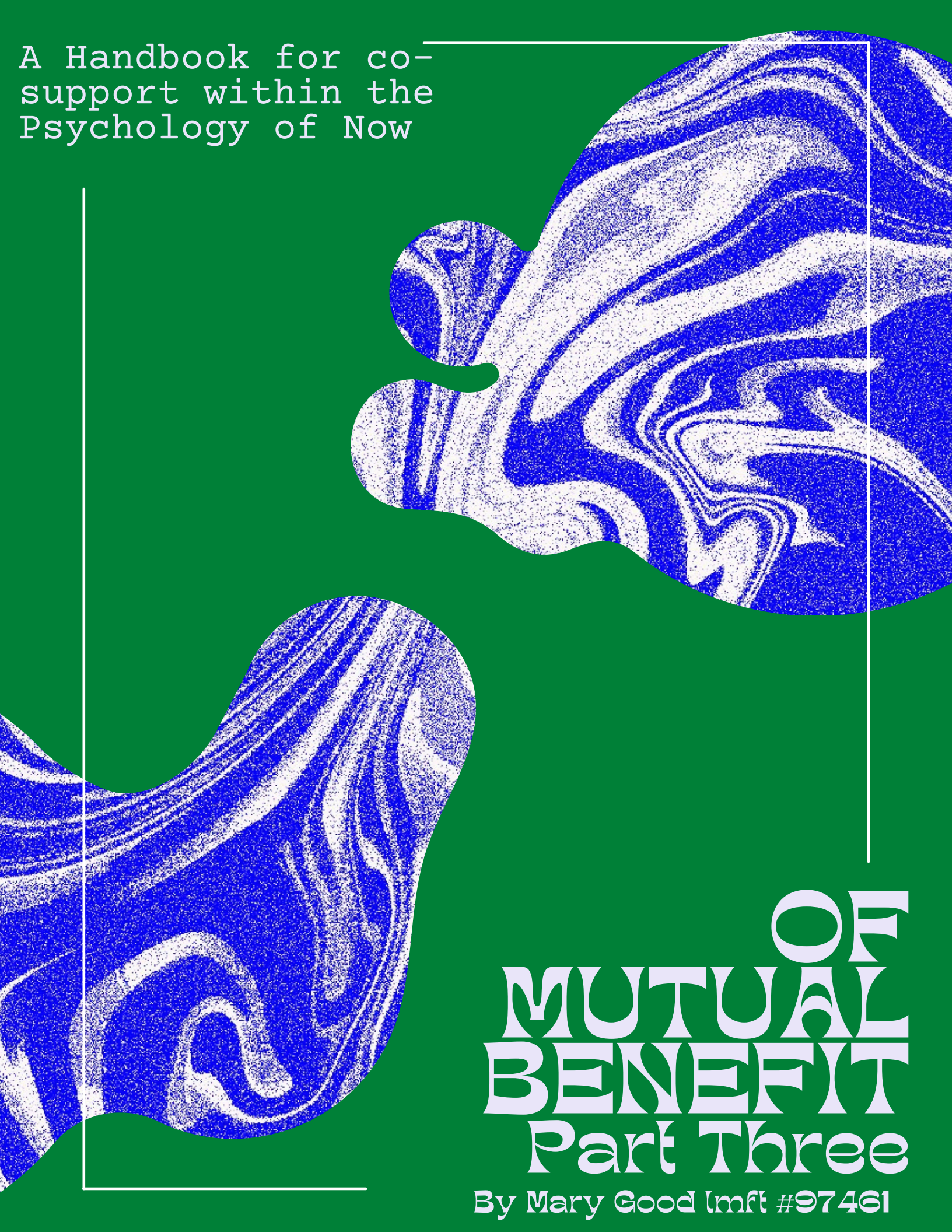


A Handbook for co-  
support within the  
Psychology of Now



OF  
MUTUAL  
BENEFIT  
Part Three

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# **OF MUTUAL BENEFIT**

## Part Three

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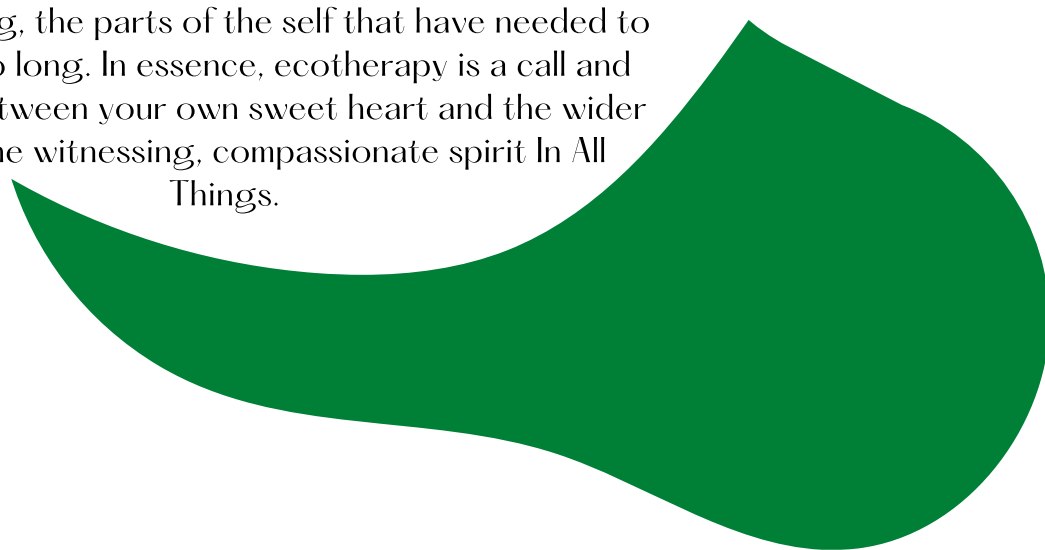


## About Part Three

Our psyches did not evolve in relationship with smart phones, 24/7 global news, desk jobs or the urban industrial lifestyle. Whether or not these things are useful is not up for debate. What is important to consider is what happens to our mental, physical and spiritual well being when we live lives disconnected from the one relationship that was central to our development – our relationship to the feeling of wind on our faces, the gaze of the moon upon us at night, the smell of wild grasses drying in the sun. Our relationship to nature not only as home, but also as entity and essence, an ensouled being in conversation with itself, our lives both dialogue and subject.

Ecotherapy at its core is very simple – the session is held outside, so that your struggle and pain, your joy and effort is placed back into the context in which it belongs. Just the very act of being out in the world lifts the lid off of the box we may have stuffed ourselves in. We slow down and let the world speak to us. Somatic Mindfulness brings you back into your senses and body.

This allows you to not only speak of stories and situations that trouble you, but to speak about them from the heart of the matter, to let your muscles and bones say what they remember. We unpack, we explore, we laugh and we sit in silence. We listen, to the birds, the leaves rustling, the parts of the self that have needed to speak for so long. In essence, ecotherapy is a call and response, between your own sweet heart and the wider heart of the witnessing, compassionate spirit In All Things.



# SOME CONSIDERATIONS

Ecotherapy, like anything in the intersection of mental/physical health and “nature” has a tendency to fall prey to the Wellness Industrial Complex. Nature becomes something else to consume, this time for well being. One way to avoid this pitfall, is to practice reciprocity and relationship. It begins with asking questions, utilizing the framework of animism:

Who is this place / tree / animal / body of water?

What do they need?

Who do they love?

How can I be of service?

Another key consideration is that wherever you go in North America / Turtle Island, you are on Indigenous land. Knowing who's land you are on is an important first step when approaching eco therapy and there are many more to take. Reciprocity here means restoration of relationship to land. What are the efforts you could support of the Indigenous Nations local to you?

Another place to begin is your own body. We tend to think about making contact with Earth as something we have to go outside to do, yet our bodies ARE earth. Everything we eat is of this earth, and becomes us. We are encouraged to disconnect from our bodies in western culture, and since trauma and emotions are held in the body as well, our physical form can feel like a repository of our misery, or a haunted house. It's no wonder we disconnect.

For this week's section on comfort, we begin here by looking at how the body is being supported in general

Are you nutritionally nourished?

How much rest do you get?

Do you recognize hunger and/or other pain signals in the body?

If you are able, does your heart rate get raised multiple times a week?

If you are disabled, are you active in the ways you can be?


Do you consume caffeine and if so how much?

Do you consume alcohol and if so how much?

This is not coming from the cult of “wellness” – for many people, taking an afternoon nap, always having the money for food, receiving adequate health care, or being able to be active are luxuries rather than options. Asking someone who is already feeling crushed by their situation or responsibilities to suddenly do “self care” is nearly a form of gaslighting and insensitive to the realities of poverty, ableism, racial oppression and capitalism in general.

The herbal recommendations listed next have not been evaluated by the FDA. All suggestions are for plants that are considered to be safe when taken over long periods of time, unless otherwise noted. If you decide to try herbal medicine, you are doing so under your own discretion. You are also encouraged to research their profiles on your own. As the plants work with the physical body, this also influences emotional states. Understanding this full spectrum requires study too vast to abbreviate here. Consider the following suggestions as an introduction to lifelong friendship.

# LET'S BRING YOU SOME COMFORT



The herbs listed below are meant to be taken as simples (one herb at a time), although once you are familiar with them, they can be combined in complementary ways. For the purposes OF MUTUAL BENEFIT, they are companions for every day, over a long period of time, in tincture form, infusion or decoction (with a couple of exceptions). My recommendation is to choose a friend that speaks to your overall sense of experience. Dosage for tincture is 15–30 drops (1–2 dropper fulls) 1–3x day, and 1–2 T of dry herb per 8–12oz water for infusion (unless otherwise noted). It is very effective to work with spirit doses of tincture: 1–2 drops at a time. Flower essences are energetic medicine and need only be taken a few drops at a time. To increase dosage of a flower essence, increase your frequency of taking it, not the amount.

There are many ways to bring herbs into the body, and making it a time of quiet reflection will enable you to "hear" the particular conversation your body has with the medicine you have chosen. It can also help you remember that we are meant to be in relationship with more-than-human others. Reestablishing this kinship goes far to remediating many ills in the world.

## For building physical and emotional resilience, especially when feeling depleted.

**Milky Oats** (tincture): Restores the nervous system, especially when taken long term – for that experience of feeling fried or frazzled.

**Reishi** (tincture, infusion, decoction): For returning to a sense of wholeness, to become a shining one like the mushroom themselves. Use caution in pregnancy.

**Ashwagandha** (1–2 t powdered root in tea or warm milk): A popular "adaptogen", Ashwagandha has a long history of use in Ayurveda for harmonizing the endocrine system, when fatigue has become baseline. Contraindicated in pregnancy and hyperthyroidism.

## When panic sets in

**Kava Kava** (tincture, low dosage, short term use only): Kava feels like a warm hand on the heart, and is especially good for anxiety held in this part of the body. Indicated for when anxiety feels like an emergency. (Use caution if taking anti-depressants or benzos. Can stress the liver in high amounts. May interfere with blood clotting. Contraindicated in Parkinsons. Avoid in pregnancy and breastfeeding.)

**Milky Oats**: ABTMO (Always Be Taking Milky Oats)

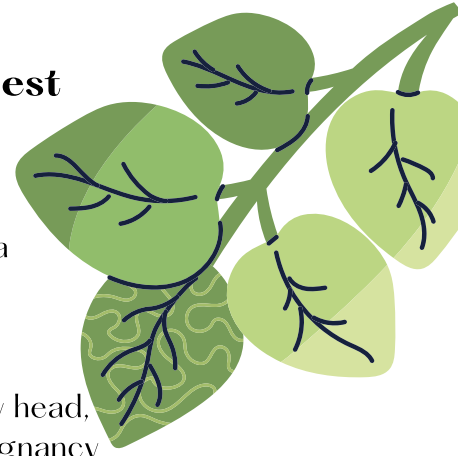
**Hawthorn berry** (tincture, infusion): For anxiety/panic accompanied by heart palpitations, racing heart. Use caution if taking medication for high blood pressure or if you have low blood pressure. Avoid in pregnancy.

**Mimulus (Creek Monkey Flower)flower essence** When the entire world feels shaken and unreliable:



## When anxiety settles in the body like an unwelcome guest

**Wood Betony** (tincture, infusion): Unwinds physical tension in the musculoskeletal system, exacerbated by an experience of overthinking and a clenched belly. Not a sedative, feels like the hand of a good friend on the shoulder, reminding you that you're going to be ok..



**Skullcap** (tincture, infusion): Calm anxious thinking, helps to rest your weary head, promotes relaxation and sleep without causing drowsiness. Use caution in pregnancy

**Passionflower** (tincture, infusion): Insomnia, poor sleep and ruminating at 2am can clobber your daily functioning. Taking passionflower 1/2 hr before bedtime can help you get to sleep, and stay asleep. Taking it again if you do happen to wake up can help you fall back into slumber. Avoid in pregnancy.

**Catnip** (tincture, infusion): For anxiety felt in the gut, nervous stomach, knots, butterflies. Helps with digestion that has been impacted by anxiety, especially if accompanied by belching. Use caution in pregnancy.

## When all hope has gone

**Tulsi** (tincture, infusion): Holy Basil not only promotes overall wellbeing, it also lightens the spirit, and improves outlook and broadens perspective. Avoid in pregnancy.

**Mimosa Flower** (tincture): Known as the tree of happiness, Mimosa supports recovery from grief, especially when anxiety or depression is felt in the chest (heavy heart). Avoid in pregnancy.

**Lemon Balm** (tincture, infusion): a mild anti-depressant, brings the summer sunshine into the body center.

**Mustard Flower Essence:** For gloom and doom. Lifts the cloud cover.

**California Wild Rose flower essence:** For shifting from apathy and hopelessness to a sense of purpose and engagement

## When you feel too broken hearted or traumatized to embrace life and living

**Rose** (tincture, infusion): Rose is the quintessential heart medicine. With a loving and enfolding embrace, rose opens the heart while also bringing a sense of soothing safety

**Tulsi** (see above)

**Mimosa** (see above)

**Hawthorn** (see above)

**Star of Bethlehem Flower Essence:** For acute or complex trauma and/or shock. A guiding star.



# Journal prompts for Part Three

This week, you have two suggested options

## **Sit spot**

Find a spot outside (or near a window if house-bound).

Anywhere you feel drawn to be will do, preferably where you won't be disturbed.

Plan to stay for at least 10 minutes.

Begin by connecting to your breath, doing breathwork from week one if you like.

Take a moment to bring your senses forward into the present moment. Check in with each one...what do you hear, taste, smell, touch etc.

Invite your body and mind to relax.

Quietly observe the activity of life around you.

Record your observations in your journal.

## **Coming to Our Senses Meditation**

Setting aside 15 minutes, plus time to journal...

Find a comfortable place and position where you won't be disturbed.

With eyes closed or with a soft gaze looking down, listen to the following guided meditation.

## Coming to Our Senses

Afterwards, take a moment to write down what you noticed from your experience.

# Inner and Outer Tracking

This week, you will be taking your experience outside.

You will want to choose an area or hiking trail that you are familiar with, and is accessible for your level of ability. This practice may also be done at a window (preferably open).

This practice utilizes somatic mindfulness and nature awareness, and focuses on the interplay between the two. Just like an animal tracker pays attention to signs on the trail, so too can we track our inner experience and notice how it interacts with the external world.

Let your noticing be simple, curious and friendly. There is nothing here to fix or figure out. Just notice.

When you are doing Inner Tracking: You are noticing emotional energy and/or physical sensations in the body. Play with understanding that thoughts too are simply the physical sensation of one of our major organs – the brain.

When you are doing Outer Tracking: Bring your curiosity to the world around you. What catches your attention? What are your senses picking up? What do you observe?

When you are letting your awareness move back and forth from Inner to Outer and vice versa: As you let your experience "just be" notice if there is any shift or change. For instance, if you noticed tension in the belly, what happens as you take it for a walk, when you catch that fragrance on the breeze, when you see something that delights you? Along similar lines, when you see something that delights you, what do you notice in your body?

This practice can feel awkward at first. Don't worry about "doing it right". Just notice. Having a lot of thoughts or self judgement? Notice. Experience not going the way you thought it would? Notice.

Trust that whatever your experience, it is as it should be.



# COUNCIL STYLE SHARING

1. Speak from the heart, with courage
2. Listen with the heart, with courage
3. Be spontaneous
4. Be lean of expression
5. Respect Confidentiality

## **Speak from the heart, with courage**

Your truth is safe here. There is no one you need to impress with how articulate you are, or how much you have it together. Speak to your own experience with as much authenticity as you can. Keep it simple.

## **Listen with the heart, with courage**

Listen from a place of non-judgement and openness. It's normal to have our own internal commentary come up when listening to another, especially if we strongly agree, or disagree. If this happens, just notice this and come back to heart-centered listening.

## **Be spontaneous**

Although the journal prompts may have "primed the pump", try to speak without rehearsing beforehand, either before meeting or while listening to the other person. Trust that what needs to be said will find its way.

## **Be lean of expression**

The use of the timer is here to help you speak to the heart of the matter without getting lost in the details. Take your time when speaking and also be aware of your listener and their need to have their full time to share too.

## **Respect confidentiality**

To be entrusted with another's vulnerability is an honor and a gift. Keep it like sweet honey in your heart. If you feel disturbed by something another has shared, you may want to bring that to another confidential source, like a therapist.

## Prompts for Week Three

If you are able, meet your partner at an agreed upon outdoor location. (If you are unable, get creative. Maybe you can FaceTime? Use dictation on your phone or journal to record your observations and council together later?

Decide before hand if you'd like to start with your mindfulness focused inwardly or outwardly.

Take a moment to come to a sense of quiet reflection.

Begin walking at a slow pace. Side by side is nice. Go much slower than you normally do. Slowing down is a radical act.

Walk for five minutes without talking, keeping your awareness on your inner or outer experience.

Stop and council. 2 minutes each. What did you notice?

Continue walking at your slow pace, switching mindfulness (inner if you started with outer, vice versa)

Walk for 5 minutes. Stop and council. 2 minutes each. What did you notice?

Continue walking. This time, notice the interplay between inner and outer.

Walk for 5 minutes. Stop and council. 2 minutes each. What did you notice?

Repeat as desired.



## In Closing

How you'd like to close your time together is up to you, but closing with intention is recommended. This contains the work you have done together and puts a period at the end of the sentence before you move back out into the world.

Taking a moment of silence to reflect, or practice the breathwork from this week, is enough.  
So is simply saying "Thank you".

Many folx have their own personal spiritual relationship with the anima mundi of the land they live on, more-than-human-others, ancestors, spirit guides etc. Inviting them into this work with you can be integrative.

As a long time practicing Buddhist, I really love the idea of dedicating the merit. This version by One Earth Sangha has an emphasis ~~on earth~~ justice. And here is the Dali Lama's favorite version.

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If you are Christian, or would like some prayer examples to use as templates for your own spirituality, these Prayers for Difficult Times by Grace Cathedral are lovely.

