intrapersonal dimension** - manifestation towards oneself;
- **Interpersonal dimension** - manifestation towards another human or non-human being;
- **Transpersonal dimension** - manifestation towards the world (ecological/cosmic dimension).

In each of these dimensions the qualities and resources that we manifest are the same, but the direction and result are different. As maturation and growth progress, our attention and inner need shift more and more towards the manifestation of the ecological dimension of care and love. In this way, the mature adult and the initiated elder manifest the care, love and service of the human species for the more-than-human world. This is the motivation that in certain cases would place the need of the community and the planet higher in comparison to the individual (egocentric) needs of the individual.

# Windows of knowing and ways of loving

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Feeling, imagining, sensing, and thinking are called by the therapist and psychologist Eligio Stephen Gallegos the “**four windows of knowing**” (Gallegos, 2020)<sup>13</sup>. These are the four ways to receive and accumulate knowledge and understanding about the world around us and about our internal states. Each of the four windows is equally significant and important for a person, but in the modern world, thinking is visibly given dominant importance. The remaining windows remain underdeveloped or even declared inferior. (“These are just fantasies...”, “You are too emotional...”).

Each facet is associated with **a way of loving** that is most natural to it and emerges from their main resources and qualities. North represents Nurturing Love, East compassion, South Eros, and West stands for Romantic Love.



# NORTH FACET OF WHOLENESS

## Introduction

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The NORTH facet of human wholeness is associated with winter and night. This is that part of the human psyche that we can call the Inner Parent. In the original of the Map it is known as the Nurturing Generative Adult (NGA). The natural symbolism and qualities of the north are associated with darkness, night, stillness, elderhood, cold, danger and challenge. This is the place where the qualities of the mature adult, the leader, the elder are those that are needed and manifest.

A person with a well cultivated North facet is ready to serve their family, community and culture. A person who is ready to devote their time and talents to the nourishment and development of their children. A person who contributes to building a future, even at the cost of certain deprivations in the present, who is not afraid of discomfort to provide comfort to their loved ones, who provides selfless care, who has the intelligence to find creative solutions without compromising the right of other people or groups of people to satisfy their needs. A person who shares, has compassion, love, solid values, a sense of justice, an unshakable spirit, leadership qualities, tolerance and understanding.

*"If you've ever felt truly privileged to provide for or care for another being, human or otherwise, even yourself, or if you've ever translated an inspiration or vision into art or song, or into a manuscript, an invention, or a community project, then you've experienced and taken pleasure in the wholehearted and clearheaded qualities of your Nurturing Generative Adult. If you've ever dedicated yourself to the renewing and enriching of a ruined place — a clear-cut forest, a polluted river, or an overgrazed prairie — or rolled up your sleeves and volunteered to serve families or neighborhoods, then you've had a firsthand relationship with the North facet of your Self. If you've ever acted in defense of an oppressed people or an endangered species, spoken truth to power without desire for personal gain, or occupied public space in support of true democracy, then you've known your North Self in masterly action." (Plotkin, 2013) <sup>14</sup>*

# Qualities and resources of the NORTH

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|                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                               |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hardship<br>Knowledge<br>Skill<br>Fortitude<br>Leadership<br>Nurturing<br>Teaching<br>Service<br>Mastery<br>Wholeness | Intelligence<br>Competence<br>Endurance<br>Strength<br>Parenting<br>Vision<br>Compassion<br>Care/Self-Care<br>Protecting<br>Encouraging | Active Listening and<br>Mirroring<br>Support<br>Acceptance<br>Planning<br>Designing<br>Organizing<br>Creating<br>Boldness<br>Responsibility<br>Accountability |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

These qualities and capacities are mainly visible or manifested when one is embodying the role of **teacher, leader, parent, protector and nurturer, healer, mentor** or their derivatives.

*„The North facet of our innate human wholeness is that which enables us to genuinely nurture others, provide for those less able, care for the environment that sustains us all, defend the lives of future generations of all species, carry forward the life-enhancing traditions and wisdom of our ancestors, and contribute to the vitality of our human communities.” (Plotkin, 2013) <sup>15</sup>*



# Qualities and resources of the NORTH

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## Window of knowing - Heart-Centered Thinking

Each of the four facets of the Map naturally resonates with one of the windows of knowing. For NORTH, this is thinking. It is important in the manifestation of the qualities of Planning, Designing, Organizing, Creating, it is necessary for leadership and clear vision.

The specific way of thinking characteristic of Healthy North is Heart-Centered Thinking. This is quite different from the strategic, analytical and logical mind that most often dominates our Western culture. In his book *WILD MIND*, Bill Plotkin writes: „*Heart-centered thinking is independent, creative, moral, and compassionate. It is “critical” in the sense that it reflectively questions assumptions, discerns hidden values, and considers the larger social and ecological context.*” (Plotkin, 2013) <sup>16</sup>

## Way of loving - Nurturing love

As with the windows of knowing, each facet of human wholeness is characterized by a certain (clearly distinguishable and differentiable) way of loving. The love of the North is Nurturing love. This is the love of a parent for children, of a teacher for students.

Nurturing love is clearly seen in the qualities of Nurturing, Service, Compassion, Care/Self-Care, Protecting, Encouraging, Support and Acceptance. It is manifested through teaching, healing, mentoring and parenting.

# Practices to cultivate NORTH

## North Wander

*(here we describe only the specific invitations related to cultivating the qualities and resources of the North. General instructions for wandering are given in the General Practices section)*

- Using your imagination to access the qualities of the North in yourself, discover how you already know this archetype in yourself: in relationship with yourself; with other humans and with other-than humans. Once you have a sense of who this one of you is, go on a wander with the intention of embodying your North. Observe carefully how you sense the world, what feelings arise as you move through and relate with the world and how you perceive what is happening in the others around you with your heart . Notice how you are called into relationship with the world, for example, what opportunities for care and service open up for you in this situation? Do them, if it feels right for you and the beings consent to your offer of an expression of care. Note how it was to move through and interact with the wild world from your North facet of Wholeness, especially any insights, emotions or imaginings in your journal.
- A variation of this invitation is to go on a wander “accompanied” by your North facet of Wholeness. In your imagination, enter into a conversation with them and immerse yourself in the communication. What are the questions you would like to ask? What answers do you receive? You might engage in the practice of “*Writing a love letter*” from this one to you with the words you have always longed to hear (see below).
- Wander until you are drawn to a natural place or being of nature that embodies or resonates with the North (Nurturing Generative Other). Stay and spend some time with this creature or place. Open your senses to this place and share with the beings out loud what it is you see, smell, taste, touch, hear. Register with all your senses the care, nurturing and generativity that fills this place. Greet them and tell them what qualities you see in them that make them the personification of the North. Give yourself over completely to your feelings while you share with them. Enter into communication with them. Ask them the burning questions that may arise in you in this place. And “listen” by opening your senses, emotions and imagination, but do not be attached to the desire to receive an answer. If you wish, try to merge with this place or creature in your imagination and perceive the world through their way of being, of loving, of creating beauty and nourishing life. In your journal, get to know what attracted you to this place, what do you see in them that you wish you had or were? Then, you can describe which northern qualities you manifest in life and which situations require them from you. Ask yourself the question, are there qualities that I would like to develop more? Are there situations in which I could embody my northern qualities more? How so?
- Wander until you are drawn to a natural place that embodies the north. Ask for permission and, if granted, surrender yourself completely to being nurtured and cared for by that place. Let Nature take care of you with all its love. What are you experiencing at this moment? What are you feeling?
- While wandering, ask questions to places and beings like: Is there anything I can offer to you? What can I do for you? What do you need?

# Practices to cultivate NORTH

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## **Embody/Enact NORTH**

Since the resources of the four facets of wholeness are innate and present to a certain extent in all of us, you may choose to consciously practice embodying them in your way in the relevant situation. By using and experiencing a facet of Wholeness, you develop and cultivate the qualities further and strengthen your resources. It is enough to remind yourself (often) what it is that you want to manifest and to do it (for example, caring for others or empathy). This is, in itself your North, the one who has an intention and manifests it in the world! In order to facilitate the process of accessing your North facet, you can create a movement or phrase that helps you call on your Inner parent/NGA. This can be a symbolic step-in, a hug of yourself, a key word or a gesture.

## **Role model Imagery**

An easy way to awaken the qualities of the North is to call up a memory of a person you know, a person who you think best embodies the qualities of the North. It could be a parent, relative, beloved teacher, mentor or friend. Think and define what qualities in this person you associate with the Nurturing Generative Adult, and recall how they have manifested these qualities towards or around you. Having their image in your mind, use your imagination to sense this person standing with you in the way that feels most supportive for you. Imagine how they support you with all their trust and love for you. You can even ask their imaginary presence for advice.

## **Writing a love letter**

Writing letters from the perspective of the NGA is a practice that you can do anywhere. It is suitable for developing any of the three dimensions of manifestation of the North (intrapersonal, interpersonal and transpersonal), depending on the choice of the recipient. Before you begin writing a letter, consciously call upon and enter the consciousness of the NGA. Fully experience yourself as the love of the compassionate and fully accepting ideal parent, the caring adult, the protector, the leader. From this place of consciousness, you can choose to write a letter to yourself, to another human or non-human being, or to a Mountain, River, Earth, Sun, Milky Way or Universe.

# Practices to cultivate NORTH

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## **Active listening and Mirroring**

A mirroring is a reflection we give to a person. It provides an instant test to the communication process. It helps both communicator and receiver. Our mirror is the feedback signal that lets the speaker know if we heard them correctly. Try to be fully with the speaker as you are listening, be with them in their world. At the same time, notice what is arising in you as you listen. What thoughts, emotions and sensations are coming up? Don't interrupt the other with your questions, comments or own stories. Instead be present, listen and notice - both the other and yourself. Then, once they have finished speaking (or after a previously agreed time, e.g. 5 minutes), feed back to them what you have heard: "What I heard you say is...". You might follow with the questions: "Did I understand that correctly?" and "Is there something I missed or that you would like to add?" Very often, when one is distressed being listened to, feeling seen and heard is the first and most important need. Therefore, deep listening is a great gift to offer another, and a good practice. As you listen, be careful that you don't make what is spoken about yourself, don't let yourself be hijacked by your wounds or own stories. Listening is not about who is right, or finding out the ultimate truth (which rarely exists!), but about empathy and presence.

## **Fasting**

Fasting is a willing abstinence from food or drink, practiced since ancient times in nearly every culture. Across the ages it has revealed itself as a source of renewal, bringing health to the body, clarity to the mind, and strength to the spirit. It cleanses, heals, and awakens us to deeper layers of our being.

As an act of chosen austerity, fasting is both a challenge and liberation. It calls forth willpower, sharpens concentration, and reminds us that we can renounce even what seems indispensable. In letting go, we discover new perspectives: the body's quiet signals become audible, emotions take clearer shape, and perception itself grows keener.

At its heart, fasting is also a spiritual turning (and thus also an EAST practice). By stepping back from food and daily rhythms, we open space for other currents to reach us. It is a shifting of consciousness, a widening of the senses, a way of listening for what lies beyond the ordinary.

When entered into with care, fasting nourishes the inner world. Self-control deepens into confidence, patience blooms, and a gentle stillness arises. Those who fast often find themselves more centered, more open, and more at peace with themselves.



# Practices to cultivate NORTH

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## **Volunteering**

Volunteering is the act of a person who offers themselves for a service without taking any credit for it. You offer your services and your skills to the community, or to the world, simply because you have a desire in your heart for helping anybody who needs help and you offer it selflessly. Volunteering is a happy action, in which you gain nothing except respect and love.

## **Bread baking**

Bread is an important element in many cultures. Bread is bringing people together, nurturing them and making them strong and happy.

Throughout time, baking bread was a complex process which brought people together. Having bread on the table was hard work: preparing the soil, planting the seeds, growing the wheat, harvesting the crop, producing the flour, working with the hands for making the dough and the bread which could feed a big family for a whole week. Bread is an indispensable food for many people, but due to the modernization of agriculture and food industry most people experience the bread making chain only in the shop from where they buy it in a plastic bag, already sliced.

Baking bread is such an interesting and rich process. The bread maker can gain lots of things, besides a tasty and personalized piece of bread.

## **Gardening**

Gardening is the practice of growing and cultivating plants as part of horticulture. You can take care of plants like flowers, trees, root vegetables, leafy vegetables, fruits, herbs, by watering them and helping them to grow, nourishing both the plant world, as well as yourself and the people around you.

## **Formal learning/training**

You can consciously cultivate your northern resources by enrolling in courses and trainings which develop them. Such courses focused on northern qualities can be leadership development, nonviolent communication, negotiation skills, sensitivity training, parenting, conscious loving and intimacy, sustainability, permaculture, creative expression, social artistry, and cultivating genuine participatory democracy.

# SOUTH FACET OF WHOLENESS

## Introduction

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The SOUTH facet of human wholeness is associated with Summer and the heat of noon. This is the part of the human psyche that we can call the Wild Belonging One . The natural symbolism and qualities of the South are associated with feelings, eros, vulnerability, belonging to Earth, healing, growth, flowering, playfulness, fire and warmth, embodiment and spontaneity. From this perspective, we are owning up to being animals and are utterly moved, touched and enchanted by the things of this world that we are native to. In this chapter we refer to the South archetype of the Wild Belonging One, but you will find “the Wild Indigenous One” or “the Wild One” in the citations - these are the same archetype embodied in different names.

*“To the Wild One, there are no toxic emotions, not even shame. Each emotion is an experience alive in our bodies. The Wild One is exhilarated by each tremor, moan, or howl of feeling.” (Plotkin, 2013)<sup>17</sup>*

The South facet has been a main target for Western cultural oppression. We can forge new life-sustaining and life-enhancing cultures by cultivating the Wild Belonging One in ourselves and in our children. It is our South facet that enables us to fully experience our kinship, interdependence and belonging to this wild world.

*“The Wild Indigenous One is sensuous and body centered. We are embodied in flesh and are in communion with the world through our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin, as well as through our indigenous heart and wild mind.*

*When animated with the Wild One’s sensibilities, we live this corporeal reality in every moment. We delight in playful contact with the flesh and fur of fellow living animals, with bark and seed, husk and fruit, wind and water.*

*We’re thrilled by the scent of jasmine, the taste of honey, the spectacle of elk or eagle, the roar of thunder or the buzz of bees, or by full-bodied immersions in ocean, storm, or the final dazzling rays of sunset.” (Plotkin, 2013)<sup>18</sup>*

# Qualities and resources of the SOUTH

|                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Emotionality<br>Vulnerability<br>Playfulness<br>Spontaneity<br>Delight<br>Wonder<br>Healing<br>Emotional<br>connectedness | Growth<br>Primal instinct<br>Wildness<br>Freedom<br>Eros<br>Passion<br>Belonging<br>Embodiment<br>/somatic wisdom | Kinship with other-<br>than-humans<br>Authenticity<br>Aliveness<br>Sensuality<br>Survival<br>Relationship<br>Celebration |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

These qualities and capacities are mainly visible or manifested when one is embodying the role of a **dancer, actor, environmentalist, hunter, nature explorer** or their derivatives.

*“Consonant with these qualities of the south, the Wild Indigenous One is emotionally alive and expansively at play and at home amid the fecund wonders of our more-than-human world. The Wild One celebrates its embodiment and its communion with all living things, just as nature does more generally in the warmer parts of the day and year. Both the Wild One and our experiences in the cardinal direction of south are lush, sensuous, abundant, energetic, and animated.” (Plotkin, 2013)<sup>19</sup>*



# Qualities and resources of the SOUTH

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## Window of knowing - Full-bodied Feeling

The window that resonates the most with the Wild Belonging One in the South facet is feeling. This is not only referring to emotions, but also to bodily feelings. This includes being aware of internal organs, the position of limbs, and a particular hunch about different environments and surroundings, such as neighborhoods or natural habitats, social gatherings, interpersonal vibes, sexual passion and a general sense of bodily wellbeing or illness.

We must start with our full-bodied feeling in order to have nurturing, gratifying relationships both with humans as well as with other creatures and places in our world. Our Wild Belonging One is communicating and in communion with the other-than-human-world by “way of feeling”. Nature-based peoples find this ability to “know by feeling” the most natural thing there is. Our relationships’ health are dependent on us reading emotions, sensing social vibes and feeling the bodily states of our close ones. The full spectrum of our capacity to feel also lays the foundation for our sexuality. *“To be fully human we must fully feel.” (Plotkin, 2013)<sup>20</sup>*

## Way of loving - Eros

The South way of loving is sensuous, sexual, emotional and playful eros - passionate love. We can experience Eros when we are fully bodily alive and deeply connected: the sensual enjoyment of food, beauty, touch, and sex. Experiencing Eros is a window of connection to the wild ones: People often find their erotic nature awakening in relationship with the wild creatures, because it is a natural part of life that has been so controlled, suppressed or confined in modernity. Thus, to feel the fully alive feeling of belonging in our bodies in the wild is an erotic awareness of aliveness that is beyond current culture's capacity to enjoy and experience life.

*“Sexual-erotic allurements are full-bodied and multisensory; they engage the intellect, emotions, and imagination as much as the flesh. Healthy humans naturally experience this kind of somatic rapture with sunshine, flowers, ocean, trees, fragrance, breeze, and land shapes” (Plotkin, 2013)<sup>21</sup>*

# Practices to cultivate SOUTH

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## South Wander

*(here we will describe only the specific invitations related to cultivating the qualities and resources of the East. General instructions for wandering are given in the General Practices section.)*

While wandering in nature, experiment and connect with your Southern facet of wholeness. You might begin with wandering without aim, sharing your intention and presenting yourself to the land. Then, connect with the different elements of the South facet: your wild emotions, wild body, wild belonging, and wild Eros. You might begin with noticing what emotions are present for you in this moment, and how could you express them? Allow yourself to feel and explore the full range of emotions, both comfortable ones (joy, love) and uncomfortable ones (fear, anger, sadness). Remember that your emotions are a window of knowing, and that when you suppress some of them, you are suppressing parts of yourself. Laugh, scream, weep, let it all flow through you.

If it hasn't already happened while connecting with your emotions, connect with your body now. How does your body want to move? Unleash your inner animal. Explore, embody and allow yourself to be wild. Make yourself visible to the wild others, move, crawl, roll and howl. Play "What if...". Jump, skip and leap. Again! Do things in a way you never did before. Experiment. Play like a child. Scream, roar, call and shout. Let your body lead. And finally, communicate with the wild others in their own language. Be open and curious, serve and share stories. Be in an embodied relationship with the things and creatures you encounter. How do they feel? How do they provoke or inspire you? Let yourself be stirred and moved by your surroundings and touch like you haven't touched before - sing, drum, dance for or with the wild others. Listen, feel and communicate with them and play with your capacity to be immersed in all your sensory fields simultaneously. What does all that arouse in you? Can you feel yourself belonging among the wild others just as much as they belong with each other? Let yourself feel what it is like to be part of this ecosystem, or ask the wild others around you if they could tell you about their way of belonging to the world. As you are wandering, you might also awake your Eros, your life-bringing energy, and share it with the wild others. If it feels right, and you can sense the consent of a wild other, you might ask them how they would like to be touched, what would give them pleasure, in which way you could make sensuous love to them.

# Practices to cultivate SOUTH

## Movement and dancing practices

- **Dancing** - put on a song, listen and feel it with your whole body, with your skin and all your senses. What wants to move you and be danced through you? Allow your body to move to the rhythm and the music, expressing whatever comes up, without thinking. *"When a person's inner animals want to dance, the ego's job is to get out of the way."* (Plotkin, 2003)<sup>22</sup>
- **Intuitive movement** - drop into your body, gaze inwards and start to feel and pay attention to what it wants to express. Allow your body the movements and sounds it wants to produce, surrendering to your primal animal body. Often one can be surprised by the movements the body makes and longs for, which can be a positive sign that the mind is not planning the movements ahead, but rather following the impulses.
- **Authentic Movement Practice** - a discipline developed by Mary Whitehouse and Janet Adler where two persons, a "mover" and a "witness" engage in a movement and witnessing practice similar to the intuitive movement mentioned above, but with a certain framework<sup>23</sup>.
- **Spontaneous Earth dance** – in a place with lots of natural sounds, close your eyes and listen to the music of the Earth. Once you feel it deep within yourself, catch the rhythm and let your body follow it.
- **Five Rhythms** - Five Rhythms is a dynamic movement practice—a practice of being in your body—that ignites creativity, connection, and community. It is a movement meditation practice devised by Gabrielle Roth in the late 1970s. Fundamental to the practice is the idea that everything is energy, and moves in waves, patterns and rhythms<sup>24</sup>.

## Barefoot walking

It is putting the body in direct and uninterrupted contact with the earth. The skin needs to touch soil, sand or water. Many people don't have this contact with the earth anymore. As a population, we wear rubber shoes and live indoors. In theory, many of us could go years without directly touching the earth at all, even if we're outside. Our ancestors went barefoot or wore leather footwear made from hides that allowed the energy from the Earth to rise up into their bodies. They were grounded. So, let's take off our shoes and go! If you are new to barefoot walking, we recommend starting on soft ground such as grass.

## Emotional awareness practice: daily check-ins

Check in with yourself several times during the day, especially when feeling unbalanced: What emotion am I feeling right now? What is the met/unmet need behind it? How does this emotion feel in my body? Take time to be present with whatever arises.



# Practices to cultivate SOUTH

## Deep Relating

Deep Relating is a practice of "relational meditation" where you explore your thoughts, emotions, sensations, and intuitions as they arise in conversation. In this space, you focus on what is true in the present moment, expressing yourself with deep honesty and respect for both yourself and others. During a Deep Relating circle, you show up fully, listen with intention, and open yourself to new insights and perspectives that can transform you<sup>25</sup>.

## Sharing your grief

In order to cultivate a fuller, more authentic and responsible life, Francis Weller (2015)<sup>26</sup> underlines that we as humans need to practise the courage of facing, feeling and sharing our grief with others. This is how we tap into our life force and come to know deep love. *"Grief work offers us a trail leading back to the vitality that is our birthright."* (Weller, 2015)<sup>27</sup>. Many of us have been raised to suppress and ignore challenging feelings such as grief and anger. We encourage you to work on overcoming this blockage. Next time you are feeling upset, try to let yourself fully feel your emotion. Get to know it: where does it sit in your body? How does it feel? We invite you to find a trusted person, a friend for example, to share this emotion with. Tell them about why you feel this way, your thoughts and sensations. Ask them to be simply there to listen, without pushing it away or "comforting" phrases such as "Look at the bright side". Practice being this listening person for someone else. This way, learn to hold yourself and others in your/their grief. Notice how you feel after sharing this intimate moment, and do something to care for yourself when needed.

There are several practices developed by Joanna Macy that are made to do alone or in a group setting. These practices support you to connect with your grief, pain and belonging as a part of the bigger Earth community. The practices help bring forth what actually is alive in you and honour that. Practices such as **Bowl of Tears** and **Truth Mandala** can be found in the book *Coming Back To Life - the guide to The Work That Reconnects* by Joanna Macy and Molly Brown<sup>28</sup>.

## Council of All Beings

A communal ritual developed by Joanna Macy to support the way of seeing ourselves and relating in the world, where participants step aside from their human identity and embody another being that they speak for and on behalf of in the Council. The practice can be found in *Coming Back To Life - the guide to The Work That Reconnects* by Joanna Macy and Molly Brown<sup>29</sup>.

# Practices to cultivate SOUTH

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## **Foraging and collecting medicinal herbs**

Foraging, at its most basic level, is the act of finding and harvesting wild foods. Some people may call it "gathering".

Foraging can involve hiking in the mountains searching for elusive morels, heading out to the local (pesticide-free!) park to pick dandelions and other greens, or even picking apples from the branches of your neighbor's tree that hang over into your yard.

There are many edible plants that grow "wild" all around us—the trick is knowing when and where to look.

Foraging compels a greater awareness of one's surroundings – the need to slow down, pause and look.

Foraging and collecting medicinal herbs can be a very useful educational practice. You can do this activity alone or with a group of people.

## **Fire making**

A simple activity which has strong effects on those who take part in it. Different heating systems have replaced the fire in modern life style, thus we have become disconnected from this natural element.

For old cultures fire was a medicine, known for hypnotic powers and for healing the body, nurturing the heart and bringing the mind in a calm and meditative state. Fire is a perfect tool for mindfulness.

Gathering wood from the forest, making the fire, sitting in a circle around it and keeping the fire alive are ancestral elements which make us be more whole and rooted in nature.

Making fire can be very empowering for youth who lack self-confidence and practical skills.

## **Tracking/Wild(life) exploration**

Tracking is the science and art of observing animal tracks and other signs, with the goal of gaining understanding of the landscape and the animal being tracked. A further goal of tracking is the deeper understanding of the systems and patterns that make up the environment surrounding and incorporating the tracker.

## **Drum circle/drumming**

A drum circle or rhythm circle is a group of people sitting in a circle experiencing the spontaneous creation of music on a variety of drums and percussion instruments. Drum circles are a popular form of music therapy. Each person is able to express themselves through their individual instrument while simultaneously participating as part of a larger whole.

# EAST FACET OF WHOLENESS

## Introduction

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The EAST facet of human wholeness is associated with spring and dawn/morning. This is that part of the human psyche that we can call the Innocent/Sage. The natural symbolism and qualities of the East are associated with beginnings, innocence, lightness, new light, birth, sunrise, spirit, ascent, and its associated archetypes are the Innocent, Sage, Fool and Trickster. The East also stands for big picture thinking.

The East facet of the psyche is what helps us navigate hardships in life with lightness and humor. It is the part of us that falls in love with the sound of rain, the smell of a home-cooked meal, or the sight of a toddler playing. It is the part of us that makes silly jokes to lighten a tense situation, and the one who dares to take a risk. East qualities also show in our wise parts, when we know what to do or to say in order to comfort a friend or change a perspective.

*"When we haven't cultivated this East facet, our lives are liable to turn humorless, stress filled, heavy, and dull, perhaps even gloomy." (Plotkin, 2013)<sup>30</sup>*

# Qualities and resources of the EAST

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|                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Innocence<br>Lightness<br>Stillness<br>Silliness<br>Amazement<br>Naivety<br>Awakening<br>Enlightenment<br>Humor<br>Wisdom<br>Extroversion | Purity<br>Virtue<br>Joy<br>Awe<br>Foolishness<br>Serenity<br>Goofiness<br>Insightful<br>Trickstery<br>Clarity | Simplicity<br>Spontaneity<br>Gratitude<br>Observation<br>Laughter<br>Mindfulness<br>Seeing The Big<br>Picture<br>Lightening Up<br>Holding Paradoxes<br>Incorruptibility |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

These qualities and capacities are mainly visible or manifested when one is embodying the role of **sage, clown, jester, comedian, magician, joker, sensei, yogi, meditator, monk** or their derivatives.



# Qualities and resources of the EAST

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## Window of knowing - Sensing

The window of knowing of the East is Full-Presence Sensing. A well cultivated East facet enables us to perceive the world fully and deeply through our bodily senses of touch, vision, hearing, taste, and smell, giving precious information about both our inner states, as well as the world around us.

## Way of loving - Compassion

The way of loving associated with the East is compassion. It shows when we are feeling with one another, and make decisions and take actions according to the impact that we know will be inflicted on someone else rather than for our own benefit. Compassion can be practiced through the cultivation of qualities of Wisdom, Serenity, Gratitude, Observation and Mindfulness. Often, simply being with one another and listening deeply is the strongest way of enhancing compassion and nurturing a loving and accepting environment.

*"The love emanated by the East facet of the Self is a spiritual love that instantly dissolves our defenses, sees us to our core, and embraces our deepest human nature. East love nudges us out of our relatively small, everyday story and helps us grasp and celebrate a bigger, transpersonal narrative, a story whose sweep gathers up all historical epochs, all species, the great array of cultures, the pathos and rapture of being human — indeed, the very space-time continuum and vast imagination of the cosmos." (Plotkin, 2013)<sup>31</sup>*

# Practices to cultivate EAST

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## **East Wander**

*(here we will describe only the specific invitations related to cultivating the qualities and resources of the East. General instructions for wandering are given in the General Practices section)*

While wandering in nature, experiment with your East qualities – be playful and curious, choose the “opposite”, steal your own backpack, see the world from a different perspective (literally and figuratively). You can walk on your hands, observe hanging upside down or just bend over and look back between your legs. Engage in stalking a rock or a stump. Find a high place with a view of the horizon and from there write a letter – from the Milky Way to you or from you to the ant.

While wandering, practice non-attachment, humor, lightness and playfulness, don’t take yourself too seriously, and be open to paradox.

## **Embodying the Trickster/Fool**

To practice the qualities of the East and to feel this part of your psyche in its fullness and integrity, we recommend embodying the Trickster or the Fool. This can happen in various ways – wearing your clothes backwards, coming up with a funny walk, shouting “I am a fool” (especially if you have been worried all your life about how you look and how others judge you). If you want to take on a big challenge, choose to do what would be most humiliating for you (especially in front of people).

If you experience great resistance or difficulty with this practice, start with small steps by trying things while alone in nature. Gradually, you will gain courage and dare to try them among people.

## **Praise Walk**

Go for a wander in a wildish place, at sunrise or early morning, if possible. Greet the beings (plants, animals, natural elements,...) that you meet and tell each and everyone of them what's beautiful about them. What do you see in them? How do they enrich the world? Share your gratitude for their presence. Gift them something of yours, it might be a song, a dance, a poem, a loving touch, some food... Repeat these practices with every single being that you meet and notice which emotions and sensations arise in you when doing so.



# Practices to cultivate EAST

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## Observing the Sunrise

Watching Sunrise is the act of staring at the sun when it first appears in the sky, early in the morning. You see the birth of the sun at the dawn of the day. Sunrise is a magnificent time of day. It is an awakening of the planet, birds, trees, and wildlife. It is always a new beginning. Witnessing this beautiful daybreak can bring joy into ordinary life.

Wake up at a good time before sunrise and go to a place where you can see the Eastern horizon. Wait and observe how the light changes. Stay until the sun has fully risen, and greet her with all delight.

This practice can be combined with a **Praise Walk**.

## Standing in Awe

Awe emerges when people encounter goodness on a grand scale. People feel awe, for instance, when overwhelmed by something (or someone) beautiful or powerful that seems larger than life. The experience of awe compels people to absorb and accommodate this new vastness they have encountered. The durable resources awe creates are new worldviews (Shiota, Keltner, & Mossman, 2007).

In order to facilitate the state of awe by being amazed by the wonders of nature. You can go for a hike to a high peak that will reveal a great view, do star-gazing at night, watch the moonrise or the moonset or visit a natural phenomenon.

## Blindfolded Eating

For many, the sense of sight is the primary, and most conscious way of sensing the world. Taking this sense away, enables us to perceive stronger and more consciously through the other senses. For Blindfolded Eating, prepare some delicious food, and a calm atmosphere supported by meditative music. Blindfold yourself and start discovering your food first through your sense of touch and smell, then start eating, slowly, and notice every little detail. The practice is most powerful if the food is prepared and served by another person, making it a mystery to discover by the participant. It may also be practiced as an exercise with a small object such as a raisin.

## Soundmap

Sit down, ideally somewhere in nature, but any place works, and close your eyes. Listen to the sounds. Then open your eyes and start drawing a soundmap. Mark yourself with an x at the center of the map, then start filling the map with the sounds, close and far, that you are hearing.

# Practices to cultivate EAST

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## **Sensory shower**

A beautiful way to emerge into the senses and to connect with another person is the sensory shower. One person is given a sensory “shower” by the other(s) who offer different sensory experiences: sounds (such as soft sounds or singing), things to touch (a leaf, a hand,..), smells (e.g. a flower) and tastes (e.g. a fruit), or touching them in a variety of ways (soft, strong, with something cold or warm,...).

## **Open Sentences on Gratitude**

Open Sentences is a practice from Joanna Macy’s *Work the Reconnects* (Macy and Brown, 2014)<sup>32</sup>. It can be practiced alone through journaling, or through conversation in pairs. Take 2-3 minutes to fill in the following sentences:

1. Some things I love about being alive on Earth are ...
2. A place that was magical (or wonderful) to me as a child was ...
3. A person who helped me believe in myself is or was ...
4. Some things I enjoy doing and making are ...
5. Some things I appreciate about myself are ...

## **Meditation**

Meditation is a strong tool to connect with the present moment. There are many varieties, and you may choose your favourite one. Options are for example to scan your body, to focus on your breathing, or each of your senses at a time. Do it on your own or in a group, guided or unguided. There are also many Apps and Recordings available for support. You will find an outline on how to guide a meditation in the Session Outline section of this handbook.

## **Yoga**

As a form of moving meditation, connecting mind, body and spirit, yoga is a wonderful option for those who connect more easily to embodied practices. By practicing the step-by-step methods of Yoga taking nothing for granted on emotional grounds or through blind faith we come to know our oneness with the Infinite Intelligence, Power, and Joy which gives life to all and which is the essence of our own Self. Other mindful movement practices such as Chi Gong are equally possible.

# Practices to cultivate EAST

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## **Do something new**

Trying something new has transformative power. It enhances personal growth, expands horizons, and embraces life's endless possibilities.

Trying new things can be scary and therefore many people do not often step out of their comfort zones. Psychology explains a lot of this; it is a paradox actually... Some people are afraid to try new things while others (even though scared on the inside) are actually eager to take the plunge.

Consider embracing new experiences for the thrill of it. For the skill building, and the extra knowledge you will obtain. Main benefits of doing new things are – building courage and confidence, facilitating personal growth, expanding the worldview, breaking the monotony of routine open space for self-discovery etc.

## **Go to a children's museum**

Find the children's museums and the amusement parks around you and visit them. If you are an adult and you visit a children's museum act as if you are a child. Be curious, innocent and explore it with the eyes of a child. Ask and follow your own rhythm and needs.

## **Smiles and Laughter**

Connect with joy through activities of your choice. Especially taking the opportunity to receive the medicine of compassionately laughing at ourselves!

# WEST FACET OF WHOLENESS

## Introduction

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The WEST facet of human wholeness is associated with Autumn and sunset/dusk. It is the part of the human psyche that is called the Muse-Beloved, other archetypes of the West include the artist, the magician, the guide to soul and the wanderer. The natural symbolism and qualities of the west are associated with oncoming darkness, endings, mystery, shadow, subconscious, dreams and visions, soul, unknown, reaping, death and rebirth, magic. This is the place where the qualities of the wanderer, the visionary, the mystic, the shaman, the soul guide, as well as the poet, musician and artist are needed and manifest.

The West facet of our psyche is the part of us who is in touch with the revelations and mysteries of our unique place and purpose in life. Profoundly animated by creativity and vision, it is the one who longs for meaning and deep reciprocity with the wild. A courtier to the underworld, this one knows that the key to our fulfilment lies in the enamoured exploration of our darkness.

*"Everything we do is more fulfilling when done with a wild imagination. Indeed, most things worth doing — raising children, teaching, creating art, doing science, making love, cooking, praising the Divine, or romancing the world — cannot genuinely be done at all without the dynamic imagination of the West facet of the Self." (Plotkin, 2013<sup>33</sup>)*

# Qualities and resources of the WEST

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|                                                                                                           |                                                                                              |                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Introspection<br>Enchantment<br>Maturation<br>Imagination<br>Romance<br>Seeking<br>Surrendering<br>Musing | Creativity<br>Artistry<br>Poetry<br>Ecstasy<br>Deep Change<br>Meaning<br>Longing<br>Courting | Depth<br>Inspiration<br>Self-discovery<br>Introversion<br>Transition<br>Transformation<br>Allurement |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

These qualities and capacities are mainly visible or manifested when one is embodying the role of an **artist, visionary, poet, psychotherapist, wanderer, shaman, mystic and soul-guide** or their derivatives.



# Qualities and resources of the WEST

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## Window of knowing - Deep Imagination

The West facet of human wholeness specializes in deep imagination. This is the way we gain knowledge, or explore the world supported by symbols, images, and metaphors. The manifestations of deep imagination are different from fantasy which is largely the creation of images with the help of thought. Deep imagination, arising from the collective unconscious, is an experience of essence that is primarily received rather than controlled by the strategic mind. It manifests itself in the form of images and symbols in moments of dreams, visions, and revelations. Often such images are unexpected and surprising. Moreover, deep imagination shows when speaking without thinking, writing poetry, improvising music and movement and creating intuitive art. Imagination is the unknown source in which creativity emerges.

In many ancient and modern nature-based cultures, dreams and visions have been considered and used for millennia as a source of wisdom and direction. Even in our westernized culture, there are stories of scientific discoveries that emerged through deep imagination and dream. An example of this is Dmitri Mendeleev, who claimed that the periodic table of chemical elements came to him in a dream. Thus, Imagination of the world around us or guidance on how to participate in it, can be an invaluable tool for creating the present and influencing the future.

## Way of loving - Romantic love

The love of the West is Romantic love. It is the pull you feel to someone you just fell in love with, be it another human or other-than-human. It is a state of being where you deeply long for another, and would give everything you have to be with this one, to merge, to become one. This is the love of the poet to its Muse, the unrequited love, the deep longing for a valley or a mountain that allures you. Romantic love is present in the qualities of enchantment, allurement and longing. It is manifested through Poetry, Courtship, Romancing and Creativity.

*"Because the West facet, after all, is as much at home with death and decomposition as it is with romance. From the West's perspective, to love something is to assist it to unfold and evolve, and this requires a recurrent dying to what it has been." (Plotkin, 2013)<sup>34</sup>*



# Practices to cultivate WEST

## West Wander

*(here we will describe only the specific invitations related to cultivating the qualities and resources of the West. General instructions for wandering are given in the section "General Practices")*

- The best time for a West Wander is late afternoon or early evening, especially in the autumn. Wander without aim and direction, guided by your intuition through nature, until you come across a place or being that is both alluring and slightly frightening. A place that you would not imagine would be the goal of your normal excursion, but one that is surprising to you, slightly dark and mysterious, a place where you feel that the veil between the visible and invisible worlds is thin.

When you are there: tell the place or the being what you're experiencing, what qualities you feel or sense or imagine there, and how it resonates with your west facet. You may write and recite a love poem to this place or being. You may perform a dance or simply move in a way that this place seems to invite or that embodies how you're feeling. While there express your deepest longings. Open yourself to the possibility of being changed there — not just passively but by what you find yourself doing there, what is drawn out of you, what you overhear yourself saying or singing.

- **Befriending the Darkness** – In the darkness of the night when one is alone in nature and when the senses are not clouded by the countless stimuli of the day, we are able to hear the quiet inner voices that remain silenced at other times. This practice is an invitation to deep inner exploration. Go wander in the night. Explore how your body reacts to the dark. Be present with all your senses, feelings and imagination. This practice is not a challenge to prove yourself to yourself or others. Remember that the most important thing is not how far you will get on the land, but how deep you will enter into yourself.

Take care of your safety. Prepare with clothing and a source of light.

- **Wild Conversations** – by communicating across interspecies barriers, one can develop openness and curiosity towards nature, natural beings, places and elements, as well as towards personal feelings and inner processes. It also increases the capacity for self-expression and personal understanding.

Wander! Don't think analytically but follow your intuition until you find yourself called to this place or being.

Once you are in the place, or near the being, allow yourself to feel its presence fully, by observing it with all your senses, by paying attention to the feelings and emotions that this place/being is awaking in you, by observing your thoughts and the images that come to your awareness. Take it slowly and deeply feel the place/being. Introduce yourself and say who you are and what made you stop there, tell what have you seen in this place, what you feel about it and how you experience it.

You can ask the place/being to tell you something about itself, its life. Get to know it and understand it. Don't expect or insist on an answer, but fill the space with these questions. Then just observe what is happening around and inside you, without looking for specific answers.

You can tell the place/being how you are at this moment of your life, about your dreams, worries, fears, questions, intentions and longings. Speak about them aloud, with authenticity and honesty.

# Practices to cultivate WEST

## Calling the Muse

*"How might you begin? Accessing and cultivating the Muse-Beloved is easier than you may have (so far) imagined. The primary means of doing so is to simply envision that this bundle of resources is waiting within you. It is! Remember, then, to call on it, and then call."* (Plotkin, 2013)<sup>35</sup>

## Art practices

- **Muse Art** – With the help of your imagination, call upon your Muse and offer the leadership of your inner process. Embody your creativity and let it guide you in the process of creation of an artwork. Trust your intuition and imagination. Let your mind completely rest and let your Muse guide your hand or body. Stay immersed in the art you practice (painting, music, dance). Let yourself be surprised by the creation that will emerge through you.
- **Storytelling** – Storytelling is the social and cultural activity of sharing stories. Human beings are designed to live by telling and listening to stories. From the earliest beginnings of history, our understanding of the world around us has been passed on through stories. The experience of sharing stories with others bonds and unites communities and cultures.
- **Soul poetry** – Each person has an artistic part which can play with images, words, feelings, senses. Most of us are unaware of this inner resource which can create through words powerful symphonies of dreams, hopes, love, sorrow, grief, joy and mystery.

Soul poetry is a simple way of accessing our profound thoughts, deep feelings, and powerful visions. It is a way of being vulnerable and honest, grounded and open, simple and wise. It is a way of letting ourselves be overwhelmed by the revelations of life. Soul poetry shouldn't be perceived as the mastery of specialized poets, but rather as a playground through which we can experience the beautiful realms of life. Thus, Soul poetry is for each and every one of us.

As Plotkin writes in his book *Soulcraft*: *"Make a habit of reading the soul poets, alone or with friends. Read each poem loud, very slowly, at least twice at each sitting. Let your imagination and feelings meander. Memorize some of your favorite soul poems. Recite them aloud in wild settings. Compose your own soul poetry and record your dreams in verse. Wander with and in poems and let your awareness cross boundaries. Make notes, in verse or prose, on what you find beyond the frontier."* (Plotkin, 2003)<sup>36</sup>

# Practices to cultivate WEST

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## **Synchronicities, signs and omens**

How do you go about understanding a sign, or even knowing you've received one? First, if the sign is going to be valid, you will have asked about something deeply meaningful to you, a question both significant and difficult for you to answer. Asking for a sign to a trivial or mundane question is a sign of disrespect toward the sacred.

You recognize a sign by the fact that your request is followed by an event that has power for you. It strongly attracts your attention, generates a significant emotional response, and gets your imagination rolling. It nurtures your aliveness.

If you receive a sign, begin by giving thanks in a meaningful way and then by remembering what inspired you to ask for a sign in the first place. Sit with the sign you received with the same emotions and reverence with which you requested it. Take a deep breath and fully take in the sign with your body, senses, emotions, and imagination. Spend a good deal of time with the sign in this way before you begin.

*"The sign shows us how to proceed, like a consultation with an oracle. The key to something being a sign is that help is first requested or at least we recognize we have a question. An omen, in contrast, is not requested. It is an event both rare and out of keeping with the typical ways of nature. Omens are weird, outlandish, even bizarre. Often, they are also wondrous, conspicuous, and astounding. Sometimes they are subtle, shadowy, or vague. Always they are mysterious." (Plotkin, 2003)<sup>37</sup>*

## **Courtship and Romance**

Courtship and romance are manifestations characteristic of West love. They are deep processes of selfless devotion to a person, place, or creature. An expression of sacrifice, without seeking reward, respect, or recognition. Anyone can fall in love deeply and devotedly.

Surrender to the impulse of your love and your imagination and boldly embark on the courtship of what you truly love – a person, Life, a particular forest or valley, an image, Darkness, or Mystery.

# GENERAL PRACTICES FOR CULTIVATING ALL FACETS OF WHOLENESS

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## **Wander in nature (Solo time in nature)**

Wandering can be described as a walk in nature where there are no aims to achieve. Wandering in nature does not aim at exercising, following a particular trail or achieving a particular goal. It is about immersing yourself in the greatness of the Wild and the Land and letting intuition and signs guide your way. It may happen in a city park, national park, or wilderness area. Wander is personal time with full presence – physical, sensual, emotional and imaginary- with the other-than humans. It is movement or stillness in a natural environment without aim or objective. During a wander, slow down and immerse yourself into an intuitive presence.

While wandering “magic” may start to happen and you might wonder if it is real or if you are making it up. Just rely on what is unexpected or unusual. We recommend to just stay in the moment, and follow where the flow takes you.

During a wander:

- Treat wild Others with respect, care and gratitude. Offer your full attention. Treat them as equal and as if they are aware of you (YES, they are);
- “Listen” with all your senses;
- Make it a ceremony (this means to ensure a shift of consciousness from your regular daily way of perceiving the world to a possibility to experience it in a new/different way);
- Go for your wander in the world of Mystery by marking the opening with crossing a threshold (natural object, creak, fallen tree or just a stick on the ground), and setting an intention;
- Make a closing by expressing gratitude and offering gifts and crossing back over the threshold.

# General Practices

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## **Nature observation/Sit spot**

The ability to observe nature is an inherent human skill: to see, feel, listen and smell the magical landscapes of the world, to look and think, to breathe and to focus your mind. The activity should take place outdoors in a natural environment. It can take place in a garden, park, green area or wilderness. The bigger and wilder the natural environment the better, but any natural spot can work. When you arrive at your destination, give yourself a couple of minutes to explore, to see around. Then, find a good spot, sit there, relax and observe. Observe the beauty of nature activating all your senses.

Stay seated in your observation point for at least 20-30 minutes. While being there, let your senses be open and eavesdrop on nature. Some of the most mysterious things in nature happen when we are looking carefully, rather than rushing to our next point. Thus, be patient and let nature amaze you with its details!

The aim of Nature observation is to increase the connection with the natural environment, to increase the knowledge about various natural laws, ecosystems and different beings, to stimulate the general well-being (mindfulness, inner peace, balance) and to develop the capacity of exploration and curiosity.

## **Apprenticing (Teachers to follow)**

A big part of the most exquisite and deep knowing comes from teachers who use no words we understand with our head, teachers like the babies, the birds, the soul, the cells, the bones, the darkness, the death, the period, the feelings, the songs, the vibes, the colours, the spirit... Do not neglect these.

When apprenticing with something, you may choose to give a vow affirming your intention to do so. Engage your thinking, sensing, feeling and imagination to learn as much as possible from this teacher. Get into conversation with it, and get to know it deeply.

# General Practices

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## Four-directions circle

This is a practice that is preferably performed outdoors. Once you have found a suitable place, symbolically mark your Map of Wholeness: draw a circle with branches or leaves, or mark the four cardinal directions representing the four facets of the map and the center with natural objects. Your cardinal directions do not need to be precisely geographically oriented in space. It is more important that they bring to you the feeling of the corresponding facet of human wholeness. It is quite possible that once you find the right place, there will already be 4 natural beings there to symbolize the four directions. Ask permission from them or from the objects you will use to participate in your practice. Once you are ready with the circle, symbolically stand in the place of each direction, and greet the beings in that direction, share with them what you sense, feel, imagine and think about them and their way of being in the world in that direction/facet of Earth's wholeness. Then, move around the circle again, facing inward and embody the qualities and images of each of your own facets of Wholeness. Then, place a question or a part of yourself you want to welcome more fully into the center. Now, when you move around the circle, from each position, you can speak to the center of your wholeness or to any of the other directions. You can step into the center of your wholeness and speak to any of the directions. When engaged in this practice, be aware of the response of the land to your process - sounds, animals and birds, falling leaves etc. *What did you learn about your wholeness? What guidance can each direction give you?* When you are finished, return the natural objects to where you took them. Follow the rule "Leave no trace."

## Individual Map of Wholeness

Create a map on paper or with natural objects depicting individual qualities in the four directions. When making the map, use symbols and metaphors of the qualities you exhibit or possess in each direction. Such a map can serve to record the current state of individual wholeness, as well as a starting point for planning future actions for its cultivation.



# General Practices

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## Dreamwork

Since the dawn of time, indigenous cultures have used dreams as a source of wisdom and guidance. In the modern world, they are perceived as a function of neurophysiology. Some psychologists from the last century and the present have tried to restore the place of dreams in human life and to rehabilitate their significance for our “real” lives.

In working with the map of the human psyche, we use **non-interpretive dream work**. This practice does not try to interpret the dream, but allows the dream to do its work on the dreamer repeatedly. We believe that each dream is an experience sent to the dreamer from the depths of their psyche with a specific purpose. Just as we learn from our experiences in the daytime world, can experiencing and delving into the dream world bring us insights, wisdom, and guidance.

The waking ego erases dreams from our memory very quickly, so the first step to working with dreams is to remember them and to write them down. Setting an intention to do this is the first step, and the second is to get a Dream Journal. Place your journal next to your pillow at night, along with a pencil and a flashlight, and be ready at any moment of the night to write down a dream as soon as you wake up. Once you wake, do not move or open your eyes. Replay the dream several times in your mind before writing it down. Write down your dreams in the first person and present tense, as if it was happening right now.

During the day, return to the dream from the night. Recall the situations, images and feelings. Recall the sensations in your body from the dream and hold them in yourself. If you have a dream, vivid and full of sensations and strong emotions, find time during the day to draw or depict the images in it on a sheet of paper, with clay or collage.

Find a dream-working partner and meet regularly to share your dreams. When you do this, try to return to the dream world, close your eyes, take a deep breath, and tell the dream slowly as if it was happening now (first person, present tense). Create a family practice of sharing dreams around the breakfast table.

Another method of working with dreams is to re-enact the dream out on the land. Wander until you find a place that resonates with your dream. Act it out with the dream characters embodied by natural objects or creatures. Ask permission and express gratitude. Don't analyze, give time and space to let the dream work on you. Let things emerge and unfold naturally. Repeat the scene (you can embody different images from the dream) to relive it repeatedly.

# General Practices

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## Journaling

What does journaling entail? It's an amalgamation of personal, rational fact-based reporting along with an exploration of your sometimes irrational and always important inner feelings. There may be weeks where you journal every day and stretches where you go a month without writing a single word. Expressive writing and other types of journaling are not just an act of processing your thoughts, but also process enhancing.

Journaling can profoundly improve your well-being. It is associated with drops in depression, anxiety, and increases in positive mood, social engagement, and quality of close relationships.

Your journaling will be most effective if you do it daily for about 20 minutes. Begin anywhere, and forget spelling and punctuation. Privacy is key if you are to write without censorship. Write quickly, as this frees your brain from "shoulds" and other blocks to successful journaling. Try writing with a pen on a special notebook instead of using any electronic device. The most important rule of all is that there are no rules and no editing is required.

*Make a habit to carry your journal with you while traveling, working, and wandering in nature. You never know when inspiration will come!*

In the section APPENDICES at the end of this manual you will find a list of reflective questions and topics that can help you in your Journaling.

# General Practices

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## **Symbolic art work**

A symbol is a mark, sign, or word that indicates, signifies, or is understood as representing an idea, object, or relationship. Symbols allow people to go beyond what is known or seen by the strategic mind by creating linkages between otherwise very different concepts and experiences. Symbols take the form of words, sounds, gestures, ideas or visual images and are used to convey ideas and beliefs.

*"The creative process, so far as we are able to follow it at all, consists in the unconscious activation of an archetypal image and elaborating and shaping the image into the finished work. By giving it shape, the artist translates it into the language of the present and so makes it possible for us to find our way back to the deepest springs of life." - Carl Jung<sup>38</sup>*

Every individual can, as Jung did, use art to bring forward messages from their own personal unconscious. Forms of art you can use are for example drawing, painting, collage, and creating a mandala. However, be careful not to analyze the symbolic messages received too quickly, as the rational mind often perceives in a limited way and may distort the message. Take your time and don't rush to verbalize and interpret what has come to you in the form of symbols, energies, and sensations.

# General Practices

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## Ceremonies and rituals

*"Simply said ritual is any gesture done with emotion and intention by an individual or a group that attempts to connect the individual or the community with transpersonal energies for the purposes of healing and transformation. Ritual is the pitch through which the personal and collective voices of our longing and creativity are extended to the unseen dimensions of life, beyond our conscious minds and into the realms of nature and spirit.*

*Ritual is a form of direct knowing, something indigenous to the psyche. It has evolved with us, taking knowing into the bone, into our very marrow. I call ritual an embodied process."* (Weller, 2015)<sup>39</sup>

Rituals are a feature of all known human societies. They include not only the worship rites and sacraments of organized religions and cults, but also rites of passage, atonement and purification rites, oaths of allegiance, dedication ceremonies, coronations and presidential inaugurations, marriages and funerals, school "rush" traditions and graduations, club meetings, sporting events and more.

Ceremonies and rituals can be a way to add depth to life experiences. For example, you can begin a dinner with a short moment of celebrating the food and expressing gratitude for the presence of the guests. Or, you can begin a training or a youth camp with a ceremonial circle, expressing loudly the intentions of the group and connecting with the space around. Choose a proper space that can stimulate the ceremonial atmosphere. Use your imagination and intuition. By organizing a ceremony or a ritual you can transform a simple moment or activity into a very meaningful experience with great impact on those who take part.

# General Practices

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## **The Way of Council (deep sharing circles)**

It is a modern practice derived from many ancient forms of coming together and communicating in a circle. The practice of deep listening without judgment fosters an atmosphere of respect for oneself and for others and promotes empathy, dissolving barriers to cooperation, understanding, and community. Using a set of simple intentions, or ground rules, Council can lead to common ground, beyond opinions, prejudices or preconceived ideas.

Council is a powerful practice and can bring strong experiences to participants. It is important to choose proper questions/topics that challenge the participants, but at the same time keep them comfortable and trustful. Arrange the council space in a ceremonial manner, by putting candles, and using a special talking object.

The basic practice of Council is simple: a group of people sit in a circle. Drawing on indigenous traditions of using a talking piece, an object is passed from person to person in a group sitting in a circle which grants the holder solid permission to speak. Each one has a voice, speaks from their heart while all the others listen without interrupting or commenting.

## **Deep conversations**

How often do your conversations involve topics like technology, fashion, movies, celebrities, goods, prices, cars, sports, gossip, complaints, etc.? How many of these topics will matter on your deathbed? Which ones help to deepen your connection with the person across from you? How do you feel after such a conversation? Is there anything missing? This is an invitation to change the way you engage in conversations. Engage in discussions about things and topics that have real meaning to you. Try to share your feelings and be interested in the feelings of your conversation partner. Talk about life, death and the future of human civilization. About the soul and the meaning of life, Universe and Nature, ecological crisis and education. Notice how you feel when having a deep conversation.

# General Practices

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## Silence

When we refer to “silence,” we’re not referring to a totally quiet environment. Rather, we think of silence as something that we are engaged in. Silence is a quality of mind, a way of being, and a powerful type of presence in the world.

When we practice silence, there is a self-consciousness that we often ignore in daily life. So often we are compelled to express every thought, emotion, or idea that floats into our heads, without fully understanding the intention behind them or their repercussions. Embracing silence allows us to be with ourselves in a way that is simply observant, not judgmental or mindless. This quality of observation can make our appreciation for life more subtle and profound and can grow group experiences into richer and more nuanced.

As we share silence with each other, it is important to be careful that we are not “silencing” others or ourselves. For some people, this may seem like an unnecessary distinction. But for people who have been silenced in their lives due to racial, sexual, or political oppression, this distinction can be deeply important. The silent dynamic we are trying to embody here is not one of “power over,” where we are not permitted to speak, but rather of “power with” coworkers and friends, with whom we have made a commitment to understanding the value of sharing space and time in a way that is supportive, meaningful, and infused with respect.

When you practice silence, you experience tranquility, balance, sameness and heightened awareness that has its source in your intelligence. In the silence of your heart, with your thoughts, feelings and emotions resting in that silence, you will see the truth regarding yourself and the world around you very differently. With the knowledge arising from that profound experience, you will cultivate discernment, patience and understanding in resolving your problems and dealing with people and situations.

## Embodiment in movement

Embodiment is an expressive improvisational movement practice that allows a group or an individual a type of free expression of the body. It can also be referred to as “deep movement”. At its core, it uses a principle of 'active imagination'. In this practice participants engage in spontaneous expressive movement exploration facilitated by music (or - as a variation - without music). The aim is to let go of control of the strategic mind over the body and to follow only the somatic impulses. One (using the active imagination) may invite or enact in this movement archetypes, dream characters, emotions or qualities they want to embody or cultivate. It is possible for participants to experience intense feelings and deep insights provoked by the wisdom of their own bodies.



# General Practices

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## Embrace discomfort (to challenge oneself)

The comfort zone is a behavioural space where our activities and behaviours fit a routine and pattern that minimizes stress and risk. It provides a state of mental security. We benefit in obvious ways: regular happiness, low anxiety, and reduced stress. A state of relative comfort creates a steady level of performance. In order to maximize performance, however, we need a state of relative anxiety — a space where our stress levels are slightly higher than normal. This space is called "Optimal Anxiety," and it's just outside our comfort zone. We can also refer to this as the "learning zone". Too much anxiety and we're too stressed to be productive, and our performance drops off sharply. This would be a "panic zone". Anyone who's ever pushed themselves to get to the next level or to accomplish something knows that when you really challenge yourself, you can reach amazing results. Optimal anxiety or learning zone is that place where our mental productivity and performance reach their peak. Once we start stepping out of our comfort zone, it gets easier over time. The invitation is to get out and do something strange—something you wouldn't normally do. A variation of this practice is the invitation to **"Know your default and do differently"**. Do things differently than you normally do (e.g. if you usually walk barefoot, try wearing shoes). Do things in a way that leaves behind things you (believe to) know about yourself.

## Slowing down

Modern culture and society are deeply imbued with the idea of competition and rivalry. People, institutions, companies and countries strive to surpass everyone else and be bigger, faster, more influential, famous, innovative, modern, smart, etc. This constant competition speeds up life to the point that it becomes difficult for a person to "catch up". People live in constant tension that they are late for something or miss something that is happening elsewhere. All this increases the level of stress, anxiety, feelings of dissatisfaction and inferiority, increases the risk of diseases and distracts people from the present moment and their real needs. SLOW DOWN THE PACE. Consciously set an intention to stop running in the "hamster wheel" and look around you. Take a deep breath, slow down your pace, listen to a song, eat slowly, speak slowly, let go of your daily agenda, relax and rest. Do all of this consciously, centered in the present moment. Listen to your inner voice and the needs of your body and soul. Practice mindfulness in your daily life.

# TABLE OF PRACTICES

In the table below, you can find which needs each practice addresses. Use it as a guideline when you prepare your programs with your target group after identifying their needs (see chapter METHODOLOGY: ASSESSING AND ADDRESSING DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS OF YOUTH).

| Name                                          | Indoors | Outdoors | well-being | belonging | meaningful connection | confidence | authenticity | learning | mastery | purpose |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------|----------|------------|-----------|-----------------------|------------|--------------|----------|---------|---------|
| <b>NORTH</b>                                  |         |          |            |           |                       |            |              |          |         |         |
| North Wander                                  |         | X        | X          | X         |                       | X          |              |          |         |         |
| Embody/Enact NORTH                            | X       | X        |            | X         |                       | X          | X            |          |         |         |
| Role model Imagery                            | X       | X        |            | X         |                       | X          | X            |          |         |         |
| Writing a love letter                         | X       | X        |            |           | X                     | X          | X            |          |         | X       |
| Active listening and Mirroring                | X       | X        |            | X         | X                     | X          |              |          |         |         |
| Fasting                                       | X       | X        | X          |           |                       | X          |              |          |         |         |
| Volunteering                                  | X       | X        |            | X         | X                     | X          |              | X        | X       | X       |
| Bread baking                                  | X       |          | X          |           |                       | X          |              | X        | X       |         |
| Gardening                                     | X       | X        | X          |           |                       |            |              | X        | X       | X       |
| Formal learning/training                      | X       | X        | X          | X         | X                     | X          | X            | X        | X       | X       |
| <b>SOUTH</b>                                  |         |          |            |           |                       |            |              |          |         |         |
| South Wander                                  |         | X        |            | X         |                       | X          | X            |          |         |         |
| Movement and dancing practices                | X       | X        | X          |           | X                     | X          | X            |          |         |         |
| Barefoot walking                              |         | X        | X          | X         |                       | X          | X            |          |         |         |
| Emotional awareness practice: daily check-ins | X       | X        | X          |           |                       | X          |              | X        |         |         |
| Deep Relating                                 | X       | X        | X          | X         | X                     |            | X            |          |         |         |
| Sharing your grief                            | X       | X        | X          |           | X                     |            | X            |          |         | X       |
| Council of All Beings                         | X       | X        |            | X         | X                     |            |              | X        |         | X       |
| Foraging and collecting medicinal herbs       |         | X        | X          | X         |                       |            |              | X        | X       |         |
| Fire making                                   | X       | X        |            |           |                       | X          |              | X        | X       |         |
| Tracking/Wild(life) exploration               |         | X        |            |           |                       | X          |              | X        | X       |         |
| Drum circle/drumming                          | X       | X        |            | X         | X                     | X          | X            |          |         |         |
| <b>EAST</b>                                   |         |          |            |           |                       |            |              |          |         |         |
| East Wander                                   |         | X        | X          | X         |                       |            |              |          |         |         |
| Embodying Trickster/Fool                      | X       | X        | X          | X         | X                     | X          | X            |          |         |         |
| Praise Walk                                   |         | X        | X          | X         | X                     |            | X            | X        |         |         |
| Observing the Sunrise                         |         | X        | X          | X         | X                     |            |              |          |         |         |
| Standing in Awe                               |         | X        | X          | X         | X                     |            |              |          |         | X       |
| Blindfolded Eating                            | X       | X        | X          |           | X                     |            | X            |          |         |         |
| Soundmap                                      | X       | X        | X          | X         |                       |            |              |          |         |         |
| Sensory shower                                | X       | X        | X          | X         | X                     |            |              |          |         |         |
| Open Sentences on Gratitude                   | X       | X        | X          | X         | X                     |            | X            |          |         |         |
| Meditation                                    | X       | X        | X          | X         | X                     | X          |              | X        | X       |         |
| Yoga                                          | X       | X        | X          |           | X                     | X          | X            | X        | X       |         |
| Do something new                              | X       | X        | X          |           | X                     | X          | X            | X        | X       |         |
| Go to a children's museum                     | X       |          | X          |           |                       |            | X            | X        |         |         |
| Smiles and Laughter                           | X       | X        | X          | X         | X                     | X          | X            |          |         |         |

# TABLE OF PRACTICES

| Name                                      | Indoors | Outdoors | well-being | belonging | meaningful connection | confidence | authenticity | learning | mastery | purpose |
|-------------------------------------------|---------|----------|------------|-----------|-----------------------|------------|--------------|----------|---------|---------|
| <b>WEST</b>                               |         |          |            |           |                       |            |              |          |         |         |
| West Wander                               |         | X        |            | X         | X                     | X          | X            |          |         | X       |
| Befriending the Darkness                  |         | X        |            |           |                       | X          |              | X        |         | X       |
| Wild Conversations                        |         | X        |            | X         | X                     | X          | X            |          |         |         |
| Calling the Muse                          | X       | X        |            |           |                       | X          | X            | X        | X       | X       |
| Muse Art                                  | X       | X        | X          |           |                       | X          | X            | X        | X       |         |
| Storytelling                              | X       | X        |            |           | X                     | X          | X            |          |         |         |
| Soul poetry                               | X       | X        |            |           |                       | X          | X            |          | X       | X       |
| Synchronicities, signs and omens          | X       | X        | X          |           | X                     | X          | X            |          |         |         |
| Courtship and Romance                     | X       | X        | X          |           | X                     |            | X            |          |         |         |
| <b>GENERAL PRACTICES</b>                  |         |          |            |           |                       |            |              |          |         |         |
| Wander in nature / Solo time in nature    |         | X        | X          | X         |                       | X          |              | X        |         |         |
| Nature observation/Sit spot               |         | X        | X          | X         |                       | X          |              | X        |         |         |
| Apprenticing (Teachers to follow)         | X       | X        | X          | X         | X                     |            | X            |          |         |         |
| Four-directions circle                    |         | X        |            | X         |                       | X          | X            | X        |         |         |
| Individual Map of Wholeness               | X       |          | X          |           |                       | X          | X            |          | X       |         |
| Dreamwork                                 | X       | X        | X          |           |                       | X          | X            | X        |         | X       |
| Journaling                                | X       | X        | X          |           |                       |            | X            | X        | X       | X       |
| Symbolic art work                         | X       | X        |            |           |                       | X          | X            | X        |         | X       |
| Ceremonies and rituals                    | X       | X        |            | X         |                       | X          | X            |          |         |         |
| The Way of Council (deep sharing circles) | X       | X        | X          | X         | X                     | X          | X            |          |         |         |
| Deep conversations                        | X       | X        | X          | X         | X                     | X          | X            |          |         | X       |
| Silence                                   | X       | X        | X          |           | X                     | X          | X            |          |         |         |
| Embodiment in movement                    | X       | X        | X          |           |                       | X          | X            | X        |         |         |
| Embrace discomfort (to challenge oneself) | X       | X        | X          |           | X                     | X          | X            | X        | X       | X       |
| Slowing down                              | X       | X        | X          |           |                       |            |              |          |         |         |

# MY WISH FOR YOU

BY TAHLIA HUNTER



My wish for you  
Is that you never wish yourself smaller  
Less intelligent  
Less brilliant  
Or less significant  
And know that you deserve to take up space  
And that by doing this  
You empower others to do the same

My wish for you  
Is that you learn to treasure your own  
company  
And savour time spent alone  
And form connections with others  
Based on love and compatibility  
Rather than loneliness or convenience

My wish for you  
Is that you see your value  
Rather than searching for it in others  
And learn to recognise your worth  
Rather than waiting for others to see it

My wish for you  
Is that you reach your full potential  
And don't allow your song to go unsung  
Your talents to go unexpressed  
And your life to go unlived

And my wish for you  
Is that you dare to dream big  
Follow the inner longings of your heart  
And pursue your greatest passions  
And don't allow another person's fears or  
limitations  
To become your own.

# METHODOLOGY:

## ASSESSING AND ADDRESSING DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS OF YOUTH

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### **Aim**

*Methodology and guidelines to assess or self-assess and address developmental needs and deficits*

The goal of using this methodology is to evaluate the developmental needs and deficits in (young) people and to create and implement a plan for addressing them by using nature-based methods, cognitive and somatic practices. This will increase the capacity of youth workers to support the mental health and sustainable well-being of young people. The aim is to decrease the risk of behavioral, psychological, and health deviations among youth, and support their harmonious ecocentric personal development and maturation while transitioning from youth to adulthood.

### **Some words of advice**

The process which we offer with this methodology is complex and requires time. The overall conduct depends on the individual progress of each participant. For the various phases of the process, we suggest a range of tools and practices to assist the assessment and development. We recommend going through the process of assessment as it will enable you to design an ideal program for your target group. However, most of the methods and sessions described in the handbook will be beneficial for most people. So, if you are at the beginning of your journey with nature-based learning, you may consider just starting and trying out some methods! Please don't let the complexity of the assessment stop or intimidate you. You will gain more clarity on the young persons' resources and needs through experience.

# Main Elements

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## Start with yourself!

Personal growth, wholing and maturation are a demanding venture. It is critically important to conduct this methodology with yourself (no matter what age you are and how much inner work you have done) before starting to apply it to others. Only after you have given yourself a good period of time to practice, as well as to learn the methodology and practices well, you can start applying it with young people. As you get familiar with the methodology, you will also get to know yourself better.

When you feel ready to move onwards to bringing the methods to your people, we recommend that you begin working on the developmental needs and qualities and resources of wholeness you are familiar with and you feel comfortable addressing. Share what you already feel strong in yourself, because only here you will be able to transmit fully what you are hoping for the young people to develop. This is important, because a person who guides young people through a process for wholing is responsible for their well-being and for the consequences of their work. Therefore, knowing the developmental deficits you carry on is equally important as knowing your strengths, so that you don't end up unintentionally hurting the people you are working with. You won't be able to show the young people the way - may it be to their own inner nurturing generative adult, a deep connection with wild others, or creativity - if you don't fully know it within yourself and are able to embody it in front of the people you are working with.

Being a nature-based human development guide is much more a way of being rather than a set of tools and practices you use. It is your mindset, worldview, and full-bodied way of being that will leave the biggest impact on the people you work - and live - with. How much are you able to love yourself and others? How much are you giving yourself in service? To what degree have you developed your wholeness, enabling you to stay calm even in times of distress? How open are you to change your mindset and your plan? And how willing are you to receive feedback and respond appropriately? These are some of the questions you might ask yourself along the way. Self-wholing is a process that will keep on developing for the rest of your life, as will your relationship to wild others.



# Main Elements

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## Target group

*Which target group is the methodology suitable for? What actions connected to the participants will be undertaken? (gathering information, preparatory tasks, etc.)*

It can be confidently stated that the target group for the current methodology is 80% of all people in modern Western society. This is because the individual development of generations over the last 200 years has been strongly influenced by industrialization, urbanization, and in recent decades by the digitalization of human society. This has led to significant deviations from the natural evolutionary path of development, for which our psyche and physique are adapted after 4.5 billion years of evolution. Authors such as Gabor Mate, Richard Louv, Bill Plotkin, Thomas Berry, Joanna Macy, Frances Weller, Rebecca Wildbear, emphasize the connection of many of the modern (constantly increasing) health and mental disorders with the disrupted connection with nature and the separation of humans from their natural environment and processes.

This methodology is aimed more specifically at young people living in Europe, between the ages of 14 and 30 in their process of self-healing and wholing. We can assume that these are young people who grew up in the "digital age", and in an increasingly urbanized society. Young people raised in capitalist values and a vision of success, and educated in the formal education system. This is reflected in the increasingly growing phenomena of **greed, aggression, intolerance, fear, hate, discrimination, prejudice, domination, racism, sexism, consumerism, militarism, competition, injustice** and others.

Western society lifestyle in this generation (as in previous ones) poorly addresses basic developmental **needs for well-being, belonging, meaningful connection, confidence, authenticity, learning, mastery and purpose.**

In addition, many of the innate resources, qualities and capacities are underdeveloped or suppressed by the way and environment of growing up. Examples of such qualities are - **Leadership, Endurance, Compassion, Care/Self-Care, Active Listening, Acceptance, Responsibility, Accountability, Innocence, Wisdom, Gratitude, Mindfulness, Resilience, Introspection, Imagination, Romance, Creativity, Emotionality, Vulnerability, Wildness** and many others.

This methodology is aimed at identifying and compensating individual deficits in the areas of the above-mentioned needs and qualities and planning ways to compensate and cultivate them.

For this purpose, we have created an assessment (or self-assessment) process based on questionnaires, reflection, action analysis, study of behavior patterns, etc. The process can be carried out individually or supported by a mentor or guide. It can be directed at one person or explore patterns in a group of people.

In order to gather the necessary information, the person subject to this methodology will go through a series of questions, describe their patterns and behaviors, and make a radical self-assessment based on certain criteria. The results can be used by the individual or by mentors and leaders in order to develop a long-term plan for inner work that will lead to growth and transformation into a mature adult.

# Main Elements

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## The needs

*What are the needs, qualities and resources targeted by this methodology?*

### ***The eight developmental needs that lack cultivation in our “modern” youth:***

1. **Need for well-being** (need for inner peace, mindfulness, joy, happiness, balance)
2. **Need for belonging** (need to be included, to be accepted, to be appreciated, to be respected, to be supported, to be trusted)
3. **Need for meaningful connection** (need to communicate, to offer compassion, to receive empathy, to enjoy closeness and intimacy)
4. **Need for confidence** (need to feel that you are worthwhile, to feel pride, to show self-love, self-acceptance, to be courageous)
5. **Need for authenticity** (need for integrity, to be true to oneself, to live a life based on your values, to express oneself in a genuine way, to choose freely one's own dreams and ways to realize them, to make independent choices that reflect oneself)
6. **Need for learning** (need to play, to learn, to explore, to grow, to challenge oneself)
7. **Need for mastery** (need to develop competences, find your element, to grow, to be “in the flow”)
8. **Need for purpose** (need to have a meaning, need to be motivated, to create, to offer, to raise spirituality)

# Main Elements

## The needs

*What are the needs, qualities and resources targeted by this methodology?*

**Resources, qualities and capacities that are affected by the way and environment of growth in current social environment and need attention and cultivation:**

| NORTH                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | SOUTH                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | EAST                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | WEST                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Knowledge<br>Skill<br>Fortitude<br>Leadership<br>Nurturing<br>Teaching<br>Hardship<br>Service<br>Mastery<br>Wholeness<br>Intelligence<br>Competence<br>Endurance<br>Strength<br>Parenting<br>Vision<br>Compassion<br>Care/Self-Care<br>Protecting<br>Encouraging<br>Active Listening And<br>Mirroring<br>Support<br>Acceptance<br>Planning<br>Designing<br>Organizing<br>Creating<br>Boldness<br>Responsibility<br>Accountability | Emotionality<br>Vulnerability<br>Playfulness<br>Spontaneity<br>Delight<br>Wonder<br>Healing<br>Emotional<br>connectedness<br>Growth<br>Primal instinct<br>Wildness<br>Freedom<br>Eros<br>Passion<br>Belonging<br>Embodiment/somatic<br>wisdom<br>Kinship with other-<br>than-humans<br>Authenticity<br>Aliveness<br>Sensuality<br>Survival<br>Relationship<br>Celebratio | Innocence<br>Lightness<br>Stillness<br>Silliness<br>Amazement<br>Naivety<br>Awakening<br>Enlightenment<br>Humor<br>Wisdom<br>Extroversion<br>Purity<br>Virtue<br>Joy<br>Awe<br>Foolishness<br>Serenity<br>Goofiness<br>Insightful<br>Trickstery<br>Clarity<br>Simplicity<br>Spontaneity<br>Gratitude<br>Observation<br>Laughter<br>Mindfulness<br>Seeing The Big<br>Picture<br>Lightening Up<br>Holding Paradoxes<br>Incorruptibility | Introspection<br>Enchantment<br>Maturation<br>Imagination<br>Romance<br>Seeking<br>Surrendering<br>Musing<br>Creativity<br>Artistry<br>Poetry<br>Ecstasy<br>Deep Change<br>Meaning<br>Longing<br>Courting<br>Depth<br>Inspiration<br>Self-discovery<br>Introversion<br>Transition<br>Transformation<br>Allurement |

# Main Elements

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## Methods and practices

The methods and practices we offer can be broadly called NATURAL. Many of them require a wild natural environment (forest, river, plain or, in the worst case, a city park) to perform, these are nature-based practices. However, others are rooted in our inner [human] nature – the body (movement practices and dance), the senses (sound map, sensual shower), imagination (embodiment of archetypes, symbolic art), intuition (synchronicities, signs and omens) and emotions (circles for deep sharing, deep listening). All of them originate from our human nature, developed as a result of our origin in wild nature and connecting us to the Big Web of Life, of which humans are an integral part.

We chose these practices because children and young people are very often cut off in their development from contact with wildlife in the modern world. Moreover, many elements of human nature are suppressed or pushed into the background (emotions, imagination, intuition and somatic intelligence).

We believe that by reestablishing our deep connection to nature (external and internal), a process of deep healing can begin not only for the individual, but also for the society as a whole.

Qualities that characterize the practices offered in this methodology:

- Active involvement of the participants - stimulating their initiative;
- Flexibility of the process – might be combined and replaced to meet specific developmental needs;
- Rooted in Nature (external and internal);
- Engaging different windows of knowing (Sensing, Imagining, Feeling and Thinking);
- Helping participants to develop and practice real skills that will be useful to them in the future.

# Main Elements

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## Resources

*Location, working space, materials etc.*

No special materials or conditions are required to conduct a (self-)assessment of the developmental needs.

If you are a mentor/youth worker working with young people, it is important to create a sense of mutual trust, and to provide an opportunity for the young person to experience a space of safety, intimacy, and profound connection in which personal exploration is encouraged and supported.

Keep in mind that the young people you will be working with are likely to experience low self-esteem, lack of confidence, or poor communication skills.

Before conducting an assessment, familiarize yourself with the steps of the process and prepare yourself with the necessary tools – questionnaires, surveys, etc.

If you are conducting a self-assessment on yourself, use the guidelines in this manual. Choose a comfortable place (preferably in nature) and be open to sharing the radical truth with yourself.

## Results of using methodology

*What are the results achieved for the people who use this methodology?*

*How will the results be defined and assessed by participants?*

### **Expected results:**

#### **At the end of the process, participants will:**

- Experience a deeper nature connection, belonging to larger Earth community and feeling of kinship with all living beings in the Web of Life;
- Feel more confident, authentic and have sense of purpose and mastery;
- Experience a sense of well-being and meaningful connection;
- Have confidence in their learning path and direction of personal development;
- Be more prepared for facing challenges of current society and address them from a place of wholeness and integrity;
- Be capable to navigate their life independently and in harmony with their value system and needs of more-than-human world;

# Phases of implementation

## OVERVIEW - Which elements are included?

### 1. Preparation (“radical” assessment/self-assessment and planning)

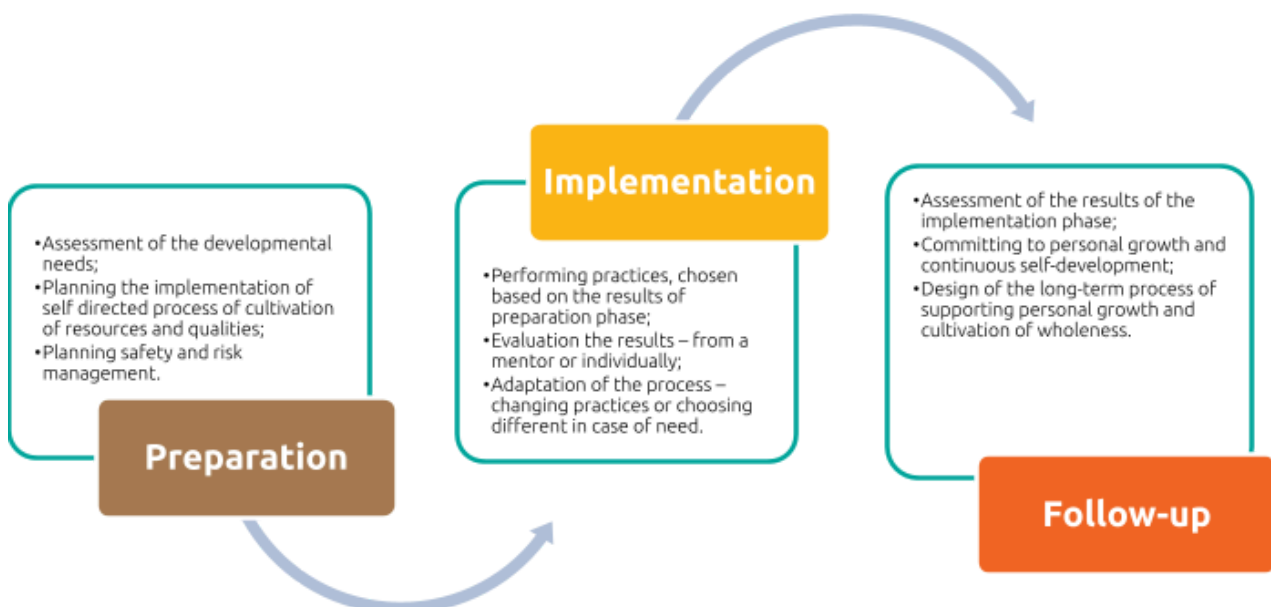
- Evaluation, assessment/self-assessment and reflection/self-reflection
- Design of an action plan

### 2. Implementation (performing nature-based practices – wholing, self-healing, cultivating resources)

- Development of resources and qualities
- Therapeutic methods
- Learning - socio-cognitive, experiential, self-directed
- Group processes and individual practices
- Progress monitoring and adaptation

### 3. Follow-up (after a period of implementation)

- Evaluation, assessment/self-assessment and reflection/self-reflection
- Design of the long-term process





# Phases of implementation

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## PHASE 1: Preparation - assessment and planning

During the preparation phase, the individual's development needs are examined and their addressing is planned. This is based on the qualities and resources of each of the four facets of wholeness, as well as the eight developmental needs. For this purpose, the map of the human psyche, resource lists, questionnaires, a set of practices, mentoring support, etc. are used.

Also, the relationship between the mentor/youth worker and their client(s) (young person) is built here. An important element of this period is also the risk assessment and the planning of measures to ensure the physical and psycho-spiritual safety of all involved.

Key elements of the preparation phase are:

- **Assessment** of the developmental needs;
- **Planning** the implementation of self-directed process of cultivation of resources and qualities;
- Planning **safety and risk management**.

## STEPS

### 1 - Read the content of this Manual and the book WILD MIND (see Appendices)

It is important to familiarize yourself with the concepts and theory. In this way you can understand this developmental approach and see how the model of Nature Based Map of Human Psyche can help you in your life journey. It is recommended also to read more articles and books, watch videos and browse web pages related to the topic. (You can find a list of recommended readings in the **APPENDICES** section of this manual.)

### 2 - Assessment - connect the theory (concepts, tools etc.) with your life and reflect on your current situation

It is important to link the theory with your life and see how it is connected to reality. You can do this through several methods:

**a. Reflection questions for each facet of wholeness:** In the **Assessment Tools** section, you will find a list with **Reflection questions** for each facet of wholeness. Spend some time with them and write your answers in a journal. You can gain very interesting insights about yourself and your life. Based on the findings you can identify which are the qualities and resources in each direction you want to cultivate more.

**b. Self-assessment of eight developmental needs:** It is important to know where you are in your life, from the perspective of the eight developmental needs. The **Assessment Tools** section contains a list of questions which will help you identify your level of addressing those needs.

# Phases of implementation

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**c. Exploring the Growing Edge:** At each moment of life a person has a direction or element in their life they are resistant to look at, a realm full of insecurity, discomfort or worry. This is an area of challenge that we seek to avoid or postpone. We can call this area of our behavior “the Growing Edge”. If we make the effort and turn our gaze there, we will find that, if we gain confidence, overcome fear or start acting differently, it can radically change our lives. Explore what your Growing Edge is and make a conscious effort to develop the necessary skills and attitudes.

**d. Looking at the archetypes:** Each facet of wholeness is represented by particular archetypes. Reflect on the archetypes of the four directions and find those you feel least connected with or hardest to embody. This will give you information about which qualities and resources you need to focus on.

**e. The deepest longing:** answer the questions “*What is your deepest longing at this moment? What do you REALLY want? What do you yearn for?*” If you read between the lines of the answers, you will find a deep need for something, very likely something you need to develop or achieve.

**f. Self-evaluate using the “Nature Relatedness Scale” (NRS; Nisbet, Zelenski, and Murphy 2009):** In the **Assessment Tools** section, you will find the long and short version of the NRS. Use it to discover to what extent you are connected with nature.

**g. Go where your curiosity is:** You may feel into your body and intuition and ask “Where should I go?” and follow your curiosity. If you feel attracted to working with the South facet, do it. We believe that when one is emotionally engaged, learning is stronger and faster. While choosing intuitively, be aware of the escape strategies that our inner protectors use. Ask yourself “Am I doing what I am comfortable with? Am I keeping myself small and safe?”

# Phases of implementation

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## **h. Guidelines, warnings and areas of attention**

When you perform self-assessment consider the following aspects:

- **Who is speaking** – often check with yourself about what is coming through you (your inner voice) is rooted in your wholeness or coming from another “inner” voice (e.g. inner critic, inner flatterer, inner judge, escapist or addict). It is very likely when you bump into a hard memory, insight or honest (unpleasant) self-realization some of these voices become active in order to distract you from reaching the “painful truth”. We mentioned these Protectors in the Introduction chapter earlier in the Manual. These protector strategies developed during childhood. They were very useful and needed in the earlier years of your life, but when you grow old they stop serving and act only as an obstacle for your maturation. They kept you safe and small in your childhood but now you need to discover your full potential. They may sound like these “What you are doing is useless...; It is much better to read a book instead of learning these things...; You are pretty good and advanced with your maturation...; You did so much inner work in the past, you are healed enough, you do not need more of this...”

When you realize an active protector, validate their work for your safety and come back to your wholeness. You are probably in your wholeness when your thoughts are coming from your Nurturing Generative Adult. A question supporting this could be “What would love have me do?”

- **Facing discomfort** – the feeling of discomfort is often a way for the ego to express its concern about what is happening. It is also a mechanism for the ego to keep itself safe. In order for the ego to grow and mature, it is necessary to follow the natural cycle of “death and rebirth”. That is, our current identity needs to “disintegrate” in order for a new one to be built.

For this reason, it is often necessary to confront and embrace the feeling of discomfort that accompanies parting with old beliefs and models for ourselves in order to make room for new ones.

- **How this is reflecting in my current life** – often the work of maturation and growth can greatly affect the current lifestyle we have. Self-assessment in this methodology can lead to a reassessment of the basic values that have led us to this point in life. This can lead to a radical change in our behaviors, the activities we engage in, and the environment in which we are used to living. Our individual change can lead to a reassessment of relationships (and breaking off unhealthy ones), leaving activities and commitments (stopping unproductive activities – partying, going to bars, travelling, shopping, etc.) and even changing jobs or target groups (leaving the corporate world and moving to the social or ecological sector).

If we step onto the path of personal transformation, we must prepare for the upheavals that this can bring, both for ourselves and for our loved ones, friends and family.

# Phases of implementation

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## 3 - Make a developmental plan

- a. **Decide on which facet of wholeness, qualities and resources, archetypes and developmental needs you want to focus:** Make a list of those that you have addressed the least or those that you feel a calling to work on.
- b. **Prioritize them and choose 2-3 you want to start with:** Select from all the elements from the list those that are the most relevant and important for you at this moment of your life.
- c. **Choose the practices that can help you address these elements of development:** Choose from the **Table of practices** at the end of General Practices sectionion, practices that can be best used for your needs. You can also find other practices that are not included in this manual.
- d. **Make an action plan:** Make an action plan by answering to these questions:
  - i. What do you want to do? – The practices.
  - ii. Why do you want to do it? – Why do you want to address these developmental elements?
  - iii. When do you want to do it? – Set a realistic time. Don't rush, don't delay.
  - iv. What do you need for executing this action/practice? – Resources, places, people etc.
  - v. Who can help you with this? – Support persons, mentors, guides etc.
  - vi. What will guarantee your safety? - Plan safety and risk management

# Phases of implementation

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## **PHASE 2: Implementation - performing nature-based practices – wholing, self-healing, cultivating resources**

Implementing, testing and adapting (nature-based) practices to cultivate wholeness and address developmental needs; continuously monitoring the effects and adapting if necessary; receiving mentoring support from a youth worker.

Once the appropriate practices have been selected according to the results of the first phase, they begin to be implemented in practice. In this process, the role of the mentor or self-organizing person is to objectively monitor the results and adapt the implementation process if necessary.

Key elements of the implementation are:

- **Implement the actions and the practices** - chosen based on the results of preparation phase.
- **Reflect and evaluate:** Ask the following questions: What did you do? How was it to do it? How did you feel? What did you gain? What can you change/improve? You might want to repeat step 2 “assessment” from the preparation phase.
- **Adaptation of the process** – changing practices or choosing different ones in case of need.
- **Go back to the theory and read it again:** You can always go back to the theory and study it with the new perspectives that you have after implementing the action plan. By reading it again you may get new insights and deepen learning and development.
- **Celebrate and appreciate:** It is very important to celebrate efforts and growth, and to be grateful for resources we already have!

# Phases of implementation

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## PHASE 3: Follow-up - after a period of implementation

It is important during this period to establish a routine for implementing practices that support personal development and growth. One of the fundamental statements in the Ecocentric development models is that “no developmental task or resource can be completed 100%”. We can always build more confidence, be more compassionate, or show more care or responsibility. For this reason, it is important to build a lifestyle based on our personal values that contains practices and patterns that help us continue to cultivate our individual integrity and to assist others in cultivating theirs.

Steps of follow-up are:

1. **Assessment** of the results of the implementation phase;
2. **Committing** to personal growth and continuous self-development;
3. **Design of the long-term process** of supporting personal growth and cultivation of wholeness.

# ASSESSMENT TOOLS

## Assessment Tools

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### **Reflection questions related to facets of wholeness**

*This section offers questions which help evaluate/self-evaluate the development of resources and qualities in each facet of wholeness.*

#### **General/Introductory questions**

- Which aspects of your wholeness do you believe are developed to a great extent? To what degree do you feel confident in them?
- Write about your personal role models, your personal heroes, beings you have learned from (human and non-human, imaginal and perceptible). What are the qualities do they exhibit?
- What are your current, primary responsibilities in life? Challenges?
- What is calling you to a larger story, a greater life?
- What is missing in your life today? What is fully lived in your life today?



# Assessment Tools

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## North

- Would you call yourself skillful?
- How often and in what situations do your leadership qualities manifest themselves?
- How would you evaluate your ability to speak in front of an audience?
- How often and in what situations do you find yourself making decisions or leading a group?
- Do you ever teach others? How do you feel in this role? How do your learners evaluate you?
- How would you evaluate your resilience to difficulties? How do you deal with discomfort?
- How easily do you give up when faced with obstacles? Would you call yourself persistent?
- Is there an area in which you would call yourself a master? Do you easily learn new skills?
- How would you evaluate your physical and mental endurance?
- Do you take care of yourself and how? And of others?
- Do you get involved in socially significant activities or projects? Do you participate in volunteer actions?
- How often, alone or in a team, do you generate ideas and plan their implementation?
- Can you say that you have a vision for your future and for the future of society, and for the more-than-human world?
- Do you ever defend someone (a person, another living creature or a place) from threats? How do you feel doing it?
- How would you rate your ability to be compassionate?
- Are you good at listening actively and when do you use this skill?
- How would you rate your planning and preparation skills?
- How developed are your organizational skills?
- Do you consider yourself a person who accepts differences and shows tolerance?
- How would you rate your ability to be responsible and accountable?
- What are the qualities of the North that you think you would like/need to develop more? Why?
- Which of the North archetypes is the easiest/hardest for you to embody (teacher, leader, parent, protector and nurturer, healer, mentor)?

# Assessment Tools

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## South

- How emotionally aware are you?
- How deeply do you feel your emotions?
- When was the last time you were vulnerable?
- Are you an expressive person? How?
- How often do you tap into your playfulness - do you make space for play in your life?
- Would you call yourself spontaneous?
- Do you feel emotionally connected to yourself and to others?
- To what degree (1-5) are you invested in your personal growth and/or healing?
- Do you find it easy to get wild and tap into your animal body?
- To what degree (1-5) do you feel like you belong on Earth?
- Would you say that you easily connect with your eros? What does that look like to you?
- Do you see yourself as a passionate person?
- How often do you connect with your body? Do you let it move the way it wants?
- Do you enjoy dancing? How often do you dance?
- Would you say that you are able to feel your bodily sensations?
- How often do you feel fully alive? In which type of moments does that happen?
- Are you an explorer?
- Would you say that you are authentic in your everyday life? In relation to others?
- Do you communicate with other-than-humans?
- Do you make space for connecting with the wild others?
- Would you call yourself a sensual person?
- Would you say that you are present with your surroundings?
- How polished are your skills with emotions, conflict resolution, status assigning, romance, sex, and communication?
- Have you studied and understood human-nature reciprocity and ecological responsibility?
- Are you living your inner fire? In what ways? What enables you to do this?

# Assessment Tools

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## East

- What have you discovered about your relationship with innocence? Is innocence present in your daily life? In what way(s)?
- What is innocence for you, and what is your relationship to innocence? How does innocence live in you (or not)?
- Do you perceive yourself/the world as extraordinary, wonderful and innocent?
- How comfortable are you with stillness and silence?
- How awake are your senses?
- Do you enjoy being present and observing the world around you?
- To what degree are you able to laugh at yourself? When?
- Do others describe you as wise?
- How easy or difficult is it for you to change perspective? Can you look at a situation from another's point of view?
- How do you relate to time and space? To what degree are you able to shift back and forth between you and the present moments, and think of the big picture?
- How often do you laugh? When and how do you bring lightness into your life?
- Do you practice meditation, yoga or similar practices?
- How often do you feel calm and clear? Are you able to create such a state in yourself when needed?
- To what degree do you feel in awe with the world? When?
- How easy is it for you to embody the archetypes of the *sage, clown, jester, comedian, magician, joker, sensei, yogi, meditator and monk*?
- How much compassion do you have for others? Are you sensitive to others' inner worlds?
- Would you describe yourself as spontaneous?
- Do you hold strong values and stand by them?

# Assessment Tools

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## West

- How do you know creativity within yourself?
- Do you express yourself through art? What is your medium (painting, dancing, poetry, sculpting, story telling...)?
- To what degree do you practice introspection? How often do you reflect on yourself?
- On a scale of 1-5, how strong is your intuition? How often do you follow it?
- How aware are you of your dreamworld? Do you follow your dreams?
- How vivid is your imagination? Do you see, feel, hear, sense on another level than the physical reality we live in?
- To what degree (1-5) do you feel connected to a sense of purpose?
- How do you relate to romance? (Note that romance is not limited to other humans, but can show in e.g. relations to wild others or through art. What we are asking about is a feeling of allurement, deep connection, pull.)
- How open are you to deep changes in your life?
- What comes up in you when invited to surrender to something, to let go of control?
- To what degree do you enjoy deep conversations and reflection?
- To what degree do you experience magic, mystery, synchronicity, omen and signs in your life?
- Do you feel a sense of purpose?
- Do you have a life story, a theme that your life seems to be evolving around?
- How comfortable do you feel with darkness and the unknown?

# Assessment Tools

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## Evaluating the eight developmental needs

(adapted from Gadoularov, Michail, Romanica SEEDS OF CHANGE, 2020

<https://learningforchange.net/knowledge-base/seeds-of-change-cultivating-of-authentic-growth-of-youth/> )

*This section offers questions which help evaluate/self-evaluate the deficits in the eight developmental needs. If there are many gaps in a particular need cluster, this is an indication to start working on it. In order to do so, we have prepared a set of questions that will help you reflect on the profile of your young people and then understand and prioritize their current needs. **Note that this is not a quantitative but more of a qualitative and subjective perspective of the needs.***

### How to use the following analysis questionnaire for identifying the needs:

1. Think of you/your target group (a particular person or your group as a whole).
2. For each needs' cluster choose the most relevant questions and answer them.
3. Make a list with the needs that are not fully covered.
4. From this list, prioritize the ones that are more urgent, or ones whose work on them will facilitate work on other needs as well.
5. Choose activities and practices that correspond to this need and start working on it!
6. After some time, make the same assessment and check the progress by answering the same questions you answered before.
7. If there has been no progress, try again with different activities or start with a different need.
8. If progress has been achieved, move on to the second need.

# Assessment Tools

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## NEEDS ANALYSIS QUESTIONNAIRE

### Need for well-being

Definition: The need to be comfortable, healthy and happy. It is about enjoying physical, mental, emotional and spiritual balance and wellness.

Questions to reflect on:

- How peaceful/calm do you feel on a daily basis?
- Under what circumstances do you lose your inner peace/calmness? Why is that?
- How intense are the moments when you lose inner peace? How obvious is it in your behavior/in your body?
- How mindful are you during the day? Can you concentrate on tasks, or does your mind often wander?
- Are there moments when your mind wandering is more intense? Why is that?
- Is joy and happiness present in your life? If not, why not?
- Would you say you are a balanced person?
- Do you lose control of yourself easily? In what cases? Why?
- What inspires you?

### Need for belonging

Definition: Belonging means to be a member of a particular group. In this case, this group can represent a peer group or family.

Questions to reflect on:

- How included are you in peer groups?
- Do you have at least one true friend?
- How authentic are you with your peers? Do you think you need to change yourself somehow to be included? If yes, in what ways? Why?
- Do other peers appreciate you? In what ways do they show their appreciation or demonstrate the opposite?
- Do family members appreciate you? In what ways do they show their appreciation or demonstrate the opposite?
- Do their peers show respect to you? In what ways?
- Does their family show respect to you? In what ways?
- How do peers support you?
- How does your family support you?
- Are your abilities or character strengths recognized by your group?
- Are your abilities or character strengths recognized by your family?
- How much do your peers trust you?
- How much does your family trust you?

# Assessment Tools

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## **Need for meaningful connection**

Definition: Meaningful connection means to have strong and deep social bonds with other people and the skills to maintain them.

Questions to reflect on:

- Is there a person in your life with whom you share a meaningful connection? Who is it? How is your relationship?
- How do you communicate your thoughts, feelings, opinions, needs, and wishes?
- How do you evaluate your listening skills?
- Can you show compassion to others? If not, in what cases is it hard for you to do so? Why?
- How easily can you cooperate? In what cases is it hard to cooperate? Why?
- Do you receive empathy from others? Are you heard? How and why?

## **Need for confidence**

Definition: Confidence means to have faith in yourself and rely on your abilities.

Questions to reflect on:

- How self-confident are you?
- Can you rely on your own strength?
- How frequently do you show signs of low self-confidence? Under what circumstances? Why?
- What is the image you have of yourself?
- Do you believe you are worthwhile? If not, why not?
- How proud are you of your achievements, character, or presence?
- Do you show signs of overconfidence or narcissism? In what cases? Why is that?
- How do you show care, love, and nurture to yourself?
- How much do you appreciate yourself?
- Do you accept yourself? In what cases do you not? Why? What parts of your identity do you reject?
- How courageous are you?
- How frequently do you go out of your comfort zone? How do you behave then? What is the impact of such experiences on you?
- Do you take too many risks and endanger yourself in any way? Why is that?



# Assessment Tools

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## Need for authenticity

Definition: Authenticity is the ability to be true, genuine and original. Authenticity is about knowing who you are and manifesting your true self around others as well.

Questions to reflect on:

- How authentic are you on a daily basis?
- Do you notice any differences in your authenticity when you are alone versus when you are around other people? In what cases and how does your behavior change? Why is that?
- How deep is your self-awareness?
- Would you say that you live based on your values?
- In what cases do you fail to live/act based on your values? Why is that?
- Can you express yourself freely? (Not only through verbal communication but also non-verbal ways, such as how they dress, walk, talk, and behave.)
- How frequently do you choose to be vulnerable in order to stay true to yourself?
- How authentic are the ways/means through which you pursue their dreams?
- How independent are your choices? (Both small choices, like what you consume, and major life decisions.) By what or whom are these choices influenced?

## Need for learning

Definition: Learning means acquiring knowledge or skills through different means and having a personal will to apply them for personal growth.

Questions to reflect on:

- How seriously do you take your own learning?
- What is your attitude towards learning? Do you have any limiting beliefs in that area?
- In what ways do you learn better and faster? Under what circumstances?
- In what situations do you struggle to learn?
- How frequently do you apply your previous knowledge and skills?
- Playing is one of the best ways to learn. How frequently do you allow yourself to be playful?
- Do you have an interest in exploring anything in particular? (A theory, a concept, a place, etc.)
- If you do not have any interest, why is that?
- How frequently do you challenge yourself to acquire new knowledge or skills for the future? If not so frequently, why?

# Assessment Tools

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## **Need for mastery**

Definition: Mastery means comprehensive knowledge or skill in a particular subject or activity. Mastery is about identifying one's own element that when applied makes him/her thrive.

Questions to reflect on:

- How aware are you of your own competences?
- Do you recognize what you are good at? If not, why?
- Do you recognize what you are passionate about? If not, why not?
- What is your element?
- What brings you into a state of flow?
- What is your mastery?
- How are you nurturing your own mastery?
- How willing are you to cultivate your own growth?
- How willing are you to make career choices that align with your calling?

## **Need for purpose**

Definition: Purpose means to have meaning in life, to feel that what we do is valuable and worthwhile.

Questions to reflect on:

- To what extent is your life infused with purpose?
- What are the elements in your life that give you meaning?
- How meaningful or meaningless is your life? How does this influence your attitude towards life, your behavior, and your body?
- What motivates you deeply? How frequently does this motivation occur? If not frequently, why?
- How much do you want to use your mastery to create something for others?
- How willing are you to devote yourself to something bigger than yourself? (Other people, God, nature, the cosmos, etc.) If you are not willing to do so, why is that?
- What is your connection with spirituality?
- How easily can you see the big picture of things?

# Assessment Tools

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## Nature Relatedness Scale

(NRS; Nisbet, Zelenski, and Murphy 2009)

<https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00813/full>

### Instruments

The Nature Relatedness Scale (NRS; Nisbet, Zelenski, and Murphy Citation2009) assesses the individual's connection with nature, regarding the cognitive, affective, and experiential aspects. It encompasses three dimensions: NR-Self which represents the internalized identification with nature; NR-Perspective, which assesses the external nature-related worldview; and NR-Experience, which refers to the physical familiarity established with the natural world. It is a 21-item Likert-type scale, presenting a 5-point scale (disagree strongly, disagree a little, neither agree or disagree, agree a little, agree strongly). Higher scores indicate a stronger connectedness with nature.

After the development and validation of the NRS, Nisbet and Zelenski (Citation2013) developed the NR-6: a new brief measure of nature relatedness. The short-form version of the nature relatedness scale (NR-6) comprised 6 items from the 'self' and 'experience' dimensions (My ideal vacation spot would be a remote, wilderness area; I always think about how my actions affect the environment; My connection to nature and the environment is a part of my spirituality; I take notice of wildlife wherever I am; My relationship to nature is an important part of who I am; and I feel very connected to all living things and the earth). The authors tested the new scale's predictive ability across multiple samples and with longitudinal data in students, community members, and businesspeople. The NR-6 scale demonstrated good internal consistency, temporal stability, and predicted happiness, environmental concern, and nature contact.

# Assessment Tools

## NATURE RELATEDNESS SCALE

**Instructions:** For each of the following, please rate the extent to which you agree with each statement, using the scale from 1 to 5 as shown below. Please respond as you really feel, rather than how you think “most people” feel.

| 1<br>Disagree strongly | 2<br>Disagree a little | 3<br>Neither Agree or disagree | 4<br>Agree a little | 5<br>Agree strongly |
|------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
|------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|

|    |                                                                           |  |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| 1  | I enjoy being outdoors, even in unpleasant weather.                       |  |
| 2  | Some species are just meant to die out or become extinct.                 |  |
| 3  | Humans have the right to use natural resources any way we want.           |  |
| 4  | My ideal vacation spot would be a remote, wilderness area.                |  |
| 5  | I always think about how my actions affect the environment.               |  |
| 6  | I enjoy digging in the earth and getting dirt on my hands.                |  |
| 7  | My connection to nature and the environment is a part of my spirituality. |  |
| 8  | I am very aware of environmental issues.                                  |  |
| 9  | I take notice of wildlife wherever I am.                                  |  |
| 10 | I don't often go out in nature.                                           |  |
| 11 | Nothing I do will change problems in other places on the planet.          |  |

# Assessment Tools

|    |                                                                                               |  |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| 12 | I am not separate from nature, but a part of nature.                                          |  |
| 13 | The thought of being deep in the woods, away from civilization, is frightening.               |  |
| 14 | Humans have the right to use natural resources any way we want.                               |  |
| 15 | Animals, birds and plants should have fewer rights than humans.                               |  |
| 16 | Even in the middle of the city, I notice nature around me.                                    |  |
| 17 | My relationship to nature is an important part of who I am.                                   |  |
| 18 | Conservation is unnecessary because nature is strong enough to recover from any human impact. |  |
| 19 | The state of non-human species is an indicator of the future for humans.                      |  |
| 20 | I think a lot about the suffering of animals.                                                 |  |
| 21 | I feel very connected to all living things and the earth.                                     |  |

## Scoring Information

Reverse scored items: 2, 3, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 18; NR-self items: 5, 7, 8, 12, 14, 16, 17, 21; NR-perspective items: 2, 3, 11, 15, 18, 19, 20; NR-experience items: 1, 4, 6, 9, 10, 13

**Overall NR score is calculated by averaging all 21 items** (after reverse scoring appropriate items). Scores on the 3 NR dimensions are also calculated by averaging appropriate items after reverse scoring.

**A short-form version of the NR scale (NR-6) consists of items: 4, 5, 7, 9, 17, 21.** Items are averaged to create a score on the brief measure of NR. No items are reverse scored.

## Referencing information:

Nisbet, E. K. L., Zelenski, J. M., & Murphy, S. A. (2009). The Nature Relatedness Scale: Linking individuals' connection with nature to environmental concern and behaviour. *Environment and Behavior*, 41, 715 - 740.

# Assessment Tools

## NATURE RELATEDNESS SCALE – SHORT FORM (NR-6)

**Instructions:** For each of the following, please rate the extent to which you agree with each statement, using the scale from 1 to 5 as shown below. Please respond as you really feel, rather than how you think 'most people' feel.

|   |                                                                           |  |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| 1 | My ideal vacation spot would be a remote, wilderness area.                |  |
| 2 | I always think about how my actions affect the environment.               |  |
| 3 | My connection to nature and the environment is a part of my spirituality. |  |
| 4 | I take notice of wildlife wherever I am.                                  |  |
| 5 | My relationship to nature is an important part of who I am.               |  |
| 6 | I feel very connected to all living things and the earth.                 |  |

NR-6 score is calculated by averaging all 6 items (total score divided by 6) =

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# APPENDICES

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# Reflective questions for Journaling

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*In this section you will find questions that can help in the process for self-discovery and personal/professional transformation. They can be supportive in creating personal developmental plans, self-assessment and self-exploration.*

*The questions can be used by facilitators (trainers, Youth workers, counsellors, guides) in activities provided for young people, but can also be used personally for one's own work. We recommend selecting 3-5 relevant questions at a time.*

*You can find many more questions dedicated to the four facets and the eight developmental needs in the chapter "assessment tools - reflective questions". They can equally be used/adapted for journaling.*

*Please keep the following in mind:*

- Be gentle to yourself when answering the question! Many people struggle for years to get to this answer or even worse neglect its importance for humanity. Working with the purpose requires a special soul awakening and it is definitely a long and challenging process! If you are thinking about it, you are on the right track!*
- There is not always a definitive one-line sentence to answer this question. You may feel the direction of your purpose (let's say working with people) or the key elements it includes (for example nature and finance). If you get to this, it is fantastic!*
- The purpose in life can change throughout time! Every day you wake up as a different person! Even your cells die and regenerate! Time makes you stronger and wiser and it would be inappropriate to believe that we will all have the same purpose throughout time! It is normal if we make shifts or get deeper into our commitments.*

# Reflective questions for Journaling

## Questions for deep conversations

source: "36 questions to fall in love" - developed in the 1990s by psychologists Arthur Aron, Ph.D., Elaine Aron, Ph.D., and other researchers to see if two strangers can develop an intimate connection just from asking each other a series of increasingly personal questions.

- Given the choice of anyone in the world, whom would you want as a dinner guest?
- Would you like to be famous? In what way?
- What would constitute a "perfect" day for you?
- When did you last sing to yourself? To someone else?
- Do you have a secret hunch about how you will die?
- For what in your life do you feel most grateful?
- If you could change anything about the way you were raised, what would it be?
- If you could wake up tomorrow having gained any one quality or ability, what would it be?
- If a crystal ball could tell you the truth about yourself, your life, the future, or anything else, what would you want to know?
- Is there something that you've dreamed of doing for a long time? Why haven't you done it?
- What is the greatest accomplishment of your life?
- What do you value most in a friendship?
- What is your most treasured memory?
- What is your most terrible memory?
- If you knew that in one year you would die suddenly, would you change anything about the way you are now living? Why?
- What does friendship mean to you?
- How close and warm is your family? Do you feel your childhood was happier than most other people's?
- How do you feel about your relationship with your mother?
- Complete this sentence: "I wish I had someone with whom I could share..."
- Share an embarrassing moment in your life.
- When did you last cry in front of another person? By yourself?
- What, if anything, is too serious to be joked about?
- If you were to die this evening with no opportunity to communicate with anyone, what would you most regret not having told someone? Why haven't you told them yet?
- Your house, containing everything you own, catches fire. After saving your loved ones and pets, you have time to safely make a final dash to save any one item. What would it be? Why?
- Of all the people in your family, whose death would you find most disturbing? Why?
- Share a personal problem and ask your partner's advice on how they might handle it. Then, ask your partner to reflect on how you seem to be feeling about the problem you have chosen.

You can find more reflective questions in "**Self-discovery pocket book**", a tool developed in the frame of the Erasmus + funded project 2016-2-BG01-KA205-023835. You can find the tool for FREE download through this [LINK](#).

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