

REFLECT, RECONNECT & REALIGN

Introduction

The end of a calendar year is the perfect opportunity to **reflect** on where you've been, **reconnect** with where you are, and **realign** with where/how you want to **BE** moving forward. What follows is a curated series of exercises I've compiled after years of doing this practice myself. I find this to be especially enlightening and invite you to create sacred time to nourish yourself in this way.

Over the coming year continue supporting yourself by taking a pause mid-year (or seasonally) to do a simple review and update of what you discover to help you stay on course and current.

While year's end is an opportune time for this reflective practice, it can really be done *any time* of year. If you are finding yourself somewhere in between, **jump in!** The process will be useful and meaningful no matter what the date on the calendar.

TIP: I recommend you using the following pages as a template. Consider designating a fresh journal specifically to this annual practice – recording your exploration, insights, and updates on those pages. You will over time create a beautiful and enlightening history of your growth and evolution.

Suggestions for approaching your Reflect, Reconnect & Realign process:

1. Set aside a good chunk of uninterrupted quiet time. Ideally 2-3 hours. Alternatively, separate 1 hour (minimum) blocks of time over days. Work through this process at your own pace, but be sure to allow enough time to really ground into a flow. Better to have too much time set aside than not enough.
2. Share your plan and needs with the important people in your life so they can support your efforts.
3. Gather a fresh journal (I recommend designating a journal specifically for this work), my [Mosaic of Life](#) tool, your planner/calendar from the past year, your planner/calendar for the coming year, favorite pens, favorite recorded meditations, blankets, pillows, something soothing to drink, and snacks.
4. If you did some reflection journaling, list making, goal/intention setting, or vision board creating over the past year pull those items together for referencing.
5. Put your electronics on Airplane mode. *For real.* "Silencing" them still leaves room for distraction.
6. Settle in with an intention for self-reflection, openness, curiosity, and playfulness. While this work is deep and introspective, **it should also be fun and uplifting.**
7. Before beginning each section practice a short meditation or center with some intentional quiet breaths. Offer a prayer for releasing what doesn't serve you, learning without having to suffer, receiving with openness, and inviting the voice of your soul.

PART 1 - REFLECT

While I agree that it's important to live in the present and not get stuck in the past, it is also important to periodically take stock of where you've been. Your own personal history is an important tool for helping you process and integrate life lessons, refresh your memory of insights gained along the way, and assist in molding your future.

*"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."
~ George Santayana*

Start by taking inventory of the past year from memory. Create a similar chart in your journal. For each month jot down Gains & Losses, Accomplishments & Fails, Highlights & Lowlights, Insights & Feelings. Go back again and add anything pertinent you may have missed from your planner/calendar. Noticing what you forgot to add as you go is as informative as what you remembered.

Year: ____

| | |
|-----------|----------|
| January | February |
| March | April |
| May | June |
| July | August |
| September | October |
| November | December |

Respond to these questions about the past year:

What was the single best thing that happened?

What was the single most challenging thing?

What was an unexpected highlight?

What was an unexpected lowlight?

What were your biggest sources of support?

What were your biggest obstacles?

Who were your most valuable relationships?

Which relationships felt sticky, depleting, or trouble some?

What was your biggest personal success or shift?

Where did you miss the mark on goals or expectations?

What did you learn from your challenges and missteps?

What were the biggest shifts in each of the Mosaic of Life categories?

What new habits or rituals did you implement with success? What changed to make them stick?

Where did you stretch your comfort zone? What was the outcome?

What was your best "Yes"?

What was your best "No"?

What was the best use of your time?

What was the biggest waste of your time?

What are you still holding on to that isn't serving you?

What lit you up and energized you?

What drained and depleted you?

What did you surrender or release?

What would you change from the past year if you could?

Where can you acknowledge joy and gratitude in your ability to navigate life challenges?

What three words best describe the past year?

Write a statement that sums up your lessons, insights, and experiences from the past year.

Now CELEBRATE!! Savor for a moment all of what has been...the good, the bad, and the ugly. Love and embrace every speck of it. It's all yours and it's all part of the amazing YOU that you are in this life.

Say aloud to yourself "Well done! I love you for being you and showing up the way you have!" **Feel it.**

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PART 2 - RECONNECT

So often we make choices in life that don't feel good because they are not in alignment with our truest Selves. From an early age we are conditioned to be motivated by external forces, ideas, messaging, expectations, and perceived obligations. These aspects of life feel heavy, stuck, and depleting. They create anxiety, restlessness, angst, and confusion. When we take time to uncover how we can support ourselves in being more internally motivated, life begins to feel more rich, vibrant, and fluid. **Values, Desired Feelings, and Soul Food** are internal motivators which become True North for discerning your "yeses" and "nos".

Determine Your Values

Values can be a little tricky. What you value often shows up in **your actions**. You may think (or want the world to think) you value one thing, but when you get real about how you're spending your time and energy, you can see that in fact you are valuing something else. For example: Someone may say "family" is a top value. If that person spends most of their time and energy on other things, thus not being present with their family, they may actually be valuing something else instead. It's not wrong to value the other thing more, it's just important to be clear with yourself (and others) about what is true for you.

On the flip side, your actions can also be driven by the conditioning of your unconscious mind. As humans we are prone to behave in ways that are not in alignment with our values because we think it's how/who we are supposed to be. Maybe you've never been given permission to explore your values or felt safe to live from that place. And additionally, self sabotage often shows up distracting us from our truth and leaving us feeling perplexed at why life feels so hard.

Don't judge what comes up for you during this exercise. It's important to **be honest** about your values so you can make aligned choices in life that feel more supportive and authentic. Being real with yourself and owning what's true for you also creates more informed consent and understanding with the people in your life. As you make your list below, notice where you might be feeling inclined to choose words based on external approval. This can give you more information about aspects of your life that aren't currently working for you.

Values can shift and change over time. Identify what they are at this moment, not what you'd like them to be. While we naturally value people, pets, and material objects, what are the **core concepts**? If you were recovering from the flu, what would still matter most to you? If everything else were stripped away, what would you still hope to experience or prioritize? At the end of your life, what will have been most important to you? These are your values.

Take a few centering deep breaths then make a list of what comes to mind first. Don't overthink it. Trust your immediate responses, then go back and spend a little time refining what comes up. Create a final list of 5-10, making the first 5 your most precious. Your final list should feel resonant, specific, and right for you.

How are your choices and actions in life aligning with your values?

Desired Feelings...HOW do you want to FEEL?

You've probably seen me mention my affection for Danielle LaPorte's "[Desire Map](#)" work. As a chronic overachiever and exhaustive "doer", her system helped me shift my perspective and approach to life. Uncovering how you want to FEEL and using that as your motivation for what you DO can help turn the tables on the hamster wheel of chasing tasks, giving away your power, and saying "yes" & "no" to things that are out of alignment. At the end of the day, **most of how the world functions is truly rooted in a desire to feel a certain way.** Below is a simplified approach to the process. I encourage you to check out her program if you want to go deeper.

The Steps:

1. **Ground and Center.** Practice a short meditation, prayer, or whatever process you enjoy.
2. **Consider** how you'd like to feel MOST of the time in life. List the first feeling words that come to mind. Short phrases are okay too at this stage.
 - a. Use the [Mosaic of Life](#) categories for inspiration.
 - b. Write until you feel complete, but I encourage you to stop around 20 words.
3. **Review** your list and **Refine** it to 3-5 words that feel most deeply resonant. **TIPS:**
 - a. Put an asterisk next to words that give you a visceral response in your body. Like a solid internal "YES!".
 - b. Circle the words that are similar in different color groups to notice themes.
 - c. Use a dictionary/thesaurus to help you find just the right words to express what feels right.
4. Keep your final words **positive**. For example, "**Courageous**" rather than "Fearless".
5. Keep your words **internally focused**; avoid forms of words that require external influences to achieve (e.g. "love" versus "loved" or "loving")
6. **Get to the root** of any phrases or generalized concept words (e.g. "successful"); **dig deeper** to tease out the desired feeling beneath it all.
7. **Get real** with yourself and stay out of judgement. If you feel the rise of "should" or wondering what others might think...**stop**. This is about **your life**. Your Desired Feelings are yours and they are sacred. They do not have to be shared with anyone.
8. **Land** on 3-5 words and write them boldly in your journal. **Congratulations!**
9. Try the new words on for a while. If after some time you find a different word feels like a better fit, then change it. It's okay to make adjustments. You can come back to this practice every year. Your words may stay the same for long periods of time or they may change.

It's important to mention that you are unearthing feelings you'd like to have MOST of the time. It's unrealistic to expect you'll feel this way all of the time, and that's not the purpose of the exercise.

How are your Desired Feelings already showing up in your life? Acknowledge & celebrate!

Soul Food

As we explore taking care of ourselves and enriching our lives we most often consider how we nourish our bodies and minds. **But what about our Spirits?** While our physical, mental, and spiritual bodies are interconnected, we often forget to feed our Soul. Have you experienced heaviness, angst, and confusion in life even while doing everything "right"? These are symptoms of neglecting your Soul. We get so focused on all of the "doing" for efficiency and productivity that we forget to nourish the part of us that truly stokes our fire. This exercise is the simplest of them all!

If you were the last person on the planet, without any obligation, what would you still do? For the sake of pure enjoyment? (Ignore the rational mind that immediately steps in to say, "Well you can't do XYZ without other people! Who will fly the plane?"). This is fantasy play. Pretend you can still do anything even if you were the last person on the planet. What would you still do? **Make a list of your top 5 things.** These are the things that feed your Soul.

PART 3 - REALIGN

Creating Invitations for the New Year

Lists of **goals, intentions, and action steps** are living documents. They are not meant to be carved in stone and filed in a drawer or hung on a wall never again to be revised. Their purpose is that of a soulful Flash-light, Trail Map, or Guide. The items on the list are ideally from the voice of your Inner Self meant to not only light your path as you move forward, but also to mark where you've been so you can better integrate and evaluate new awareness. They are alive and will shift and change as you grow and evolve.

Your success is not just in checking a completion box. Success can often be masked in the veil of perceived "failure". Missing the mark on a desired goal can often reveal that the underlying motivation was not truly in alignment with your values or desires. Failure in reaching goals also gives you the opportunity to explore outside the box of convention. Getting real with yourself to discover where you can creatively course correct, explore a new perspective and stretch your comfort zone. While this can feel very uncomfortable, success becomes the awareness you gain, deeper connection with yourself, and realignment of your goals & intentions in a way that better serves you.

As you move into creating a road map for the coming year it's important to note that you are **NOT making New Year "resolutions"** (which, BTW, are statistically not sustainable). Don't set yourself up to fail by creating a list of 10 new things you're going to start **DOING** based on a lot of external messaging or guilt from holiday overindulgence, only to stop doing them in 6 weeks. That approach leads to a load of shame, guilt, and self loathing. The work you're doing here goes deeper than committing to a new gym membership or numbers on the scale.

I see goals and intentions as invitations. The words are often used interchangeably but they have different energy. In simple terms, *Goals* are a destination with an endpoint, which is usually measurable. They can also be seen as **experiences**. *Intentions* focus more on how you desire to **"be & feel"** rather than what you "do". For best success and contentment in life, both should be aligned with your values and desired feelings. These are the standards by which you create small achievable action steps.

Turn Values, Desired Feelings, and Soul Food into Action

After all of your beautiful self-reflection and inquiry, **clearly list your Values, Desired Feelings, and Soul Food on one page in your journal for easy referencing.** I encourage you to rewrite these items and post them in a place you will see them daily. Also, it's important that you physically write at least one of the lists every day in your daily journal or planner. You can rotate through each category or come up with your own system. Writing the words on a daily basis with consideration for what they mean to you, helps them integrate into your consciousness. Over time you will begin making choices from a more soulful and authentic place out of habit rather than with conscious intent.

Use your Values, Desired Feelings, and Soul Food as guidelines for making choices and creating your life. (This is the golden nugget and biggest take-away!)

Practice lining up your plans and actions with your soul in whatever places and spaces in life you can. Life can be messy and we live in a dance with others, so do the best you can as often as you can. You may be surprised by places in life you can impact through more aligned choices, where you once thought you had little control.

How can your choices (big, middle, and little) align with what you value, how you want to feel, and nourish your soul? What invitations will you offer yourself in the coming year?

Keep these lists front & center in your planner or daily journal for easy referencing.

Big

List 5 big picture goals & intentions for the year ahead. Consider what you learned in PART 1 – REFLECT.

Write a letter to your future self at the end of the coming year. Acknowledge all you hope to achieve, experience, celebrate, understand, and resolve.

Middle

For each big picture goal & intention create a list of smaller steps which support that effort or vision. This might look like monthly and weekly actions in your planner.

Little

This is your day to day practice and life experience. From the moment you rise in the morning until your head hits the pillow what small actions will you take to create the life you've envisioned? Be sure you are creating, choosing, and acknowledging ways to feel your desired feelings, live in alignment with your values, and feed your soul. Maintain focus on your Big & Middle goals and intentions.

Will your smaller daily actions take you closer or further from what you desire?

Consider these questions as you create your invitations, goals, intentions, and action steps.

Remember to keep your Values, Desired Feelings, and Soul Food in mind as you create.

- What would you like to create more of?
- What would you like to be different?
- How will you know you've been successful?
- What will success look like? What will it feel like? What will be different?
- What do you most want to explore or experience?
- What personal truth are you ready to step into?
- What are you willing to release?
- Where will you need more support?
- What resources do you already have?
- What resources will you need to acquire?
- Who can you enlist to be on your behind the scenes team?
- What will you do to feel the way you want to feel? (In big, middle, and little ways)
- How will you do the things you need to do in a way that feels more in alignment with these feelings? With your Values?
- What changes might need to happen to bring these feelings forward in your day?
- What might you have to release or let go?
- What can you delegate?
- Where can you simplify?
- What are you already doing in life that makes you feel the way you most want to feel?
- What are you avoiding?
- What can you turn over to your spiritual support team? (God, Universe, Higher Power, Angels, whatever you honor)
- Where can you surrender in faith and trust?
- Where can you let go of perfection?
- Where can you be with what IS?

Your **Soul Food** should be showing up in your daily planner at a minimum of once per week. **Schedule it**, don't wait to see if you have time later – you never will. The more often the better. Make feeding your Soul a **priority**. You'll be surprised by how this shift will improve your productivity, creativity, and joy in life.

GOOD WHERE WE'VE BEEN, GOOD WHERE WE'RE GOING TO!

(Universal Dance of Peace)

Look at what you've accomplished! So much discovery, awareness, and understanding. **How do you feel?** This work is deep. Give yourself permission to rest and allow some softness for things to integrate. At the beginning of a new year we can often feel a sense of urgency and grasping at what we want to achieve. **This is an evolution and the process of your life.** Give yourself space and grace to implement changes slowly. Things will shift as you settle in and that's good. Throughout the coming year periodically evaluate your visions and plans. Make changes as you see fit. **Life feels better when you allow it and yourself to be fluid.**

Come back to this deep practice again annually. Use your newly designated journal to observe how you and your life evolve over time. Remember, I am always here to offer support. Just [send me an email](#) or [schedule a free Meet & Greet](#).

With Love, Light, and Blessings

Alyssa

LOVE AFTER LOVE

The time will come when, with elation,
You will greet yourself arriving
At your own door, in your own mirror,
And each will smile
At the other's welcome
And say, sit here.
Eat.

You will love again the stranger
Who is your self.

Give wine.
Give bread.

Give back your heart
To itself, to the stranger who has loved you
All your life, whom you have ignored
For another,
Who knows you by heart.

Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,
The photographs, the desperate notes,
Peel your own image
From the mirror.
Sit.
Feast on your life.

Derek Walcott, Collected Poems 1948-1984, New York, Farrar Straus Giroux, 1986

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