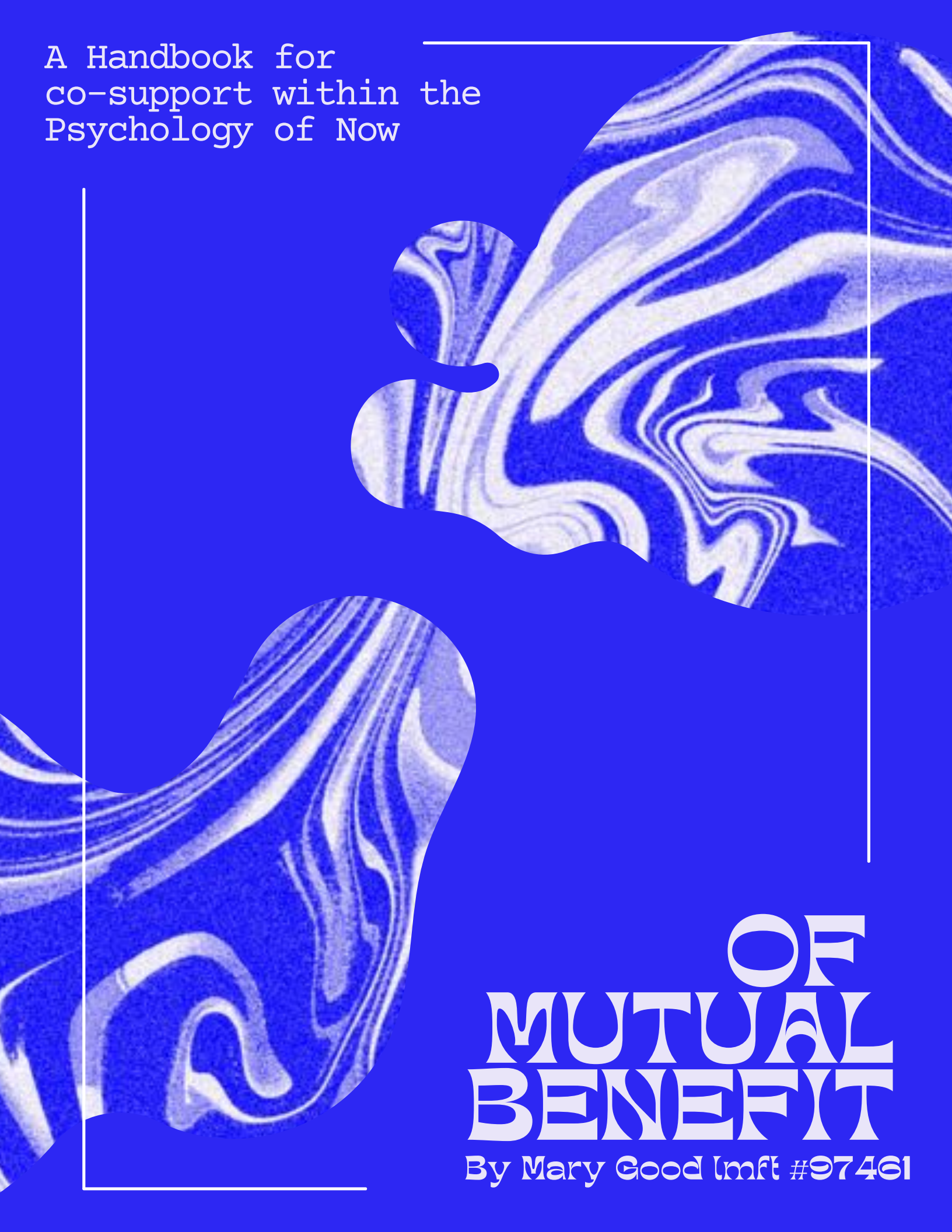


A Handbook for
co-support within the
Psychology of Now



OF
MUTUAL
BENEFIT

By Mary Good Imft #97461

OF MUTUAL BENEFIT

Part One

About this project

Some considerations

Let's bring you some comfort

This week's journal prompts

A Framework for Co-counseling

Council-style sharing

This week's prompts

In closing

This week's book recommendations

Sources



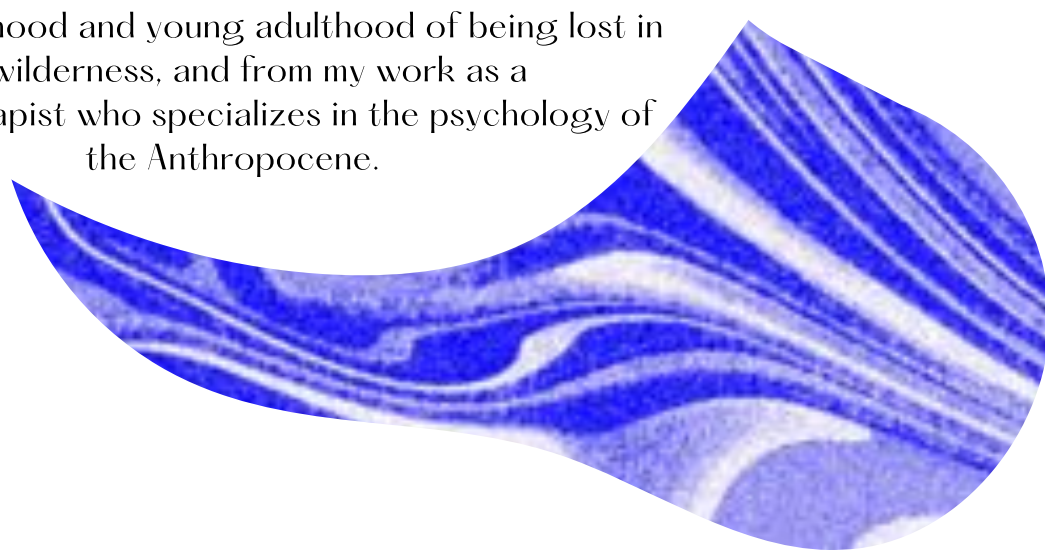
About this Project

This four part series was created for you and a partner(s) to begin the renewing process of turning towards your love for the world. Within your love is also your grief, anxiety, rage, fear and other emotional landscapes to which we often were not given the map.

Many of us have known these places as prisons from which we have felt lucky to have escaped. Like any good folktale, it is by journeying to the heart of the woods that we are able to regain our crown – the resilience that allows us to befriend our experience, recover our joy and take action without burning out,

These are pretty words, but they are not empty. If you find yourself skeptical, if hope seems preposterous, if you want me to know that not only is it hard, but it feels damn near impossible – I want you to know that this is so understandable, so very sane. I also want you to know that your pain for the world is **VALID** – there's no pathologizing here. Yet, as a professional who works with many people who feel similarly, I also know that there is an entrenched narrative of doom and gloom that has caught us in its spell – and there is a way to break the enchantment.

This project was born out of my own love for the world, from a childhood and young adulthood of being lost in the wilderness, and from my work as a psychotherapist who specializes in the psychology of the Anthropocene.



SOME CONSIDERATIONS

This work is therapeutic by nature, but it is not therapy. There is a certain amount of courage you are invited to bring to be vulnerable, feel your feelings and speak your truth. At the same time, it is not necessary, nor necessarily helpful, to push yourself into traumatic memories or share what feels like it would rather be protected. Everything is an invitation, nothing is a command.

OF MUTUAL BENEFIT may be the beginning of a journey for you, or a companion met while well on your way. It is not a "one and done" program, nor is it meant to take the place of therapy, trauma work or other types of containers where you can do a longer term investment of this good work.

This program sticks a toe into the work of Co-counseling. However co-counseling is also a craft that requires months of training. If you are interested in learning more, [here's a good place to start.](#)

OF MUTUAL BENEFIT is based on the concept of mutual aid – a natural proclivity in humanity, and in more-than-human-others, to tend and befriend as a way to survive and thrive. This program is free to all in perpetuity. My wish is for it to "grow legs", and to be shared far and wide. As it is shared, it must also not be reproduced for financial gain either in part or in whole, written or in practice. Please credit me as source.

Mutual Aid in practice has [deep history in BIPOC communities](#) and through anarchist philosophy via the [collection of essays Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution](#) by Russian naturalist Peter Kropotkin.

Finally, while I am not a fan of oversimplification, there are three phrases I offer here as guidance during your participation in OF MUTUAL BENEFIT:

Slowing down is a radical act.

Your body knows the truth.

Honor your experience.

LET'S BRING YOU SOME COMFORT

This week's active coping skills introduce the practice of breathwork.

The following practices all use the concept of belly breathing – the way we naturally breathe when deeply relaxed. Imagine a sleepy little kid, or your dog or cat when they are zonked, the belly rising and falling like a balloon. Without forcing it, breathe into the belly, inviting the belly to be soft. If it feels like the breath won't "move down" or the chest is tight (as is common with anxiety), you can try raising your arms above your head, like you are riding a rollercoaster. This will help the breath to drop.

A simple breathwork practice for anxiety – to move from a Sympathetic nervous system state (Fight or Flight) to Parasympathetic (Rest and Digest)

Sitting or lying down comfortably, with a soft gaze or closed eyes...

Breathe into the belly, for a count of 5, at your own pace.

Allow for a gentle pause at the top of the breath.

Breathe out for a count of 7, at your own pace.

Allow for a gentle pause

Continue for 1 – 10 minutes or until you feel a shift

THE FOGHORN

A breathwork practice to ease despair

Taking in a comfortable deep breath breathe out while making the sound "voo".

You should feel the "voo" creating a vibration all throughout the torso. The sound is like a gentle massage for your internal organs, including the belly and heart.

Continue for 1-10 minutes or until you feel a shift

Although intended to help you feel calm and grounded, breathwork can also create room for emotions to arise and release. Emotions are your birthright, and if it feels ok to let the tears roll, let them. If you begin to feel flooded or overwhelmed by your experience, stop. If you are interested in further exploration, you can always wait until you can work with someone for guidance and support.

Journal prompts for Part One

This week's journaling is all about Resourcing and will be different than the weeks to follow, because you will be giving part of it to your partner! For this reason, you may want to do part of your journaling in your own notebook, and do "the list" (see below) on a separate piece of paper.

A note about journaling: if writing is not your thing, distressing in any way or you are unable to write for any reason, feel free to explore these prompts in a way that works for you – art, movement, a voice recording, song, photography etc. You do you.

- When do you feel most "like yourself"? What does that feel like in your body?
- Who are the people in your life that you feel safe and secure with?
- Where are the places that remind you of how beautiful life can be?
- When you feel like engaging with your experience, what are the coping skills that support you the most (or that you've been wanting to try?) Examples: Going for a walk, resting, taking a bath, snuggling an animal companion, gentle yoga or stretching, listening to music, reaching out to a friend, cleaning, cooking etc...
- Are there any coping strategies you would like to shift away from? Examples – excessive media or internet, over use of a substance, isolating from others, work/life imbalance, etc...
- After you have become clear on your resources, write them down in a list form. At the end of sharing with your partner, give them your list. You are more resourced than you may realize AND when we are under duress it's these very resources that we tend to forget. Now your partner knows how you are best supported and can remind you when you need it.

A Framework for Co-counseling

Your work together is about deep listening, witnessing, tending and befriending. Renewal comes from this contact and is not dependent on insight or "figuring things out". As the one who is listening, you do not need to pressure yourself to somehow have answers. Your presence alone is healing.

To create a supportive container, utilizing Council-Style sharing is highly recommended (see next page)

Decide how long you'd like to meet. The bare bones of sharing itself can be completed in 30 minutes, but you may want longer if you'd like to get fancy. You could partake in a meal or tea, practice ritual or prayer. Whatever you do, remember to allow for the grace of simplicity.

Allow two minutes per person, per prompt. Set a timer before you begin (something gentle on your smartphone works). Each person can answer the prompts all at once or you can alternate. It's up to you!

After someone shares, and is complete, you only need to say thank you. Trust this is enough!

If you'd like to offer a response:

1. First, ask if they are open to feedback
2. Let your feedback be how YOU experienced what the other person shared, and what came up for you in response. Avoid advice giving or trying to fix or change. An example of speaking from your own experience: "When you shared about XYZ, I felt so much tenderness and I admired your courage in sharing." Practice empathy.
3. It's ok to say "me too" and let someone else know you "get" their experience. However, try to avoid using feedback time to process your own material.
4. Be lean of expression and aware of the balance between offering your words as support and overwhelming another. Respect boundaries and bandwidth.

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 sharing*

Take two minutes per prompt, per person

1. To be alive now in this time of global crisis, what is hard for me is...
2. What I appreciate about living in this time of global crisis is...
3. As I look at my life, it seems that I am taking part in the remaking of the world—and these are some of the ways...

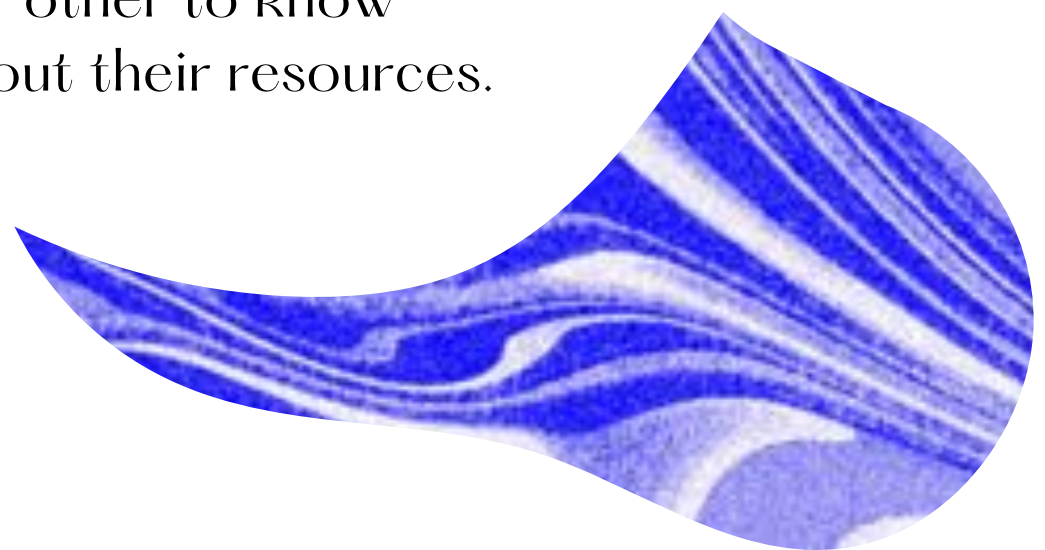
Prompts based on [The Work That Reconnects](#) and [Coming Back to Life](#)
by Joanna Macy and Molly Brown



You are invited to take a moment
here to either simply give
your partner your list of resources
from the journal
prompts

or

Allow for 3–4 minutes per person to
share
about their experience of writing
their list
or anything they would like the
other to know
about their resources.





In Closing

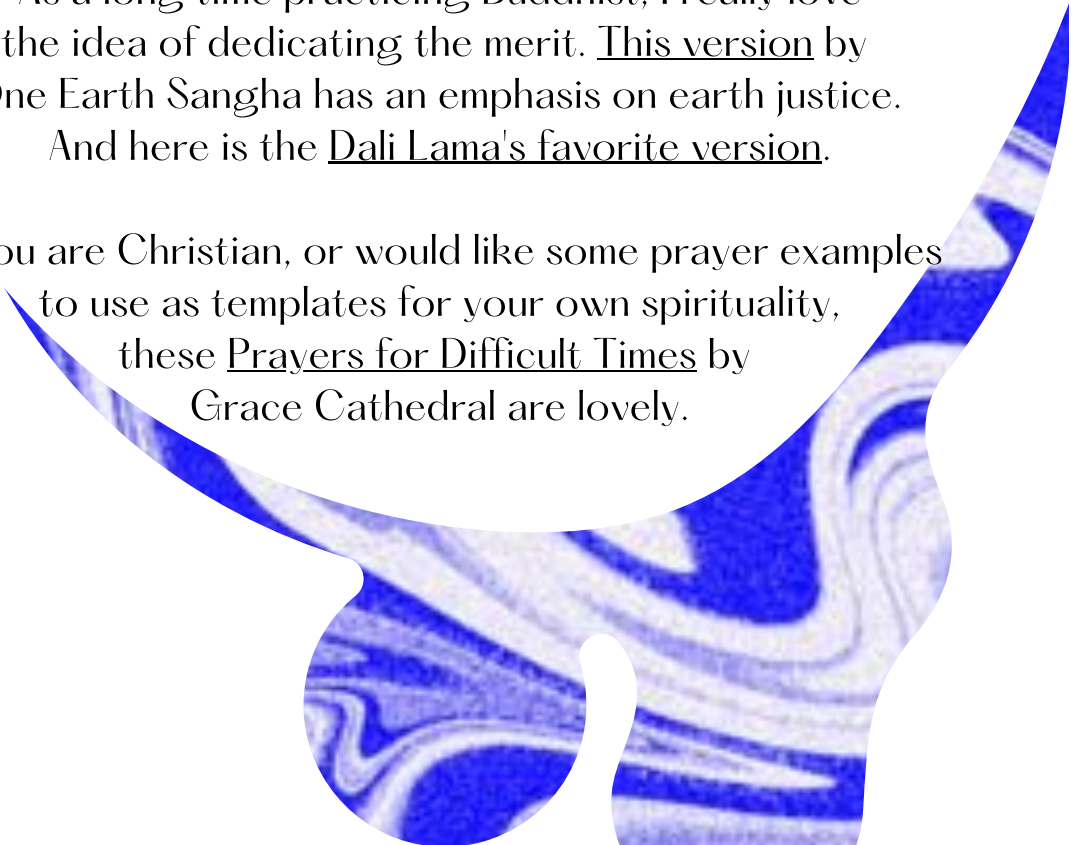
How you'd like to close your time together is up to you, but closing with intention is recommended. This contains the work you have done together and puts a period at the end of the sentence before you move back out into the world.

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

Many folk 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](#).

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.



This week's book recommendations

The writings of Yung Pueblo are exquisite in their expression of learning to befriend ourselves and our emotional experience. His words simultaneously bring solace and inspiration. Both publications below are equally excellent

Inward

Clarity and Connection

SOURCES

Macy, Joanna and Molly Brown. *Coming Back to Life*. Gabriola Island, BC, Canada: New Society Publishers. 2014

For more information on
[The Work That Reconnects](#)

Council style sharing is a widely used technique in therapy groups. It is in part inspired by the work of Jack Zimmerman, Virginia Coyle and the Ojai Foundation. You can learn more at waysofcouncil.net

For mor information on Co-counseling:
[Co-counseling International](#)

If you would like to read
Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution by
Peter Kropotkin
you can do so for free [HERE](#)

If you'd like to connect on Instagram with others doing the program,
use the hashtag #ofmutualbenefit
and
you may also tag me @the_splendor_and_travail