

THE SPIRITUAL GUIDE TO
MOVING FORWARD PAIN-FREE

Heal Your
Neck Issues
and Let Your
Throat
Chakra
Shine

C H E R Y L S T E L T E

Heal Your Neck Issues and Let Your Throat Chakra Shine

The Spiritual Guide to Moving Forward Pain-Free

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I dedicate this book to Dan, Charla, and Amin for all the love that we share.

Table of Contents

<u>CHAPTER 1: WHY IT'S SO IMPORTANT TO HEAL YOUR NECK ISSUES</u>	7
<u>CHAPTER 2: HOW LIFE'S STRUGGLES BROUGHT ME TO PURPOSE</u>	10
<u>CHAPTER 3: IS THIS BOOK FOR YOU?</u>	20
<u>CHAPTER 4: SPIRITUAL DATING TO COMMITMENT</u>	24
<u>CHAPTER 5: CREATING SAFETY</u>	34
<u>CHAPTER 6: CREATING THE FOUNDATION FOR CHANGE WITH MEDITATION, BREATHWORK, AND SIMPLE EXERCISE</u>	42
<u>CHAPTER 7: GETTING INTIMATE WITH YOUR UNIQUE CHAKRAS</u>	53
<u>CHAPTER 8: INTRODUCTION TO HEALING AND THE CHAKRAS</u>	61
<u>CHAPTER 9: GOING DEEPER WITH MEDITATION AND CHAKRA ENERGY WORK</u>	70
<u>CHAPTER 10: LIGHT BEINGS</u>	79
<u>CHAPTER 11: INTENSIVE THROAT CHAKRA HEALING AND DEVELOPMENT</u>	85
<u>CHAPTER 12: HEART-CENTERED SHAMANISM</u>	94
<u>CHAPTER 13: EMPOWERMENT</u>	108
<u>CHAPTER 14: GIANT STEPS TOWARD PURPOSE</u>	120
<u>CHAPTER 15: WHAT IS HOLDING YOU BACK?</u>	128
<u>CHAPTER 16: NOW IS THE TIME</u>	133
<u>ABOUT THE AUTHOR</u>	135

<u>ABOUT DIFFERENCE PRESS</u>	137
<u>OTHER BOOKS BY DIFFERENCE PRESS</u>	139
<u>THANK YOU</u>	140

Chapter 1: Why It's so Important to Heal Your Neck Issues

“Healing may not be so much about getting better, as about letting go of everything that isn't you – all of the expectations, all of the beliefs – and becoming who you are.”

— Rachel Naomi Remen

It was early one morning when the pain started. I was getting ready for work and sat on the edge of my bed when I started to feel pain developing in my neck. I thought, “Oh no, here we go again with another kink in my neck.” The pain rapidly increased in intensity and fear began to overwhelm me. That pain had never happened before. The pain grew and grew until it was excruciating. Any movement made it worse. I had no idea how to relieve the pain and considered going to the doctor or the emergency room. I wondered what doctors would do and knew I would likely be given medication.

I had never been to a chiropractor and somehow knew it was time to go. I called and left a message at the nearest chiropractic office and was grateful they returned my call right after they opened. The chiropractor even got me in that morning. I phoned in sick to work and had to cancel all my appointments. I could barely move, and driving was next to impossible. Before leaving my house, I applied ice, but it did not help at all.

The diagnosis was a pinched nerve in my neck. I spent five days and nights in bed and visited the chiropractor every few days during and following that time. I never would have guessed that it would take years to fully recover. I had no idea what caused the pain and certainly did not expect it to have anything to do with my emotions or spirituality. I didn't know then that neck pain is related to the throat chakra. My severe neck pain was a way of my body telling me that I had serious throat chakra issues.

Obviously, you picked up this book because you are experiencing some sort of neck pain, tension, soreness, or some sort of neck issues, but why *this* book? If you ended up like me, trying various alternative or healing therapies, with or without western medicine, and still were never able to eliminate your neck pain, you started to look further. You learned that energy, chakras, and spirituality are becoming more and more attractive as a path worth pursuing for many reasons. You have at least begun to see that maybe your constant or recurring neck pain has more to do with what has happened or what is happening in your subconscious and/or your emotions than what is happening physically. The real root cause of your neck pain is illusory, and the more you learn about the chakras and specifically the throat chakra, you became quite aware that there are

some related areas that are in need of healing. Maybe you already experienced some healing and want to go deeper, see what else is out there, and create more healing.

At the same time that you are experiencing an ongoing or occasional sore neck or various neck issues, you feel stuck in your life, career, relationship, and health. You want to move forward, and while you try different approaches, you just don't get that far. Maybe you're just not that clear on where you want to get. How can you possibly move forward if you don't know where forward is? You know there is more to life than the life you are living, and you just need a framework to get you there.

After many years of working on my throat chakra, I continued to train in meditation, reiki, acupressure, various energy healing, and shamanism, and finally got to the bottom of all my neck issues and pain. I decided to make a career out of helping others heal their throat chakra and move forward in life. One of my clients went to the chiropractor for over thirty years for his neck and back pain, so I suggested a number of the practices in this book and did some energetic healing sessions on him. Within a few months, he stopped going to the chiropractor, and his pain was gone. My client thought he would be going to the chiropractor for the rest of his life and that his pain had become age-related. He was sixty-four years old and has never looked back. Now, if he feels any pain in his neck or back, he does the practices to move beyond the emotional or spiritual cause, and when he needs help, he occasionally requests an energetic healing from me.

This book is written to help you understand yourself more fully as not only a physical being but also as an energetic, emotional, and spiritual being. The teachings here contain a toolkit of practices to help you get to the root cause of your neck pain and all that keeps you stuck in your life. This is a fairly intense path for those who are willing to, as Susan Jeffers says, "feel the fear and do it anyway."

Susan Jeffers was an American psychologist and author, and her book *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway* helped me enhance my daily meditating practice and become more of my true self. That was back in 1998, and I can't say how grateful I am and how many times I have recommended her book. What I discovered since then is that affirmations work very well in helping to change our thoughts, and it is a lot of work. I have also found that working in the heart and the energy centers, we are able to access the root or cause of our detrimental thoughts and move through our emotions and spiritual blocks which then create significant and permanent change in our thoughts and behaviors without the daily reminders to think differently.

The chapters in this book provide a step-by-step process for you to uncover what is hidden in your subconscious that contributes to the pain and problems you experience today. Once uncovered, you will learn to accept and heal the past, change limiting beliefs and values, heal core wounds, and move beyond the obstacles that cause pain and get in your way. This process will then assist you in a wonderful process of self-discovery and help you become more of who you truly are, guiding and supporting you in taking steps forward in your life that feel impossible right now.

This book is designed to help you change your life permanently and guide you through the process of becoming pain-free. You know there is more to your neck pain than you currently realize, and you know there is a much greater life for you out there than the one you live now. This process creates changes within you at different levels, and doors to new opportunities and possibilities that don't currently exist will open. Life will become more meaningful in areas of work, relationships, health, and spirituality.

My experience is that the longer we continue to try to live with the pain and stay stuck in our lives, the harder it is to create lasting change for the better. It's pretty hard to live our lives fully and joyfully in the ways we were meant to with constant or recurring neck pain. Our own sense of well-being takes a hit every time we wake up with pain or reinjure ourselves. Living in pain and feeling stuck in life lowers confidence and leads to lack of motivation, depression, inability to participate fully in life, as well as feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, unworthiness, and despair. We don't know how to, or can't seem to, pursue our dreams, create the relationships we desire, or even imagine living life fully with contentment or happiness, and we fear that it will be like this forever ensues.

I believe that there are people out there who need you and all that you came here to do. Whether you are an artist, writer, teacher, technician, engineer, scientist, surfer, or politician, a part of humanity needs you in a unique way, in the particular expression of the one and only you. Your unique soul was born into your unique body so that you can live on this earth plane, expressing who you truly are in your own unique way. When the student is ready, the teacher appears. Let this book serve you the way you would love it to serve you. I will do my best as your guide, your mentor or coach, and the person who's got your back (and your neck) and absolutely your best interest at heart.

Heal your neck pain and let your throat chakra shine!

Chapter 2: How Life's Struggles Brought Me to Purpose

"The purpose of our lives is to give birth to the best which is within us"

— Marianne Williamson

I first began meditating 25 years ago to end depression and get off antidepressants, and it worked so well, I got off the antidepressants in a matter of months and have never looked back. I knew I had to keep meditating to keep depression away, and it wasn't until later that I realized meditation could help me in many other ways, including healing my neck pain and throat chakra issues. When I first had my neck injury, I didn't think for a moment that my meditation practice could help heal my neck. Once I started to read books on the chakras and working with these amazing energy centers, I had many great and encouraging experiences, but there was nothing that I read or learned that led me to believe that meditating on the chakras could heal pain. I did notice that my chronic tinnitus and laryngitis stopped along with the depression. My neck pain did decrease, but not having made the connection, I thought it was simply the yoga that was helping my neck pain. As I had a number of throat chakra issues, I noticed that the more I meditated on my throat chakra, the more I was able to speak my truth, the more confident and expressive I became and much clearer about the direction I wanted my life to take. My life continued to improve and the more it improved, the less neck pain I experienced. It wasn't until a few years later when I was meditating and I experienced a snake around my neck that I began to see the connection, but I'm getting ahead of myself. More on that later!

There are so many symptoms of throat chakra issues that I think I could almost write an entire book on them. The throat chakra includes the ears, jaw, mouth, neck, top of the shoulders, thyroid, throat, atlas, and more. Many people experience neck pain or tension, thyroid issues, hearing loss, and problems with teeth or jaw and shoulder pain when they have throat chakra issues. To me, it is the most difficult chakra to heal and develop, but working to heal and empower it is so worthwhile, and I feel such a strong calling to help others do the same. My wish is to save you a great deal of time in healing and developing your throat chakra and share with you the most powerful practices of healing and empowerment. You deserve it; you have something great to share with the world, and it's your throat chakra that naturally wants to express it. Through this process, I learned so much about my humanity and the great importance of the throat chakra. If you feel ready, I would love to help you navigate your own healing of this vital center so that you

may move forward, creating a pain-free existence, more meaningful work and relationships, and an expression of your truth and ultimately your soul's purpose.

My Story

When my kids were twelve and fourteen, I took them to San Diego for summer vacation. We went with my dad, his wife, and her two kids. I saw people having a great time boogie boarding and just had to get in on the action. I bought one for myself and each of my kids, and off we went. I didn't read the sign about riptides, as it was small and off to the side. We headed out to the water and had a fantastic time when suddenly a big wave caught me, and I smashed to the bottom of the ocean, hitting my head and hurting my neck. It didn't hurt for too long, and I continued to boogie board. We started to realize, when the lifeguard blew his whistle, everyone had stopped boogie boarding because of the riptides. My family and I had to ask someone on the beach what a riptide was to figure this out – *duh*. But by that time, I had injured my neck a number of times. The pain grew to the point of ending up with a pinched nerve in my neck. It was excruciating for about a week, even with the help of a chiropractic. As time went on, I experienced more neck pain, showing my poor discernment of a common throat chakra issue.

Over the years, I experienced a great deal of self-doubt, thinking that others were better than me and that I wasn't good or worth enough. I often followed other's advice before my own and entered into relationships that were not good for me, even though my initial hunch was to not even entertain the idea. I couldn't trust my own truth, my own intuition, as well as I would have liked to, which made discernment challenging. These feelings were rooted in early childhood as I felt like I never really fit in. I often found myself feeling unfulfilled and stuck, and as a result, I suffered through years of infrequent and then chronic neck pain.

My road to recovery was long and grueling. At that time in my life, I also experienced serious hearing loss and teeth problems. Whenever I saw myself in the reflection of a building or a mirror in a public place, I noticed that my shoulders were always drooping forward. And after I divorced my ex-husband, I could not find a man with whom I could have a healthy relationship. However, over the years, I steadily began to choose men that were healthier emotionally and mentally, and now I am married to such a wonderful and amazing man – my best friend ever. My neck pain completely disappeared, and while my hearing didn't return permanently, it stopped declining and hasn't changed at all in over ten years.

We often develop patterns in our behavior that stem from early emotional wounds created within the families we grew up with. It is often the people who love us the most that make these marks on us. These marks remain in the subconscious until we choose to see these hurts and heal them. Our soul chooses our parents; our parents don't choose us. We all know what we are in for before we are born; your soul accepts the human challenges that help you grow to express your soul's purpose one day.

Everything that has gotten in my way and all the difficulties I experienced in my family of origin served me. Were my parents bad people? Absolutely not. Did I go through a period of feeling like they were bad people? Yes, somewhat (I'm sorry, Mom and Dad; I love you so much). I went through a period where I looked at all the wounds of my early childhood and sat in the victim role for a while. I needed to feel the pain so that I could heal it and overcome it. I had to heal this pain to move into forgiveness, and then later, I became grateful for all the good and bad in my childhood, as it made me become who I am today.

The Universe knows your purpose, and life would not be what it is without challenges. We have to experience the low times to fully enjoy the high times. It is through feeling our pain fully that we are able to forgive. My experience is that the long way to do this is through talking about it (or talk therapy), and the expedited way is through powerful meditation techniques and energy healing. The type of meditation I use in this book helps heal so quickly because we get to the energetic wound and can transform it quickly, resulting in great healing. The heart is more than just a physical organ pumping blood; it is an emotional and energetic center that is designed to feel. That's why we have a heart.

Most societies do not support feeling emotions fully, let alone expressing them fully, so we learn to stuff emotions down and deny and ignore them. About ten years ago when my neck pain was getting to be much better, I was doing some serious inner child work and remember going through my childhood birthday cards that my beloved mother saved for me and pulled them out of the beautiful box where my mother so lovingly placed special mementos from my childhood. I read the cards from birth to around age eight. From birth to age seven, not one family member signed their name with the word "love" – not one – not my grandparents, aunts, or uncles. I was so dismayed.

At the time, it felt as if I had missed out on the love I needed. I cried my tears and felt a little better. It wasn't until I breathed these feelings of regret and loss into my meditations that I

moved from feeling sorry for myself to understanding that it was just a sign of the times – a sign of the stage of human evolution in that era. In my heart, I could feel how much my family loved me, but their capacity to express it was limited through throat chakra issues. Thank goodness my family and humanity evolved to express love more freely.

My parents were controlling (I think it was just a sign of the times), and I married a controlling man. In turn, we were both controlling parents, and I still apologize about this to my adult kids today. My children are just so loving, compassionate, and forgiving. I am so encouraged by young people today and how loving they are with their children.

Being around controlling people stifles the throat chakra. We are afraid to express what's in our hearts and express our truths. At the same time, people who are controlling have throat chakra issues. The need for control is often rooted in fear – fear of not being heard or seen. I didn't feel seen or heard and while my parents didn't often say it out loud, they raised us with the old school edict of “children should be seen and not heard” likely in the same way they were raised. For years, I worked on trying to discover what was in my heart and what was true for me. Taking this knowledge and learning to express it without fear were big hurdles.

I used to have trouble even speaking in large groups. There was a time when I worked for a renovation company and my boss Larry wanted me to do a radio show with him as a way of increasing business. It felt like he wanted to make me famous, and I wanted no part of it. Throat chakra issues can be expressed by someone talking way too much, all the time, because they didn't feel seen or heard in childhood, and that was definitely me as a kid and young adult. The same issue of not feeling seen or heard can be expressed by someone who hardly speaks at all. They may have given up on being seen or heard. Of course, this does not mean that this applies to everyone. One must explore one's own throat chakra.

My biggest fear, that has taken me the longest to get over, is fear of success or fear of expressing my greatness. If you knew me then, you likely would not have seen it. I appeared fairly confident to the outside world. I became one of a small group of experts in solving moisture problems in people's homes. I lived in Victoria, Canada, where moisture problems were common and often affected children's respiratory health. I was passionate about turning sick homes into healthy homes, and Larry wanted to capitalize on that. With my throat chakra issues, I didn't want to be seen or recognized even though I eventually went along with him and did the radio show for over a year. It was like I wanted to get the message of my heart out but not be recognized for it.

There are always some things that are not worth saying, and I do my best to say what I need to say with compassion, understanding, and respect for others. I learned to practice discernment, when to listen, and when to speak. Now, I have no problem expressing what is in my heart and what is true for me, and my hope is that expressing myself encourages others to do the same.

I started reading many self-help books as I believed I could create the change I desired. After working with Susan Jeffers' book, I bought a book on the chakras and worked with that for some time. I purchased more books on the chakras and studied, learned, and meditated. I was mostly focused on the lower chakras because the issues I had in my lower chakras felt like the most important to heal at that time but for some reason didn't acquire the skills to really heal my throat chakra. My work on the lower chakras supported my work on the throat chakra later. I knew when it was time to focus there.

I was meditating one day when I felt pressure and tightening around my neck. This was new, and as the sensations increased and became more uncomfortable, I had a visual of a blue snake around my neck. At first, I was startled and tried to remove it. My efforts were ineffective, and then I realized the snake was there to get my attention and to help me work with my throat chakra. I worked with that snake at length, healing what was ready to be healed, integrating for long periods of time, and then moving to the next level. This on and off process took years, and I have developed and learned methods to move through this so much faster and efficiently.

I had tinnitus, or loud ringing in the ears, as a child. It was often so loud it was painful. By the time I was in my thirties, I experienced various sounds of tinnitus. I would hear ringing, buzzing, clicking, and hissing. The ringing was always the most uncomfortable, but the clicking continued to happen primarily when I was meditating. I would want to stop meditating because it was such a distraction, but I knew I had to persevere. I started to breathe into the sound and over months, it slowly disappeared altogether. Through meditation, all tinnitus symptoms completely vanished, and I haven't suffered from tinnitus for over twenty years.

I had hearing loss since I was in my early twenties, and it became pretty serious by the time I was in my mid-thirties; in fact, I went through a period of about three months where my hearing came back one hundred percent. It was a miraculous time, but I wasn't able to maintain it for the long term.

I learned about and practiced Peter Levine's somatic experiencing with a practitioner and on my own in my meditations. Peter Levine is an author and the founder of The Somatic Experiencing Trauma Institute, which continues his ground-breaking research into the effects of trauma and stress on the body and the nervous system. One day while practicing this method on myself (which is not what it was intended for), I had one of the most intense meditations of my life. I felt like a huge electric cable went through my body vertically, and I shook, vibrated, and convulsed for about an hour and a half. I know this is certainly not the intention of Peter Levine's work, and as I was doing this alone, I was not practicing with a skilled practitioner on that day. After that, I was so wiped out that I slept for about three hours. By dinner time, I realized my hearing returned, and I heard sounds so sharply – sounds that I hadn't heard in years. I could hear my hair rubbing on my jacket and my footsteps on the pavement.

The following day, I went for a walk at East Sooke Park which is on Vancouver Island where I loved living for twenty-four years. The parking lot is quite a distance from the ocean, and I remember hearing the ocean long before I would have in the past. It was such an exciting time for me, and I thought I would be like that forever. Instead of constantly saying, "Pardon me?" to people, I asked them to whisper to me because, for the first time in years, I could hear whispers. My improved hearing lasted about three months, and I realize now that I didn't have the capacity to maintain it. My remaining unhealed throat chakra issues continued to creep back, and my hearing deteriorated again. I had hoped that I would return to this heightened state of hearing permanently but have not been able to hold that. Specialists could not understand or explain what happened, but I have not lost hope. The good news is that while my hearing continued to deteriorate for fifteen years, after that time, my hearing stopped deteriorating and has not worsened at all in the last twenty years, which is unusual for hearing loss.

I was later guided to go back to school to study interior design. I clearly remember going to the drugstore to pick up a few things, and on my way out the door, there was an adult education booklet sitting in a stand that grabbed my attention. I looked over at it and thought, "I'm not taking any classes; I'm not going back to school."

I was a single mother doing it all on my own and was doing okay financially. I remember being so happy when I started to make enough money to be able to take my kids out to restaurants and buy them some brand name clothes. At one time, the money I made was just enough to get food on the table. I had no intention of going back to school, but I walked through the automatic

door just to be pulled right back into the store. I stood in front of the stack of course calendars and just stared at them. I kept repeating to myself, “I’m not going back to school. This is stupid; I’m not going to school.”

However, the calendar just kept calling my name, so I finally surrendered and said, “Fine!” I picked the calendar up and put it in my bag. Once home, I went to my meditation room – yes, I was blessed with a meditation room off my bedroom where I meditated daily and led meditations for friends. I made myself a cup of tea and took the course calendar in there with me. I opened it up to a random page, and there it was, a program called “the Business of Interior Design.”

I repeated, “I am not going back to school.” I grew up with my parents continuously re-decorating the house and my ex-husband and I enjoyed decorating our homes. As a single mother, I painted walls and doors and sewed custom drapes and blinds, throw pillows, shower curtains, bedding, and even slipcovers. I learned how to install wood trim, replacing all the baseboards and door and window casings in two houses. At age thirteen, my son and I replaced all the linoleum in our duplex with wood flooring. It was a lifelong hobby, not a career. The long and the short of it was that after attending an info session and going to the bank to borrow money, I was enrolled in the program and graduated at the top of the class. I had to laugh because the bank even loaned me the money to make the loan payments while I was in school with absolutely no collateral security.

Once I graduated, I went for one interview with a fairly prestigious design firm and the owner, who interviewed me, was over half an hour late. I left right when she arrived, knowing it wasn’t meant to be. I toyed with the idea of starting my own business. I was new to interior design and had little business experience, but I did it anyway. I maxed out my credit cards and got new cards and gave myself one year to make a go of it. I told my kids money was going to continue to be tight for a while. I worked my butt off, and just when I felt like giving up, around the nine- or tenth-month mark, I got a big job that covered more than one month’s living expenses. With this job, I was able to continue to pay all the bills going forward.

Looking back, I realize all my throat chakra issues in that business. I didn’t advertise and built my business by word-of-mouth. I see how I didn’t charge enough for my services for years and realize now it was because of my hidden low self-worth. I wasn’t able to receive compliments. I even remember one of my clients often offering her help in taking my samples back out to my vehicle. I never accepted this kind offer, and one day, she said to me, “Cheryl, it’s nice for the other person to have their offer of help accepted. It gives them a good feeling.”

I could easily offer my help for others but not receive help. For a long time, I remembered that and tried to receive help, but it usually felt uncomfortable. This attitude reflected my wounds, and I am grateful that meditation has helped me so much that now I am able to receive and give equally.

I was on a strong spiritual path through this time, studying with Denise Linn, author and world-acclaimed expert in Feng Shui and space clearing, and incorporating her work of interior alignment into my business. My tag line for Stelte Design was “*Designing for the Soul,*” so Denise’s Feng Shui training fit that to a certain extent. I brought in a lot of meditation where I received guidance for my clients and some shamanism as well. Doing this work for my clients helped to heal my neck pain and throat chakra issues because I was expressing part of my soul’s purpose. I didn’t realize it at the time, but it is more than clear now. Every year I let my throat chakra shine in this way, my neck pain diminished. I started my business twenty years ago, and I see now how I was a bit ahead of the times. I had a small percentage of clients who wanted to work at a spiritual level, but I was in heaven when I worked with the ones who did, and we always achieved great success.

I had friends and clients who suggested I teach, and I never thought I had what it took. My best friend often told me, “You are a spiritual teacher and a healer. Look at all you do: you meditate, you are a shaman, and you bring your spirituality into everything you do.” I would always respond by saying, “I have enough trouble healing myself, let alone trying to help others do the same.” Looking back, that comment seems humorous because now it’s all I want to do, and making the choice to become the spiritual teacher, healer, and coach that I am was one of the best things I have ever done.

I never experience neck pain and haven’t for years. If I ever even feel a tinge of anything, I address it right away so I don’t need to suffer. I can’t say enough about how much I value working on the throat chakra. I do my stretches a few times a week and meditate on all my chakras daily, occasionally incorporating Heart-Centered Shamanism as well as do things that express who I truly am and my soul’s purpose. It has not been easy, but it has been so worthwhile. It is one thing to heal your wounds and it is something else to take action steps and speak your truth.

Just before I started writing this chapter, my screen saver changed to a fantastic image of a hippopotamus. This immediately felt like a message from the universe. I didn’t have time to meditate on the meaning of it because I had to start writing this chapter, so I googled it. What I

found from Imelda at trustedpsychicmediums.com was “The hippopotamus Spirit Animal reminds you that you are born great, and you have the potential to become whoever you want to be.” I can’t help but believe this message is for you right now at this point in this book! So I invite you to join me and take a few minutes to breathe that into your heart. Born great, born great. Potential to become whoever you want to be. I would love to help you with that.

I did a weeklong meditation retreat by myself in my home during which I meditated eleven to fourteen hours a day. At the end, I was told I was a spiritual teacher. This message came to me in a profound way, and I discovered what my work on this earth was and what my soul’s purpose was, and frankly, I was terrified. While on the retreat, I could feel the truth in it, but once back to my everyday life, this knowledge felt more and more like a ball and chain.

At that time, I left Victoria, Canada to pursue my childhood dream to study fashion design, and I did the retreat over Christmas break. When I went back to school, my passion for the program fell flat; I had all but completely lost interest.

I kept thinking, “Why am I doing this if I am a spiritual teacher?” It suddenly all felt so meaningless. Some of my classmates were interested in meditation, so I started teaching them. I burned the candle at three ends. I was doing a two-year fashion design diploma program in one year, a two-year program in Heart Rhythm Meditation at IAM University of the Heart, and taught meditation part-time. I took time off from the fashion design program to attend five-day retreats and two-week residencies. I attended extra retreats than expected, as the retreats just called to me so strongly.

I finished the fashion design program and received the “overall completion award” and did nothing with it. I started to look at how I could combine fashion and spirituality, and in the end, nothing felt right. I wasn’t able to fully step into the role of spiritual teacher and ended up sick because of it. Western medicine made me sicker, so I was on my own. I worked intensely on the root and sacral chakras to give the support my throat chakra needed. It took me time to recover, but the more I stepped into that role, the healthier I became. Here I am now, helping others move through what I went through in a lot less time.

It’s taken me a long time, but I am so grateful for my journey. My soul’s purpose is to help people like you. I am still not perfect by any stretch, but the tools I developed, acquired, and perfected over the decades helped me heal my neck pain permanently and allowed me to finally

pursue my soul's purpose as a spiritual teacher and healer. Whatever your soul's purpose is and even if you don't know what it is, I can help you take the steps you are ready for today.

Chapter 3: Is This Book for *You*?

“Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world. Today I am wise, so I am changing myself.”

— Rumi

I want to help you heal your neck pain, so you no longer suffer the way you have. My wish is that, through the practices in this book, you will release your neck pain once and for all and move forward in your life in ways you have only dreamed of.

I wish I understood, decades ago, all that contributed to my neck pain at a subconscious level. I now see that I had to learn it all the long and hard way so that I could share my discoveries with you. One of the biggest things I realized years ago was that I played small. I played small without even realizing it in more than one area of my life. Do you play small in any area of your life? I don't want to see you playing small anymore. I did so for *way* too long. Even when I realized how small I played, it took me a decade to step out of that behavior. I wrote this book so you don't have to suffer anymore. My neck pain was but a symptom of a much deeper suffering. I wasn't ready to face that until I was in my forties, but once I did, my life took a great turn for the better. Our pain is an expression of something inside us that wants to heal and is ready to heal.

I invite you to let this book take you on a journey – a journey of deep self-discovery, profound healing, and unimaginable empowerment. This just may be one of those books you want to read again and again and again.

Throughout this book, you will gain a deeper understanding of your neck pain and throat chakra issues. The pain is so obvious and takes no effort whatsoever to pay attention to it. It does, however, take effort to look deeper and to dare to uncover the emotional and spiritual root causes of that pain. Your neck pain is like a weed in your beautiful garden; it stands out and doesn't contribute to the beauty. There is so much out there that can help you cut out that weed, but the weed always comes back, disrupting the beauty of your garden. It is only when the effort is put into digging right down to the tip of the root that it can be fully extricated, never to return again. This book will give you the tools you need to help you release and heal your neck pain and ensure it never comes back in the same way. You may end up with another weed – a different neck pain in the future – but these tools will serve you to do the same thing, and removing the weed just gets easier and easier once you know how to do it.

I have developed a number of unique and powerful spiritual practices inspired by various modalities and paths that are designed to maximize the amount of healing one can do through meditation. I combined meditation, energy work, and my own Heart-Centered Shamanism to help you delve into a journey of self-discovery and healing. This book is designed for people who want to make some serious changes and are ready to commit to themselves to do some deep work and move forward.

You likely already know about the chakras, what they are, and maybe even how they operate. You have possibly already worked with the chakras. If you know nothing about the chakras, this book will cover the basics of all the chakras and how they are all connected. I will help you get intimate with your personal chakras. It is not designed to tell you specifically how your chakras are the same as everyone else's. Through working with many people, I discovered that the experience of the chakras can be somewhat different for everyone, so my goal is to help you gain a more personal understanding of your chakras and how to work with what exists uniquely in your chakras. Of course, this book will serve you even if you are not familiar with the chakras.

By reading this book, you will gain a deeper understanding of your neck pain and throat chakra issues. This is fundamental. If you don't know what it is all about and what contributes to it, how can you possibly heal your chakra issues completely? Through these practices, you will not only discover the root causes of your suffering, but you will also become your own personal energy healer and will heal those root causes. Will it be easy? Sometimes, yes, but often, this journey will be difficult. However, I will say that the more difficult the journey, the greater the positive results. This work is extremely worthwhile.

Through these exercises, you will learn how to create the safety required to do this kind of work. I will help you create a sense of safety within yourself and outside yourself, which I believe is absolutely fundamental in working through a process such as you will experience with this book. Over time, you will be introduced to beginner through advanced practices designed to help you heal at various levels, one step at a time. You will be provided with detailed, step-by-step, guided meditations and unique spiritual practices. The healing portion is followed by practices that are designed to pull out the inherent light and beauty within you, empowering you to be who you truly are and, better yet, to help you take steps in pursuing your soul's purpose, whether you know what that is or not. The beautiful and unique light within you is covered by the hurts of the past, conscious and unconscious. Once you heal this covering made up of wounds, your light will begin

to shine. There are practices that help you shine even brighter, helping you get in touch with the personal power latent within you so that you can take the steps you have dreamed of to move forward in your life and become who you truly are.

The throat chakra is an expression of what is within us. When we cannot express what is in our hearts and our being clearly and authentically, the throat suffers, and we find it more and more difficult to create the lives we desire. Many of us aren't even totally aware of all that is in us and wants to be expressed, so how can we possibly express what we don't know? This book helps you make great discoveries about who you are and who you are not. Once you learn the basic practices and move onto healing the first four chakras, you will work intensely in the throat chakra, which will help you create the changes your heart so desires.

The goal is to help you move toward purpose, and the throat chakra is the expression of that. There will be no more hiding your greatness; you cannot access your purpose when wounds are covering it.

You will learn to be your own spiritual guide, discovering the required steps you need to take to move forward in a whole new way. You will create a roadmap for yourself of action steps that you will actually be able to implement and will encourage and support you in taking giant steps to move forward in your life as you have not been able to do up until now.

The process is designed so that you feel as safe and supported as possible so that you can create the you that you were born to be. This process begins in Chapter 4 with a deep commitment to yourself to show up and do the work, a commitment to yourself to heal your neck pain and move forward in your life. In Chapter 5, a foundation for change is created with meditation, using breathwork to become your own energy healer, and I have included some excellent stretches to help at the physical level.

It's so important that you feel safe, so in Chapter 6, the focus on helping you develop both internal and external safety and a deeper sense of trust. One of my goals is to help you become your own teacher. I believe the teacher is doing their job when they help the student become their own teacher.

In Chapter 7, we will learn more and more about the chakras not just in a general way but the where, what, and how of the chakras at a very personal level. We are all unique and so are our chakras. In Chapters 8 and 9, I will help you to become your own energy healer through the

practices provided. You will access spiritual support and heal wounds of the past. The more healing we do, the brighter our throat chakras shine!

In Chapter 10, we will work with Light Beings and your own personal light. Closer to the end of the process in Chapter 11, we will work intensely on the throat chakra to help you heal further and begin to express your truth and power in ways you haven't previously. We will work with what I have named "Heart Centered Shamanism" in Chapter 12, working with specific Spirit Animals or Power Animals to help you create the change that has been just waiting to happen. We will then focus on empowerment and surrendering to your greatness in Chapter 13. You will begin to gain clarity on why you are here and begin to take giant steps toward your purpose whether you know exactly what that is or not.

Let me help you heal your neck pain so you can change yourself and change your life!

Chapter 4: Spiritual Dating to Commitment

“Commitment unlocks the doors of imagination, allows vision, and gives us the right stuff to turn our dreams into reality.”

— James Womack

Yes, we are spiritual seekers and there is *so much* out there to choose from – so many paths, so many modalities, and a whole lot of spiritual teachers, coaches, mentors, and healers. We can do what I call “spiritual dating” for years and years, and it works well and serves us to a degree. Spiritual dating is, in many ways, similar to dating in relationships. We try out different spiritual teachers or different spiritual paths and never stick to just one. It can be a lot of fun, enticing, and bring us some joy and lots of good feelings. It’s a bit of an adventure, as we never know exactly what is going to happen. It is fun to try new things and get to know new people. It keeps our interest because there is always something new, and we can work with many teachers at the same time.

This can work well for us for a short time or a long time, but how intimate can we get with five people if we are dating them all at one time in our lives? How deep can we take multiple relationships compared to focusing on just one special one? It is when we decide that one person pulls at our heart strings that we would like to go deeper with that one person. It is the same with spiritual teachers. The deeper we go with one teacher, the deeper we can move into ourselves. It is when we discover one person – one method, teacher, or healer – who gives us greater hope and faith than another and commit to that one teacher for a period of time that opens the door to greater and lasting change. We need to say “No” in order to say “Yes, I am ready to explore myself through this teacher.” Does that mean we stop all previous practices? Not necessarily. It just means that for this time, we commit to learning through one teacher for a certain period of time.

Along with this will often come some fear, especially these days with online dating where there are a plethora of people just waiting to get to know you. Spiritual dating is not like years ago when we met our soulmate through a friend, acquaintance, or happenstance. No, today, we could date a new person every day of the week if we so desired, and we could work with a new spiritual teacher every day of the week if we wanted. Doing so could be a great deal of fun, but how sustainable would it be?

I have met numerous people, and was one myself, who went from one spiritual teacher or spiritual path to another, jumping from one self-help book to another and one meditation style to another. If we look at all of these as relationships, which they are, how well does it serve us? It

gives us new skills, new perspectives, experiences, thoughts, beliefs, practices, and new ways of being, but what would happen if we just chose one and made the commitment required to go deeper?

When we commit to the relationship with that one method or teacher in our hearts, we know that this person is the right one for us or the relationship is at least worth exploring. We can look him or her in the eye and say, “Yes, you are the one for me right now.” How deeply can we make that commitment? It doesn’t have to be a forever commitment; instead, it can be a commitment for a designated period of time like the time it takes to read this book. Essentially, the commitment is ultimately to yourself.

It’s exciting to make this commitment and is often something worth celebrating, whether we celebrate outwardly or whether we celebrate within our hearts. It feels like a new beginning filled with hope, joy, and faith. We know we have made the right decision. Life is already better just by making this commitment. We can easily make the sacrifice of giving up spiritual dating and commit to this one teacher, path, or spiritual modality. There is a lift in our heels and in our heart. Everything is brighter, and it is through this commitment that we feel brighter and lighter. We are so open and hungry for what this teacher has to offer, knowing we will become more of who we truly are through the process of self-discovery, all the while deepening our connection with Source, God, or the Universe.

We feel hopeful, and our level of trust in life increases. We trust what we committed to, and that helps us trust ourselves and gives us faith that we will truly change for the better – until the inevitable happens and we are attracted to something else – to a new spiritual teacher – and we may just sneak away to listen to a talk, a podcast, or even a guided meditation. It may provide us with a fantastic experience, and we begin to wonder, “Oh no, did I make the wrong choice? Is this other person better for me? Have I made a terrible mistake? Well, I’m not too far into it, so maybe it’s not too late to switch.”

This frequently happens after making a commitment, and just know that this is the Universe’s way of asking us, “Are you serious about this? Are you ready to take this plunge? Can you hold to your word?”

Have you ever been single for a long time, and then you meet someone and find yourself falling for them? This person seems perfect for you, like your souls were finally brought together as they were meant to be. Then, suddenly, out of the blue, other attractive people start showing an

interest in you. You wonder, “How can this be? I was single for so long, and here I am, a magnet for love.” This is how the energy of love works; it attracts more of the same. Therefore, when we commit to a spiritual process, method, or teacher, the same phenomenon occurs. The energy our hearts transmit will be reflected back to us. It’s what we do with this that matters. We can take it as a cue to continue with spiritual dating, which we can do for the rest of our lives, or we can view it as a reflection of the magnified heart energy that is a result of this commitment, and we choose to stay with the one we chose.

I recommend focusing on this one spiritual process during the program this book offers and not starting a new spiritual path or skill until you have completed it. Yes, you may have a meditation practice already, but I suggest, for the time being, to just stick to what is offered here. If you are currently doing a meditation practice that you absolutely do not want to put on hold, you can certainly contact me to see how we can make it fit. Just send me a message at cherylstelte.com.

Commitment to Self

What about the commitment to self? Isn’t this the most important of all? I certainly believe it is. We commit to the self when we commit to a relationship, and we commit to the self when we want to heal and grow. This can certainly exist in the path of spiritual dating or spiritual commitment.

I came to a point where I realized I’d been playing small my entire life. I subconsciously learned this behavior from my beloved father, and I desperately needed to move beyond it. I wondered how I managed that far, accomplishing a fair bit with the subconscious belief that if I played too big, I would get rejected or nobody would like me. Only if I played small would I be accepted. “Let others be bigger; let others shine brightly,” I thought. “If I don’t, I will be thought of as conceited.”

My dad did his very best as a father. I think he thought his job was to keep us in line. I don’t have any memories of my father ever giving me a compliment or saying anything kind. The first time I heard “I love you” from him was when I was twenty-eight. I had moved to another city far away, and at the end of a phone conversation, I said, “I love you,” and he said, “I love you too.” I will remember that forever. Again, I see this in some ways as a sign of the times. Did his father say kind words to him? I don’t really think so. Was I loved? Yes. But the expression of love was repressed, and this caused me to have issues with unworthiness and not being good enough.

I grew up with the saying, “Always think of others before yourself.” This was repeated to me by my mother. But I remember getting a plaque from my father that made me cry when I read all the words on it: “Fill your own cup first, and others will benefit from the overflow.” I read that line over and over, and it slowly began to replace the old, worn-out belief of always putting others first.

It was quite a shock to receive such a gift from my father, whether he actually purchased it or not (I was pretty sure my future stepmother purchased it on his behalf). It felt like it was his way of making amends with me, and I still feel so much gratitude when I think of it. To this day, like many parents, I still believe in putting the children first, and I get great joy out of putting my adult children first. However, I make sure to always take good care of myself and my needs. When I received the plaque, I made a commitment to myself that I wanted a different life for myself, and I was going to do what I could to make the changes I desired. It was that the deep desire in my heart for change that brought me to start meditating.

I was thirty-two when I ended my marriage, and that was three weeks after one of my brothers ended his marriage. That same brother, who left his wife, committed suicide, which was something I think none of us thought we would ever get through. You don’t know the pain of suicide unless you have gone through it, and I experienced a fair bit of guilt in thinking I could have done more to save my brother. That experience was the hardest thing my family ever went through together, and it still hurts today.

About six months after my brother’s death, his spirit showed up on the beach at Deep Bay on Vancouver Island where a friend was doing kinesiology on me. We were at the beach waiting for the tide to go out so we could pick oysters. Picking oysters was on the top of my list of favorite things to do, and I love standing in the cold water, finding, gathering, and shucking oysters, and eating them raw.

As I laid on the beach and my friend plowed through different people and events in my life, I suddenly felt a great ball of love and light above me. I never experienced anything like it in my entire life, and I knew it was my deceased brother, Brian. I felt all this intense love. He was just love and light. Up until that point in my life, the extent of my spirituality had been going to church, which I hadn’t done for years. My friend had never channeled before, and she didn’t know I had a deceased brother. I didn’t want to interrupt her flow but hoped she would mention him, and she did.

My friend said, "He is here."

I responded, "I know!"

Brian spoke through my friend, and we were both in awe as time stood still. We had a conversation around his death, and she told me that he was bipolar, and it was never diagnosed. He had gone to the light and was doing what he could, as spirit, to help people who were depressed or bipolar.

Then, I asked him why he was there. Brian said he wanted me to start to meditate. At that point, I would have done anything he said. I had heard of meditation but, at that point, had never tried it. By the next day, I was able to communicate with Brian myself. As we picked oysters the second day, I felt where he was and could hear him. It was such an uplifting and profound experience. By the time I got back to the city, the communication ended, and by the next day, I began to seriously question what happened. Was it real? Did I somehow make it up? Was it all fantasy?

However, even when the doubt came up, I started calling meditation places, and they all asked why I wanted to learn to meditate. I responded with, "So I can speak with my deceased brother," and they all informed me that they didn't have that kind of meditation. I was so disappointed! I knew nothing of the spiritual world and expected these people to understand.

At lunch that day, I went for a massage since I was recovering from a pinched nerve in my neck. When I walked down the hall to the office, I noticed a sign that said, "Meditation Classes," and the classes started the following evening. I signed up, went, and have been meditating ever since.

I made the commitment to myself to grow and live a better life, and the Universe responded by means of my beloved, deceased brother. I had no idea what I was getting myself into, but I had been on antidepressants myself for over a year and was able to get off them through meditation and never needed to go back on the medication. I made the commitment to myself then and never stopped. I never wanted to go back to the person I was, who was generally fairly unhappy and who didn't make the best choices for herself. I wanted to make better choices, and I longed for the happiness that I didn't have. I committed to meditating every day, starting with ten minutes. It wasn't until eight months later when I was up to meditating for twenty to thirty minutes that for the first time, I felt something significant. I felt different for less than thirty seconds. I didn't know what it was and couldn't describe it, but it was noticeably different. The feeling gave me the

motivation to keep going. Over the decades, the Universe responded to my commitment to self and personal and spiritual growth in a variety of ways, and I am eternally grateful.

You are more than ready to make this kind of commitment if you haven't already. I invite you to look at what kinds of commitments you made to yourself over the years and how they served you. What kind of commitment are you ready for now? If you are reading this, you are more than ready to make a commitment to yourself; you just need to define it. What exactly are you ready for? How much change are you ready for? Are you tired enough of the pain in your neck and shoulders?

You have an understanding of throat chakra issues and recognize how your throat chakra holds you back. But are you ready to let go of your old ways of being and commit to something new? Are you ready to move beyond all you knew about yourself and enter into a journey of awakening to the real, more accurate you? This book was brought to you as an answer to your heart's call – your call for change. This is your call for a deeper understanding and knowledge of who you truly are so you can more fully express that in the world. Are you ready to make the commitment to yourself for deep, inner change so that you can create the outer change you so desire? Feel this in your heart right now.

See if you can breathe in the knowledge that all is happening exactly as it should, and you are ready. You are ready to make the commitment to yourself and the teachings in this book. It is time for you to change, to let go of the old, and invite in the new. If this doesn't resonate with you, I encourage you to pass this book to someone else. If you are emotionally moved by these words and feel a sense of hope or optimism, I invite you to keep reading. Often, we feel fear when we face the truth of what is in our hearts. So if you feel any fear or resistance to continuing to read this book – please – do yourself a huge favor and keep reading!

You are worth it; I'm just going to repeat that – *you are worth it!* You are worthy of all the blessings of the universe and to have a wonderful and fulfilling life. Yes, we will always have struggles, but living a full and fulfilling life is about the balance to be tipped toward joy and happiness, even with the struggles. I haven't met anyone who, once they look deeply, has not struggled with unworthiness. This is one of the main subconscious beliefs that holds us back from developing our full potential. The unworthiness is often developed in early childhood and serves us in our challenge to grow and become who we truly are, and we are worthy of that.

In this book, you will discover the best possible ways to move beyond fear and unworthiness, but for now, when you feel any uncomfortable feelings while you read through, please breathe deeply and allow yourself to feel any and all emotions fully. The heart wants to feel; it wants to feel everything, not just the positive, happy emotions but the most difficult emotions and everything in between. Can you make a commitment to yourself to feel your emotions fully? Trust me, this big commitment will serve you in lightening your load and allowing you to experience the positive emotions in ways you have not imagined.

Please take a bit of time here and reflect on what kind of commitment you are ready to make to yourself, to this book, or to me, as a teacher. I encourage you to read through before you make a big commitment to work with me, but for now, commit to reading this book, taking in the information and processing it to the best of your ability. This change doesn't have to take years either.

Commitment Meditation

I would like to guide you in a meditation to explore what your heart desires to help you discover what kind of commitment, if any, you are ready for. Are you ready to make a commitment to look at your throat chakra and heal all that you can? Are you ready to commit to expressing yourself in the best ways only your heart knows you can? Please follow me in this meditation. You can find the recording on my website, cherylstelte.com, or just read through it here:

I invite you to sit in a chair where your feet are flat on the floor and your spine is very straight. Lift your shoulders up toward your ears and roll them back, letting them fall. You feel how this opens the chest, giving greater access to the heart center. Feel your seat in the chair and your hands in your lap, palms up or down – whichever is more comfortable.

I invite you to breathe deeply into the lower part of your abdomen, a long and full breath, stretching the length of the breath as long as possible, keeping your attention there for a few minutes. It helps to place your hand over your lower abdomen, with the thumb at the navel to keep your focus there, and breathe as low and deep as possible. When this begins to feel comfortable, place your hand on your heart center, and while breathing fully, bring your awareness to your heart center, which is in the middle of your chest.

Allow yourself to become aware of any thoughts or emotions that have arisen from reading this book so far. Just notice them, allow yourself to be with them, not wanting to push anything away.

We want to allow everything the heart presents. We just keep breathing fully and noticing –

noticing, feeling, allowing. Is there excitement, joy, hope, trust, faith, or wonder? Is there fear, resistance, longing, sadness, grief, hopelessness? Please allow yourself to feel whatever comes up without judgement.

You have come to a pivotal point in your life. You are ready for change, whether it is through this book, my program, or something else. You would not have purchased this book if you weren't ready for something. The best way to make a decision is to allow yourself to feel all that your heart wants and needs to feel. Our society does not encourage us to feel our feelings but instead, usually, to stuff them down. This is a great opportunity to sit and just be with yourself exactly as you are. Allow the emotions, even if you begin to cry. I have learned through the spiritual school, IAM Heart, that tears wash the heart, so at the very least, you will feel lighter after this meditation. Give yourself all the time you need to feel your feelings. If they change from happy to sad or vice versa, just allow that. Let your mind flow with the emotions of the heart.

Eventually, once you have felt all the emotions present in your heart at this time, notice what comes. Your heart has an inner sense of knowing; this is not the knowing of the mind. Just sit and focus on your heart and wait; wait for the knowing to appear. This inner knowing in the heart will let you know if it is best for you to commit to yourself in a new way and how. It will let you know if this is the book for you, if I am the person you are more than ready to work with, if you are ready to take the risk and learn new things so that you can grow and really let yourself shine.

This inner knowing may show up as thoughts, emotions, images, or body sensations, and, however obscure it may be, you will definitely recognize the sign(s). You already know if this is right for you or not. You will know if you have had enough of living the way you have been living and are open and willing to move forward into the unknown so that you may fulfill your heart's desires. You can easily access the longing in your heart and have the courage to sit with all that comes up. Change is never all that easy, especially great change. Small change can prove to be fairly easy, but the bigger the change, the more discomfort. Are you ready to get uncomfortable? I can promise you the temporary discomforts you will experience will always prove worthwhile, as they move us beyond our current discomfort of feeling stuck.

Are you ready to work with someone who always has your best interest at heart? Are you ready to work with someone who wants, more than anything, to see you shine in your most glorious

and magnificent ways? What kind of commitment are you ready to make? Let your heart tell you. Let yourself feel your heart's desire fully, giving yourself all the time you need, and when you are ready, open your eyes.

Confident in Commitment

Congratulations on taking this crucial step and completing the meditation. Once you feel the kind of commitment you are ready for, it is beneficial to put it on paper and write it up in a journal. I recommend using a journal throughout this book beginning with this commitment so you can continue to look back on it, even recommitting when needed. This commitment holds us to it and helps us along when we experience regret or self-doubt, or the journey just gets hard. You may make a commitment to finish this program, and that is *a lot!* Your heart may already know that I am the person you want to work with based on what you have read to this point. You are open and ready for whatever it is I am going to offer and welcome the unknown. Now is the time to *begin* and put on paper the level of commitment that feels perfect for you in the face of your smaller self. Your true self knows. What is it that you can write down and sign today?

Here is a sample start, and I feel that it is important that you write the words for yourself. Please take your journal out and write it there or sit at your computer right now and write down whatever comes in your own, perfect words. For example, you might write, "I am so ready and willing to make the commitment to myself to heal my chronic neck and shoulder pain. It has been long enough, and I know I have lots of throat chakra issues. I am ready to face the sadness and disappointment that I feel, as well as this feeling of being stuck and the fear to move forward. I commit to this process with Cheryl Stelte. I commit to work with her the best I can. I commit to letting myself shine in ways I have never shone before. I commit to moving beyond my old ways and discovering my own inner beauty and uniqueness that will radiate out in the world so that I too may help others and be of service in ways I haven't even dreamed possible. Now is the time. I will commit to this process and welcome everything that comes. I welcome this journey of self-discovery so I can learn who I truly am and allow myself to move forward and express all that I have always meant to express. I sign my name here today."

Please read your commitment letter back to yourself, and listen to yourself as the receiver of the commitment. You are committing to yourself, so you are both the expresser of that commitment and the receiver. You can even meditate on receiving the commitment from yourself.

Most people have a very different and often profound experience in being the receiver of their commitment to self.

Doesn't that just feel like a breath of fresh air? This is the first step and a very important one. I strongly encourage you to let yourself dive into this process with me. Know that I am already holding you in my heart every step of the way. Now that you feel confident in commitment, we can move onto the next step of creating a stronger foundation for change. You have already given yourself a sense of greater stability for the work of healing your neck issues, and we will take this one step further in the next chapter using meditation, breathwork and simple exercise.

Chapter 5: Creating Safety

“Out of this nettle, danger, we pluck this flower, safety.”

— William Shakespeare

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of safety when doing an intensive program such as this. How many times in your life have you felt unsafe? How many times have people said or done things to you that hurt so much, and you felt so unsafe in your fear and pain that you had nowhere to go? When we are abused, neglected, treated badly, ignored, criticized, yelled at, or ridiculed, we need to have a safety zone of some sort to offer us reprieve. Many of us grew up not knowing what that meant. Did you have the blessing of a parent who frequently said, “You can come to me with anything; I will always be there for you no matter what. You are safe with me?”

If you are reading this book, the likelihood is slim, and as I didn’t, my parents didn’t receive those words, nor did they have the wherewithal to say them or repeat those words when I needed to hear them most. How many of our parents, if they could do it all over again, would be our safety nets no matter what?

When I was a kid, we got food, clothing, and shelter, some fun summer vacations, and we even got to go out to restaurants once in a while. We played board games and cards as a family, but nobody talked about their feelings, especially feelings like fear, sadness, regret, joy, anger, etc. In fact, I don’t know of too many families who did. It just wasn’t the thing to do.

We expressed anger in our house by yelling, so I married someone who yelled a lot, and I hated it. I yelled too, and I hated it. Yelling doesn’t create safety. I used to have conversations with a friend whose family didn’t express anything – not anger, joy, or anything – nor did they talk about their feelings. Her mother left when she was young, and it was never talked about – not once. What is your story around expressing emotions and feeling safe?

In all the work that I do, one of my goals is to help people feel safe to move through the process this book provides. When I am doing energy healing, I tell clients they are not alone, that I am with them, they are safe, and it is okay to feel the emotions that move through them. My intention is to create a sense of safety for you as you read and do the work in this book.

Safety in Meditation Space

It is ideal to create a meditation space where you will not be disturbed. You want to create a sacred space in your home where you can sit on a chair and meditate. If you already have a daily

rhythm and the perfect place in your home to meditate, you are set. If you have yet to develop a regular practice, you want to choose a place in your home where you will be undisturbed and where you can meditate at the same time every day, if your schedule permits.

First, you will need a comfortable chair. This is not the type of meditation where you sit on the floor for long periods and try not to move, even if your leg falls asleep or your shoulder is killing you. You want to be comfortable so you can focus your attention on your practices. If your nose gets itchy, please scratch it and keep meditating.

It's also ideal to meditate at the same time every day. I suggest mornings, as we are more awake and usually have more energy. For over five years after starting to meditate, I could not meditate in the mornings, as I was not a morning person. Instead, I meditated when I got home from work before I did anything else. Now, and for the last twenty years, I love meditating in the morning. Meditating in the evening can be challenging if you are tired. We need energy to do these practices, as they require concentration.

Look around for the best possible place – a corner of a room is perfect – and ask yourself if it is a safe-feeling space. Will you be able to cry if need be and not worry about being judged by another person walking by at the time you do the practices? Maybe you live with other people and none of them would understand, or maybe they would support you. In any case, it likely needs to be a private space where you can be alone with yourself. Take some time to sit in your sacred space. How safe does it feel on a scale of one to ten? We are aiming for an eight at least. At the same time, if you do not feel safe anywhere on earth, it's totally fine if you don't get the eight. If the rating is lower than that, you need to make whatever changes you can think of so that you feel very safe in your physical meditation space. Try to think of what might be missing, what would help your space feel more comfortable and safe – it might even be a favorite scarf that you love to wear.

Please sit in your space and imagine what would help you feel safer. If there is no way you can have visible privacy, maybe you want to hang a curtain or put a room divider around your space, or maybe you need to change your space to another area of your home. Maybe there is only one time in the day where you can be there alone and that is the time when you will feel most safe. If such a time does not exist, you can ask the person living with you if they can alter their schedule a bit so that you can have a bit of alone time if there is not a physical room you can go to. Freedom

to sit with whatever comes up in this book will help you move beyond your blocks and what is holding you back in life.

Once you feel you have the privacy you need, are there any pictures or objects that always give you a good feeling when you look at them or touch them? These could be crystals, statues, lighting, plants, flowers, wall hangings, or photo(s) of your grandmother, spiritual guru, goddess, loved one(s), nature scenes, animals, birds, or whatever makes you feel good, possibly even supported, and especially safe.

What is on the floor of your space? Do you want to put a little area rug to sink your toes into or do you love the natural feel of wood? How comfortable is your chair? Does your back get sore after meditating a while? Do you need to have a cushion nearby to slip behind it to support it so you can continue meditating?

Please put some effort into refining your space so that you experience a sense of safety when you sit there. If any of the aforementioned helps you feel supported as well, please make sure to incorporate that. You can never have too much support. Once completed, confirm with yourself that the sense of external safety is at a level of an eight or the greatest level you can create, given what you have to work with. If you just can't seem to get to a level of safety you enjoy, it may be that your internal sense of safety is just so low that all the external safety in the world will not make you feel safe. You need to go inside and start to create safety internally. We will do that in this chapter.

Internal Safety

Carl Jung, founder of analytical psychology, taught about the inner child – the child who has repressed emotions, unmet needs, unhelpful core beliefs, deep seated fears, etc. This inner child usually didn't experience a strong sense of safety. Many people, including me, believe that our souls choose our parents. Hazrat Inayat Khan, a great Sufi master, wrote about the soul coming from the angelic planes. He said souls are like the rays of the sun, some long and some short. The long rays are souls that have come down to earth and have a unique purpose to accomplish as a human being. We are all one of those long rays. The thing with becoming human is that the soul is ready and agrees to face the human challenges, forgetting itself as the angel in bliss. Your soul came into this life agreeing to engage in the struggle of humanity as a human being, and that began when you were born or possibly even in the womb. It is extremely beneficial for our work on earth to heal the wounds of the past so that we can shine the light we came in with. Each one of us has

something unique and important to accomplish. It's never easy for anyone, and if your inner child does not feel safe because of events – familial, environment, and circumstances – it is ideal to help her/him feel safe.

Fifty or one hundred years ago, I don't think you would have heard people say what many people say today, "I am in my head; I'm not centered. I'm not grounded; I was out of my body." Many of us now know that we will feel better and safe if we feel centered and grounded. I'm sure you know some grounding exercises, or at least one. The one I practiced for years was imagining and sending a grounding cord from the root center down into the earth, even all the way to the center of the earth. This is very useful, and I would like to take this a few steps further.

Creating Safety Meditation

I invite you to sit in the meditative posture with your spine very straight. The spine is a transmitter and receiver of energy, so you want to make the most of it by sitting very straight yet relaxed. Bring your awareness to the spine, following it up and down, feet on the floor and hands in the lap, with palms facing down, roll the shoulders up and back, giving them a nice stretch as you do that. Bring your awareness to the heart center and take on the full breath, engaging the abdominal muscles to help expel all the air on the exhale and inhale fully and completely while you let the belly expand.

Once you are comfortable with the full breath, find the heartbeat and make the breath rhythmic with an eight/eight count, more or less being fine too. After breathing this way for five to ten minutes or until it feels natural and easy, continue the rhythmic breath and imagine you have a grounding cord that goes from your lower torso down into the earth. Imagine what color and texture it is or if it has a temperature.

If you do not see or imagine anything, notice if you feel any sensations or have a sense of knowing the grounding cord is there. Once you are in tune with your grounding cord, I invite you to exhale energy from your heart down into the earth, creating a strong connection with the earth. On the inhale, breathe up the unconditional love of mother earth into your heart center.

Breathe and direct the heart's energy in this fashion for a few breaths, and then widen it. Imagine that when you exhale, the stream of energy becomes wider, making the grounding cord wider and wider until it reaches the earth and goes straight down. We inhale up that wider stream of energy into the heart center. Every exhale, we widen the cord a little more so we can exhale more heart energy and inhale more heart energy. We keep breathing this way until the

grounding cord from the heart includes our legs out to our knees and our feet are entirely in the grounding cord. It may feel like a pyramid shape or even like an umbrella, but our connection with the earth is very wide.

Feel how stable you feel with a such a wide connection. See if you can feel your heart energy going down and running through your legs, feet, and the space around you. Then fill that space with unconditional love from mother earth. Continue with this practice until you feel solid, stable, and safe.

Next, imagine yourself as a small child. What age are you? Can you see or feel what you are wearing? Where are you? What are you feeling? How safe in the world do you feel? What doesn't feel safe? Who doesn't feel safe? I invite yourself to look at or feel your feet as that small child. What are you wearing on your feet? How do your feet feel in those socks, shoes, boots, or whatever is there? How grounded do your feet feel? How safe do you feel with what's on your feet? This is an opportunity to help your inner child feel safe and grounded. Please take the time to change the footwear on your inner child, taking off what exists and putting on what you know would be perfect for him/her to have fun, feel safe, and feel grounded. Take your time. You may need to try on a few different items. What color would you make the footwear? How does it feel? How does the little child in you feel with the new footwear? Hold the little you in your heart and let your inner child know you will keep him/her safe and grounded. You will be there for your inner child always, keeping him/her safe. Let your inner child know that you will be back to hold him/her again very soon and will continue to hold them in future. Give yourself time to really connect and love the little you, and when it feels right, open your eyes.

How was that meditation for you? Write down your experiences in your journal. Maybe the little you had something to say for you to write down as well. You can repeat this meditation any time or as often as you wish. It's not about getting it right or wrong; it's about the experience and making the inner child feel safe.

Often, your sense of trust in the self and trust in the Universe is based in your sense of safety or lack of a sense of safety in your inner child. My wish and intention is to help you reach a new level of trust – to trust more deeply in yourself and your capacity to expand your sense of trust in the Universe and Source and that you are here for a unique and glorious reason specific to only you and to help you trust in this process of healing and empowerment. Deepening your trust leads to faith and living with trust and faith will make a difference, even in your daily existence.

Safety in What or Who Is Presented

I remember when I met Claude Poncelet for the first time at a three-day shamanism workshop. He is an amazing, self-taught shaman from Belgium. I felt like I had found my spiritual teacher and spiritual family. I travelled from Victoria, British Columbia, Canada to a rustic retreat center south of Seattle with a friend. I remember feeling at home with all these strangers. Claude led us on a spiritual shamanic journey to invite in the Power Animal that wanted to work with us that weekend, and we explored our connection with Power Animals and what they came to teach us.

Power Animals, Totem Animals, or Spirit Animals usually refer to the essence of that animal in general. All animals have distinct qualities and each animal has a unique essence. When we connect or take on a Power Animal, we are not connecting with an individual animal but to the essence of all of that specific species on the planet. For example, the gorilla was one of my first Power Animals, and it was male. The male gorillas do an amazing job of protecting their entire families, and it was beneficial for me to feel protected and safe.

During that workshop, a new Power Animal showed up immediately for me, and it was the elephant. Not an actual elephant, but the general spirit of all elephants came to me in order to help me grow or develop in some way. I was so surprised, but soon after working with the elephant, I began to slow down to a pace I was unaccustomed. I was going so fast in my life, working long hours at my then business, Stelte Design, and living a very busy life, living way too fast. This was exactly the spiritual medicine I needed in my life at that time.

Years later, when I sacrificed shamanism in order to commit to HRM and my new teachers, Susanna and Puran Bair, I remember meditating once and suddenly realizing that somehow Susanna Bair had had called me. There was a calling I responded to. This was not something I knew previously, but that day I knew I was in the right place at the right time.

I invite you to reflect on how this book came to you. I encourage you to take out your journal or a piece of paper and write down what comes to you when you think of the following questions: How did you hear about me? Why are you reading this book? How do the few practices feel so far? How do you relate to the stories? What were you wishing for or dreaming of before you discovered this book? What are your biggest hopes? What has your spiritual journey been like until now? What would you like your spiritual journey to be like? What do you know needs to change the most or first?

Additionally, ask yourself what you tried before to get rid of your neck pain? How tired are you of having a stiff and sore neck? How long have you had throat chakra issues? How do you know this book is right or wrong for you? What are you feeling about this book right now? Are you ready for a change? How ready are you to face the inevitable discomfort that true and lasting change brings? Here is a meditation to help you go from the mind and into your heart for deeper knowing on these questions. This is to help you get clarity around whether this is the right book for you or not.

Clarity Meditation

Get into the posture, taking your time to feel your body sit nice, and straight, and strong while relaxed. Breathe into your heart center and begin counting the heartbeats. Breathing into and out of your heart, ask your heart what your level of trust in this book is. Nobody can answer this question except you. Go straight into the center of your heart center. The heart chakra is located along the spine and not in the front of the chest, so breathe closer to the back of the body, as this also helps you go deeper. Ask yourself, what is my level of trust that reading this book is very good for me, or something similar? Is this book a blessing for me or not? Without knowing what is in this book yet, how does your heart feel about continuing to read it? If it's time to pass the book on, that is fine! This is about you and what is best for you. Explore whatever you notice or feel in your heart. Is there a sense of knowing of sorts? What exists in your heart around this book?

If you ever feel sleepy practicing HRM, it's usually because your breath is not full enough. I still check in with my abdomen occasionally to make sure I am breathing fully. The practices have a greater effect when you breathe as fully as possible. It may feel like a bit of a workout in the beginning, but you get used to it.

If you have been doing another style of meditation, I encourage you to just try this method for a while and see how it fits. Do it as an experiment for a month or two, and if you don't like it, go back to your old method. Please feel free to contact me at cherylstelte.com to ask any questions or gain access to my free meditation recordings.

My hope here is that you have clarity around if you are meant to read this book and do the program contained therein on your own or with me personally. It will benefit you to be aware of your level of safety and trust moving forward. It doesn't have to be perfect, and you can even feel a certain amount of unsafety and little trust and read the book. The more aware you are, the better

for you. This is a great practice for anything we want to embark on. Sometimes our minds find something enticing but it is short-lived. Getting in touch with our level of safety and trust with anything helps us make the commitment to ourselves if that is what's best for us. Spiritual dating is a great thing, and when we are ready to go deeper, making commitment to one thing, even if for a designated period of time, such as eleven weeks, it is most beneficial to create the change your heart longs for.

I hope you have found a new sense of deep safety within and without yourself to trust and do the practices in this book to continue on this journey of self-discovery, healing, and empowerment. Know that you can come back to this chapter at any time if you start to get uncomfortable with anything that comes up for you. This is your safe haven chapter.

We have begun to create a foundation for change through creating a deep sense of safety to do this work. In the next chapter, we will continue with developing through other techniques.

Chapter 6: Creating the Foundation for Change with Meditation, Breathwork, and Simple Exercise

“Spirituality is in no way a hindrance to worldly progress. A worldly success when gained through the power of spirituality has a stronger foundation.”

— Hazrat Inayat Khan

In order to manifest the changes you deeply desire, you need to first create a strong foundation, one that will support you through all the highs and lows of this process. You want to be at your fundamental best physically, mentally, energetically, and spiritually. You do not need to be a superstar, but you need to start with as solid a foundation as possible, and that means, for most of us, a notch or two above where you are currently.

Physically, I understand most of you who are reading this book are currently experiencing a certain level of pain, likely in the neck and/or shoulders. My goal is to help you ease into this a certain amount, and I will share with you some of my favorite exercises that get results without having to spend one hour a day doing yoga or other stretching exercises. Fifteen minutes will do the trick. This will create a physical foundation for the work ahead. Mentally, you will just read your commitment to self every day as a reminder of what you are doing and why you are doing it. Energetically, you will discover the power of breath and learn to direct it. This is the foundation for becoming your own energy healer and will help you dive into that work in future chapters. Spiritually, we will cover the basics of the Full Rhythmic Breath, which will give you an amazing foundation for spiritual growth and change.

Exercises to Ease Neck Pain

Let’s start with the physical aspect. I’m sure you have tried various forms of western medicine, alternative therapies, and treatments to heal your neck pain. Some of them have helped and some not, but even if something(s) helped, the same pain keeps coming back, or it returns in a different way. Nothing you tried helped you eliminate your neck pain entirely. I would like to share some of the exercises that helped me tremendously.

As you know, I had a pinched nerve in my neck, and it took a great deal of time to recover from that, having suffered with intense pain for over eighteen months. The number one stretching exercise that helped me is a bit of a spinal twist and what I refer to as the cross-over stretch.

Cross-Over Stretch

- Lie down on your back on the floor or a yoga mat and raise your knees.
- Put your arms out to your sides at a ninety-degree angle from the body, with palms facing down.
- Lift your right leg and cross it over your left leg, letting both legs fall to the left, without letting your right shoulder come off the floor.
- Keeping your shoulders on the floor and your hands face down, turn your head to the right as far as possible without making you uncomfortable.
- It is important to not push to a level of pain during this stretch. Try to breathe as deeply as possible, and with each breath, relax the body, letting it fall to the floor. I like to count seconds and, depending on your level of flexibility and current pain, allow yourself to remain in the stretch for thirty to ninety seconds to start before repeating it on the other side. I found the best time for me to do this stretch is in the late evening before bed. It helps me relax so I can easily sleep.

Acupressure

Once you are in bed, it is an ideal time to do a little acupressure on your neck. Acupressure is similar to acupuncture but uses human fingers instead of needles. It works with the meridians, which are energy pathways that run through our bodies. There are a number of pathways that run through the back of the neck, and by pressing certain points, we can release stuck energy and get that energy flowing more easily again.

I think the best time to do this is as soon as you get into bed. Get yourself comfortable in bed and have your room at your ideal level of warmth for sleep. Lie flat on your back and take a few long, deep breaths, focusing on the exhale; exhale with a sigh. This is an opportunity to let go of all the worries of the day and breathe in the regeneration we experience in sleep.

- Begin by applying finger pressure at the small intestine points behind the arm socket. To locate these points, cross your arms over your chest and reach around to your underarm on each side with your middle finger. Slowly slide your finger two to three inches up the space where the arm joins the body with slight pressure, looking for a tender spot. It is often halfway between the underarm and the top of the shoulder. There are actually a number of points along here. Feel around for a sensitive spot and apply pressure with one finger on each side. Press as hard as feels

comfortable, and breathe deeply for about two minutes if you can; three minutes is a lot, and more is not always better.

- Next, put your arms down by your side and then lift your hands up and place two to three fingers on the shoulder points which are located by placing your fingers on the shoulder one to two inches away from your neck. You can also run your fingers along the top of your shoulders and find the most sensitive spot. Anyone reading this book will likely have tension in the shoulders, so press there for a couple minutes while breathing deeply into the lower abdomen.
- We then want to follow the remaining points up the neck and find our way up to the points at the base of the skull. Locate these points by placing a couple fingers on the spine at the neck and slide them outward slowly until you feel the muscles, about one and a half inches out. Apply pressure on each side of the neck at these points for as long as is comfortable.
- Alternate which fingers you use so they do not get sore. Find a balance between discomfort and relief. If your arms or fingers get tired, put them back down by your side and just breathe deeply and rest for a while. Resume what you are doing when it feels right.
- Please place your hands in front of you and bring your hands together, crossing and locking your fingers together. Keeping fingers locked together, bring your hands behind your head and use your thumbs to find the points at the base of the skull. Slowly slide your thumbs outward until you find where there is a natural indentation. Release the fingers and get comfortable. Press on these points at the base of the skull, pressing upward for as long as possible. This is the final release. This exercise will release some neck pain and provide some great relaxation as well as a great start to a good night's sleep.

We do need to move physically, as we are physical beings. If you have an exercise routine that works for you, keep doing it! As a minimum, I recommend yoga sun salutations. This was the most effective exercise for recovering from the pinched nerve in my neck. I am providing a point by point description here, and please also feel free to try out yoga if you haven't already. If your pain level is very high, there are all sorts of classes for people with back pain and these same instructors can usually help anyone with neck pain.

Hatha Yoga Sun Salutation

- Stand in one place with your feet together or two to three inches apart, big toes touching, heels out
- Press the palms lightly together in front of the chest with the shoulders back and down
- The crown of the head lifts up, and the chin is parallel to the floor
- Inhale and sweep the arms up and look up at the thumbs
- Lift out of the waist, reaching up towards the sky
- Exhale as you bend forward and down from the waist into forward fold
- Press the palms flat on the floor (or as far as you can get), bending knees slightly. Line fingertips up with toes
- Bring your forehead towards the legs
- Inhale and step the right foot back into a high lunge. Make sure the left knee is over the ankle and toes are pointing forward
- Shoulders are back and down, the chest presses forward, crown lifts up, and the back leg is straight
- Step the left foot back into a plank, so the body is one straight line and in a push-up position
- Press the heels back and reach the crown of the head forward
- Exhale bending the knees to the floor and bend the elbows to lower the chin and chest to the floor
- Reach the hips up towards the sky, arching the back. Inhale into upward facing dog, scooping the chest forward, straighten the arms, and roll onto the tops of the feet
- Reach the crown of the head up, press the chest forward, and lift the hips and legs off of the floor; bend the elbows slightly if it feels like you are straining the low back
- Exhale into downward facing dog, tucking the toes under, bend the elbows, and lift the hips up and back
- Press firmly into the hands and arms to press the hips back, letting the head hang from the neck press the heels into the floor. The legs are straight or can be slightly bent to flatten the back

- Inhale and step right forward into a high lunge, stepping the right foot forward between the two hands and adjusting the leg so that the knee is directly over the ankle and the toes and knee are pointing forward
- Keep the back leg straight as you sink the hips down; the crown lifts up, and the chest and gaze are forward
- Exhale into forward fold, pressing the palms flat to the floor; if necessary bend the knees slightly
- If you have the flexibility, bring the fingertips in line with the toes
- Reach the forehead in towards the legs and inhale and sweep the arms up
- Stay in Mountain alignment, and look up at the thumbs, lifting out of the waist, reaching up towards the sky
- Exhale and bring the palms together in mountain and place the feet together or two to three inches apart, parallel, and facing forward
- The palms are lightly pressed together with the shoulders back and down, and the chest presses in towards the thumbs while the crown of the head lifts up, and the chin is parallel to the floor

Depending on your current level, start with what feels easy and just push yourself a little further. For example, if doing three feels good and four sun salutations starts to feel hard, just do four and increase as you can, continuing every morning. Know that you are not only helping your neck; you are helping your entire body.

Meditation and Breath

You've heard the story about what motivated me to start meditating, and I must say, it is one thing that has provided me with the most healing and personal and spiritual growth. I am a different person today than I was twenty-five years ago. Yes, we all change, or at least most of us change over the years, but I am so grateful to have meditation to help me heal and grow to become the person I am today. I would never have even come close without it.

I started with a type of mindfulness meditation, read various books, and tried different methods. I worked with the chakras for years and eventually discovered shamanism. Meditation and shamanic practice are two different practices, and I did both for years. When I discovered Heart Rhythm Meditation, which was developed by Puran and Susanna Bair, my meditations went

to a whole new level. This was soon after I had ended a very difficult relationship, and went to India for four and a half months to recuperate and get my yoga teacher training. During that time, I did a lot of meditation on the third eye, staying at an ashram, and meditating a great deal, as part of the yoga teacher training. I was on a spiritual quest and loved the experiences of upward meditation.

Before that, I enjoyed meditating on my heart center and moving energy through all the chakras. When I returned from India, I missed meditating on my heart center, and while I tried to do my old meditations, I could not keep my energy there, no matter how hard I tried. My energy kept going up. Eventually, out of frustration, I googled “heart and meditation” and discovered HeartMath and Heart Rhythm Meditation. I found a couple of free meditations online and favored the Heart Rhythm Meditation, and I ordered Puran and Susanna’s book, *Living from the Heart*.

As soon as the book arrived, I jumped right in and in little time was able to keep my energy and focus in my heart center. After a number of months of doing the practices every day, one day my heart center suddenly grew to be bigger than me; I was sitting inside my heart. This was so amazing for me. All I felt was this deep, pure love – nothing else. The room seemed brighter, and the love just flowed through me. The experience lasted about twenty to thirty minutes. I used to fall out of peak experiences if I thought certain thoughts, but this incredibly strong experience held and held. I just sat there and wept in the beauty of love as I breathed my enormous heart. It was like time stopped, and I became a being of light and love, fully here and present, but my physical self fell into the background.

I could still feel my heartbeat throughout the experience, but I was more in my energetic self than my physical self. It was like my soul came out of me and expanded, taking over. My soul is pure light and love, and that is simply what I was for that twenty to thirty minutes. When it subsided, I grabbed the book and went to their website, and after reading about their two-year intensive program, I signed up for IAM University of the Heart and did all of IAM Heart’s trainings. I am now on the faculty, co-teaching graduate programs in addition to teaching and mentoring my own students. I am also a personal retreat guide.

In this book and in all my programs, we will be using the “Full Rhythmic Breath” which is the foundation practice of Heart Rhythm Meditation. The more advanced practices in this book were developed over time by spirit moving through me and guiding me. These practices have benefited myself and others immensely, and I look forward to sharing these with you in upcoming

chapters. For now, we will begin with the Full Breath and then move onto the Full Rhythmic Breath (FRM).

Basic Full Breath Meditation

Sitting in the posture described above, I invite you to place your hand on your lower abdomen with your thumb over your naval. Begin by taking long, deep breaths, doing your best to breathe into the lower abdomen. On the inhale, we fill up the lower abdomen like a balloon, breathing in as much as possible, while keeping the shoulders and the rest of the body relaxed. On the exhale, we squeeze the abdominal muscles to expel all the air.

This takes some practice, as we are all used to breathing into our chest, or some of us are used to only breathing into our shoulders. Deep breathing takes times to learn, and I trust you will have patience with yourself. When we breathe fully in this way, brain function changes. In our everyday breath, the medulla oblongata at the back of the brain is in charge of breathing. As soon as we engage the abdominal muscles, that brain function moves to the frontal lobe brain and, in so doing, frees up the back of the brain. This freeing up of the back of the brain allows access to your subconscious.

In this style of meditation, the intention is not to get rid of thought. For years, I heard people say they couldn't meditate because they can't get rid of their thoughts. We value our thoughts when they come from the subconscious. Yes, you may still have thoughts about what to make for dinner or how we want to spend your weekend, but you have more and more to concentrate on, so it keeps the mind busy and those everyday thoughts are not so intrusive. You want to access the subconscious because it brings up your own internal guidance, memories of the past that want to be healed, and more and more information about who you truly are and how you can best pursue and live your purpose here on earth.

Full Rhythmic Breath

I will now cover the preliminary details to obtaining the Full Rhythmic Breath. Posture is of importance to practice the Full Rhythmic Breath; sit on a comfortable chair with the spine straight and the head lifted toward the ceiling. The spine is our major energy highway, consisting of the chakras, or energy centers, which are located at the spine, along with the energy channels that run along the sides, the Ida and Pingala (this will be discussed further later). The main thing is that you want to keep the spine as straight as possible for optimum energy flow. Your feet are flat on the floor and about hip-width apart. You want the knees to be level with the hips, which

allows you to breathe fully into the lower abdomen. The hands are placed on the thighs either palms up or down, whichever feels right to you. Palms up are more receptive and palms down are more grounding. We have chakras in the feet and hands and facing both downward and connecting to these chakras helps us become grounded and centered. I learned the value of keeping the spine straight early on, and it was IAM Heart where I learned to keep the level of the knees below the hips. IAM Heart calls this posture the Pharaoh posture. Once seated and comfortable, lift the shoulders up toward the ears and roll them back, letting them fall. Feel the opening of the chest and the heart center.

I want you to remember this: *breath is what powers the practices*. Without a full breath, you will not have the effect you desire. This is probably the hardest part to perfect, but the benefits are endless. Breathing with a full breath and engaging the abdominal muscles calms the nervous system and stimulates the vagus nerve, which transmits information to or from the surface of the brain to tissues and organs elsewhere in the body. This oxygenates the body and allows access to your subconscious.

No one ever exhales completely in their daily breathing due to a subconscious fear of death. If we exhale all the way, there will not be another breath and we will die. With the Full Rhythmic Breath, it is so important to exhale all the way and expel all the air completely. We exhale all that has been used up and subsequently invite in the new. Every breath is a new beginning, so at the end of the breath, you want to focus on how far you exhale. You want to give the abdominal muscles an extra little squeeze after you think you exhaled all the air, as there is usually just a little further you can go with this. The abdomen automatically wants to expand, and this is where we can breathe in new life on the inhale. It's exciting that we can take the time to prompt change in this way just through the breath.

The last step is to find and focus on the heartbeat. You want to practice the above posture and breath until the full breath becomes automatic; otherwise, it can be difficult to focus on the heartbeat and breathing fully at the same time. Depending on how much breathwork you have done, this can take from one hour to three weeks. Focusing on the heartbeat helps you get in touch with your rhythm, which creates more rhythm in your life. How much out of rhythm is your life? This small step helps a great deal in helping you find your own internal rhythm, which reflects in your outer life.

Full Rhythmic Breath Meditation

Begin with the posture, and practice breathing fully until it feels natural or at least comfortable. Place the fingertips of one hand over the sternum in the center of the chest, applying a bit of pressure. Sit and breathe fully and notice if you can feel the heartbeat vibrating through the fingertips. Continue with that for a couple minutes. Next, try placing the flat of the hand or the flat of the fingers over the physical heart. Can you feel your heartbeat this way? The third method is to hold the breath after the inhale. Now, it's important that we don't hold the breath in the chest. Of course, when we are stressed, we hold the breath in the chest and tense our shoulders. This can be hard on the nervous system and hard on the organs. You want to keep the shoulders relaxed and hold the breath in the belly.

After the inhale, hold the breath for as long as is comfortable and then exhale. This is often a reliable way to feel the heart beating. It can take some time to feel the heartbeat, and if this is you, don't worry, it will come. Over the years spent teaching, I find that as we slowly move to becoming more heart centered, more and more people find their heartbeat faster than they used to. Once you find your heartbeat or even your pulse, you want to count how many heartbeats you feel on the inhale and how many you have on the exhale. Over time, the goal is to get to eight heartbeats in and eight heartbeats out. Some of us start at four or six and others, and often athletes or those who have worked with the breath previously start with ten or twelve. The starting point doesn't matter so much as the fact that you feel something. The next step is to make the number of heartbeats on the inhale the same as the number on the exhale. If you don't feel your heartbeat or pulse, no need to worry; you can count seconds. This is called the Full Rhythmic Breath. It is a long, full inhalation and long, full exhalation, breathing into the lower abdomen while you follow the rhythm of the heartbeat using six or eight counts in and six or eight counts out. Please practice this as long as you can.

Directing the Breath

With the Full Rhythmic Breath mastered, you can begin to direct the breath. This is how you will become your own energy worker. We are energetic beings, and we can make the most of this by learning to direct the breath in ways that heal and empower us. I can write about all the scientific proof about humans being energetic beings, but I would like you to experience your own energy in a simple and easy way. This practice is a Heart Rhythm Meditation practice.

Directing the Breath Meditation

Please sit in the Pharaoh posture and take on the Full Rhythmic Breath. When that is flowing nicely, find your heartbeat, and breathe with an eight count. Lift your dominant hand up so the palm is facing you. Open your eyes and place the center of your palm in front of the center of your chest and about six inches away. Close your eyes again, and focus again on the posture and full, rhythmic breath. You want to then see the intention that you will exhale your heart's energy from your heart and through the palm of your hand in front of you. We are breathing fully with the belly in the background and focus on sending the heart's energy into the space in front of you through the hand. Keep doing this until you feel the physical sensations created in the center of the palm by the energy directed there. Just keep breathing in this fashion until you feel something. You might feel warmth or coolness, tingling, or even pulsing. You may need to do it for a while or even repeat the exercise a number of times, but you can do this. This exercise just helps the mind believe that you can, and will, direct energy.

I encourage you to practice the Full Rhythmic Breath every day for ten to twenty minutes to start and eventually over time sitting for forty-five minutes. That may sound like a lot, but most people spend the first twenty to thirty minutes on technique, and once we get over the 30 minute hump, we feel the practice working for us energetically. It's in the last fifteen to twenty minutes where we get the energetic and emotional results. One of the biggest challenges is to develop a regular, daily practice. Once you are sitting, it's usually pretty easy. It's getting yourself to sit every day. This is where the personal commitment comes in. Maybe you want to read your commitment every morning when you get up. I find that the long-term goal is forty-five minutes. That may sound outrageous, but I find that most people quit at twenty minutes. This is when we get bored, or it's when our stuff or issues start to come up.

This reminds me of when I used to swim lengths. My son swam in a swim club for some time, and I admired all these kids whose bodies flowed so beautifully through the water. Eventually, I wanted to do the same thing and took an adult stroke correction course so I could swim multiple lengths. I discovered swimming is not just about the strokes but so much about how we breathe!

Swimming in a twenty-five-meter pool, the first three or four lengths were a piece of cake. However, it slowly became more difficult for me to continue. My muscles started to ache a bit. I doubted I could continue the breathing, and I started with the negative self-talk, such as, "Why am

I even doing this? What was I thinking? This is so hard. I should just go home; today is not the day for this. I feel weak, etc.”

This continued until I would get over the hump of the twelfth length; then everything changed. I got into the flow of swimming, and it became easy. I felt the joy of my body gliding through the water. I usually did 100 to 110 lengths in an hour even though I was a smoker. I enjoyed the swimming so much that I eventually quit smoking, and my lengths went up to 120.

Meditating is similar; it starts to get hard at twenty minutes, but if you can push through that next ten, you are over the hump and in the flow. Just keep breathing, and just keep counting heartbeats, as awkward or uncomfortable as it becomes. This is where you begin to have deep and profound experiences. Trust me, it is worth the effort. You won't get there overnight, and you definitely need to practice, but you just need to trust you will get there and keep sitting and practicing. Most of us can only meditate once a day, but in truth, meditating twice a day is optimal. After developing the ability to sit for forty-five minutes, I recommend forty-five minutes in the morning and ten to thirty minutes in the evening, especially when you are serious about change and/or are going through a program such as the one in this book. It is certainly not all bliss; healing happens in longer meditations, and that can be hard at times, but you will also move into the heights of joy and glorification!

You have learned how to create a great foundation for change with physical exercise, basic acupressure, breathwork, and the Full Rhythmic Breath. We will now be moving onto the chakras and your own personal discovery of their location and how you experience them. I will be holding you in my heart as you take these steps forward and begin to develop one of the practices that will help you become more of who you truly are.

Chapter 7: Getting Intimate with Your Unique Chakras

“The soul is the divine breath. It purifies, revivifies, and heals the instrument through which it functions.”

— Hazrat Inayat Khan

No doubt you know something about the chakras. You likely know they are energy centers that are located within our bodies and energetic beings. Today, whether I am teaching or healing, it amazes me how many people know about the chakras. It seems to me that twenty years ago, not many people did, nor were they interested. I’m grateful for your current knowledge and your openness to learn more. I have been a spiritual student for a long time, and I am a spiritual teacher. Did I mention how much I resisted this term “spiritual teacher?” My throat chakra just wouldn’t let me be seen that way, let alone be recognized for it. Anyway, I’ve come to learn that as students, we all eventually become our own teachers. We are all unique, and what works for one person may not work the same or as well for others.

To me, this applies to the chakras as well. I went online to see all the images for the chakras. There is some consistency, but the location, images, and names vary. If you think about it, in the Hindu tradition, for example, there was likely one person who meditated on their chakras and came up with some visuals, colors, sensations, emotions, and thoughts. After time, they decided that they knew where the exact locations were and decided to share this information with others. I’m sure some of these people had the same or similar experiences and others didn’t. Yes, this book is partly about the chakras and most specifically the throat chakra. I only wish to claim to be an expert in my own experience of them, and I would like you to explore and become your own expert on the chakras.

A few weeks ago, I taught shamanism through the heart class, and part of what we did in the meditation was work on the back of the solar plexus. I always like to have the students share their experiences. One woman shared that she felt a strong connection with this chakra and that it was purple. Now, I don’t think I could find anywhere that the solar plexus is purple. However, for her, it was purple, and I was elated that she had this experience. I don’t know why her solar plexus is purple, but I’m glad it is and that she was the one who discovered it. I used to lead people in meditations, guiding them to experience the correct, corresponding colors as stated in various literature, and it never worked all that well, as it didn’t work all that well for me. I feel much closer

and connected to my chakras in my own unique experience, and I would love for you to do the same.

I studied and meditated on the chakras years ago, and I remember one author who explained it was best to go up and down the chakras like an elevator and then explode roses in front of the chakras, especially the heart center. The book I was following did not give a description of how to explode roses, so I would just imagine a large rose and let it explode into pieces in front of me. I don't remember ever benefiting from that part of the practice, but I was committed to growing spiritually and so did it long enough until I knew it wasn't meant for me. I don't have that book anymore and stopped doing those practices long, long ago because I outgrew them and moved onto other practices. My point is that many of the practices from the wide range of teachers or practitioners today may work well for you, but my heart's desire is to open a whole new door for you – a door that invites you to explore and work with your chakras as you and only you experience them. You are a unique being. There is nobody else in the world who has ever looked or been exactly like you. There is nobody the exact same today, and there never will be anyone who is precisely like you in the future. So why should your energy centers be the exact same as someone else's?

The most common way to access these energy centers is through the mind. We use our mind to focus on them and do all sorts of things. There is a great deal of music available that can help you get in touch with your chakras. I tried many of these, and none of them worked for me, but that doesn't mean they won't work for you. Please let me encourage you to pursue what attracts you. Maybe you would like to create your own music for the chakras. There are singing bowls for the chakras made of crystal or brass, and when played, in various ways, the vibration of the sound is felt and continues for a long time. The sounds are fantastic. I like singing bowls because the sound vibration they create fills the space and your being so beautifully, but they don't actually help me connect to my chakras near as much as meditation. I find focused meditation the best way to access and work with the chakras, and I would like you to try to join me in the exploration of the chakras.

Understanding Chakras with Heart/Emotion versus Mind

There are many diagrams and images in books and online that demonstrate the specific location of the chakras in the body. Some are accurate, and some are not so accurate. For years, when I worked with the chakras, I placed my attention in the front of my body, and I realized years

later that sometimes I wasn't even totally in my body; I was doing the work as if the chakras were out in front. Once I realized this, I tried to place my attention in the middle of my body, and that helped me to be inside my body. I have come to realize that many of my students and clients do the same thing. For me, the actual chakras are mostly located along the inside of the spine, and when we work with them in front, we are only working at half strength. I discovered that the more I focus on the chakras at the spine, the more powerful the meditations, the more energy I feel, and therefore, the more powerful healing and empowerment I experience.

Chakra Locations

I would like to introduce the chakras here by simple location based on my experience and the experience of my students and clients when I do this exercise with them. If you are going to work with chakras, it is fundamental that you know the exact location in your own body, so you can focus your energy and breath there.

When working on a specific a chakra or chakras, I often ask my students if they would like me to touch their spine where the exact location is. This is usually helpful, so feel free to reach around with your hand and touch the location if you can. I remember working on the back of the solar plexus and placing an object with a soft, pointy part on it between the back of the solar plexus chakra and the chair. It was too hard to reach around and hold my finger there, so I found this extremely helpful. I'm a little embarrassed to say the object I used was a vacuum cleaner attachment, but it was the nearest thing to me at the time. I had been meditating and didn't want to stop for too long.

How to Locate Your Chakras

I am going to describe to you how I locate the chakras. There are an endless number of books out there on the chakras that have varying descriptions of chakra locations. I encourage you to go by feel, looking for either physical sensations, emotions, or both. Sometimes, the visual just comes, and that is totally fine too. Either at the beginning or end of one of your meditations, move your awareness up and down the spine, and then, starting with the root, see if you notice anything in the following locations as you practice the Full Rhythmic Breath. Remember to reach around and touch the locations physically if that helps. Take your time with this exercise and make it your own. You can repeat this, whether you experience something or not. I have provided a list of guidelines for easy location below:

Root: bottom tip of coccyx

Sacral: two to three inches below waist at back (inside spine)

Solar plexus: feel in front first, soft spot below sternum where ribs come together;
straight back from this location (inside spine)

Heart: center of chest and back (inside spine)

Throat: at the top of the hump on the spine (inside spine)

Third eye: in center of forehead, back in the middle of head

Crown: above center of head

While using the Full Rhythmic Breath, take some time to breathe into and out of each of these locations to become more familiar with them. There is no need to imagine colors, spinning, or images; this is simply to help you understand where the chakras actually are in your body. If colors or anything else comes for you, please just embrace it. Your centers are already communicating with you.

While meditating on my unique chakras at these locations, I decided to open myself to a more personal visual of my chakras to see if it varied from lotus petals or any other traditional representation. What I discovered was that my personal chakras are all represented by bouquets of flowers. Yes, they are not circular, with varying lotus petals or anything even close to that. When I open myself to experience my chakras as they are, in *my* being, along *my* spine, they are bouquets of flowers as follows:

Root Chakra: Red roses

Sacral Chakra: Daisies

Solar Plexus Chakra: Daffodils

Heart Chakra: Sun, with long and very bright rays

Throat Chakra: Irises with roots in Root Chakra and stem through Sacral, Solar Plexus,
and Heart

Third Eye Chakra: Blue bells

Crown Chakra: Orchid plant

I was so grateful when I discovered this about the chakras because I always felt somehow challenged in creating or superimposing someone else's images on, or in, my chakras. This just felt so right because it was not from my mind; it was from my inner senses and knowing. Notice the seventh chakra is not a bouquet of flowers but an actual plant. I actually don't work there a

whole lot. I find that when we work on the lower chakras, the crown automatically takes care of itself. It opens, it shines, and it does whatever it needs to do. It is ideal to work on the lower chakras for a long time before venturing into the crown chakra.

I used to be visual in my meditations, and now I mostly feel energy and emotions, as well as physical sensations. When I want a visual, it comes easy, but I find that I go deeper without the visual. In this practice, before I got the visual, I felt the energy of the chakra. I move my focus around the chakra, front to back and up and down, until I find the most intense location. They are there and just waiting for you to access them. Search to feel their energy. Each of your experiences of the chakras, if you explore with an open heart, will be slightly to largely different. I find it is much easier to access the chakras' energy and work with it when you have a more intimate connection with your own unique chakras.

Chakra by Location

Now that you have located your personal chakras, you want to get to know them better. You can read about them endlessly, and this is useful; I encourage you to take all that knowledge and bring it to your own experience, testing this knowledge to see if it is true.

I had a client on a one-week personal meditation retreat with me, and during our session together, she told me that the entire universe was in her solar plexus. This was a profound experience for her, and she described it to me as best she could, and of course, words could not explain. I had the same experience at different times, so I felt that I knew what she was talking about, but it still doesn't mean our experience was identical. She then said she felt kind of robbed. When I asked her why, she wanted to know why nobody ever told her that the entire universe was in her solar plexus. I couldn't help but smile. If someone told her the entire universe was in her solar plexus, even if she grew to believe it fully, it wouldn't give her the experience of knowing it at an experiential level.

My client will never forget how to experience this, but that also doesn't mean she can experience it at will. I gave her the meditation practices to do, and she did them; through these practices, she had this experience. This is what I am doing here. I am giving you some practices and encouraging you, as much as possible, to have your own experiences.

Throat Chakra and Supporting Chakras

This book is primarily about the throat chakra as it relates to your neck pain, and we will work intensely with the throat chakra in a further chapter. For now, we will continue to work with all the chakras because they are all connected. The throat chakra is not an isolated center; it is connected with one through seven. All the lower chakras below five (the throat chakra) have an effect on it, and five has an effect on six and seven.

Across the board with my clients, I found that most of them have throat chakra issues, and as you'll remember, it can be one of the hardest chakras to heal. Part of the reason for that is that the energy runs up the spine and hits the bottleneck of the throat center. The energy naturally wants to come out as self-expression and, most importantly, expression of your purpose. Few of us feel grounded, stable, and safe enough in the root chakra to let our creative expression flow all the way up at the throat. Our creativity may be distorted or weak in the sacral chakra so that expression will be distorted or weak. The solar plexus chakra also wants to be expressed through the throat chakra, and we understand our own sense of power and truth; we understand how we may stifle our own power or sense of truth because that is how we've been conditioned.

Next, we get to the heart chakra, and we want to remember that all the lower three centers run through the heart before they get to the throat. If we have a small, broken, or sad heart because of all that happened to us in our earlier years and we don't process this, that darker energy comes up from the heart and into the throat, either getting stuck or expressing in ways we regret. That's why we often get a sense of hopelessness when the energy of the other chakras builds up in the throat, but there is hope! Let me help you get to know your chakras a little further so we can begin to work with them.

Chakra Meditation

Please get into the meditative posture and begin breathing fully. When it feels right, create a rhythmic breath by counting your heartbeats or pulse. Let this practice become comfortable and solid within you. When you are ready, feel into your confidence level, knowing where your chakras are located. You've done this practice before and have accomplished a sense of where they are located in your body. Let yourself feel the confidence of knowing you are ready to move on to a new practice.

Start with the root center. Breathe into its exact location as best you can. Tune into the energy of it and any other details associated with it like images, colors, physical sensations, emotions, or even smells. I want you to imagine that the root chakra (and all the chakras) open front to back

and notice how that feels and if it feels right. You may want to experiment with how this chakra operates for you specifically. Take your time. I am going to work with the notion that it opens front to back. I invite you to breathe energy into the root chakra from the space behind it. Inhale from the space behind it, and exhale into the center, as if you are filling it up or lighting it up or whatever wants to happen. Once you get comfortable with this, see if you can inhale from the front of the root chakra and exhale into it. Do this a number of times until you have an experience of it.

Then I invite you to inhale from the space in front of the chakra and the space behind the chakra at the same time and exhale that energy into the chakra. Notice how you imagine the energy coming in. Do you see or feel the energy or both? We will work with this further later on. Do this for about ten breaths, and move onto the sacral chakra and do the same thing, working all the way up to the third eye chakra. Check in periodically throughout the meditation to make sure you are breathing fully and that you feel your heart beating, keeping it rhythmic. You also want to check in occasionally with your spine and posture, ensuring you are sitting straight.

Value of Journaling Meditations

If you're like me, you think you will remember everything that happened in the meditation, but you won't remember it a few days from now. Some of the details might even vanish in a few hours. It is good practice to write down all the details in your journal and read them before you do the practice again.

Years ago, I had a student who meditated every day. She was dedicated to her personal growth and the practices. She often wrote in her journal and loved the changes she was going through. Then, one day, she decided to read her meditation journal to review practices and the results she achieved. She could not believe what she discovered. For five months, she often got the guidance she needed to paint. She wrote in her journal and then forget about it. It took her five months of writing it down to realize how important this was to her. Once she realized it, she soon pulled out all her art supplies, expecting she would start painting and she didn't, couldn't, and wouldn't. She looked at her paints and her canvas every day and just couldn't do it. I asked if she had neck pain, as it seemed like a throat chakra issue. She did, and I gave her some practices to try. She started painting and even began using her art in her fashion design business, selling renderings to clients who didn't even exist before. Later in this book, you will learn how she moved to this success so you can too.

Please pat yourself on the heart for making it this far into this book. You have learned a great deal, and I would love to hear about your experience. Please also feel free to utilize my free guided meditations on my website.

I hope you gained a deeper understanding of the chakras and how they are connected. I encourage you to continue to explore your chakras on a personal level and trust you have made notes on your personal assessments in your journal. You can expect that as you change and grow, your chakras may change too and this often happens through energetic healing in the chakras. In the next chapter, we will move into healing the chakras and how and why to invite in spiritual support.

Chapter 8: Introduction to Healing and the Chakras

“Healing is embracing what is most feared; healing is opening what has been closed, softening what has hardened into obstruction, healing is learning to trust life.”

— Jeanne Achterberg

Hopefully, you have been practicing the meditations mentioned earlier, and if you’re not, hopefully you will when the time is right for you. We will be taking this one step further in this chapter to touch into healing. I would first like to mention spiritual support, as it is a key component to deepening practices and getting the most out of them, although it is often overlooked in many spiritual paths.

What is spiritual support? Spiritual support is tuning into the invisible world and specifically invisible beings who we admire, adore, love, or feel a strong connection with or would even like to develop a strong connection with. Having spiritual support will help you on your journey to healing your throat chakra issues and can benefit you in any area of your life. These beings can be a deceased loved one like a grandmother or a deceased spiritual teacher or saint. The Angels, Buddha, and Jesus are popular beings to attune to, as they created great change in humanity and helped with our evolution. Spiritual support can come from ancient gods or goddesses like Shiva, Ganesh, Green Tara, Mohamed, Mother Mary, or any great being who we admire.

The benefits of our own spiritual development and healing can be tremendous through this practice. It’s the great qualities that we recognize in them that exist in us. Through this kind of connection, we develop these qualities over time. We may be grateful for the unconditional love that a grandmother had for us, the power of Shiva, the joy of Ganesh, or how much change a spiritual master made in the world.

A spiritual being can be a living being as well like the Dali Lama or even Marianne Williamson. As I am the one providing these practices to you, you may want to tune into me and my spiritual energy to assist you in gaining the most from your meditations. This is not about the ego but an opening. We are all one, and the separation we experience is an illusion. Please join me in a meditation to call in the spirit of a great spiritual being.

Spiritual Support Meditation

When we begin our meditation, once we get into the posture and move into the full, rhythmic breath, we consciously call them in. It’s as simple as placing the intention that you are asking

and that they will respond. Notice how or where they show up. Do you get a visual, a physical sensation, emotion, or a sense of knowing? Maybe you can even feel their vibration. Notice where you sense them. Are they in front of you or behind you? Are they in front to strongly make themselves seen and known, or do they have your back and stand firmly behind you? This may be difficult at first and I encourage you to trust this practice. Keep repeating this daily for a few minutes at the beginning of your meditation and as you meditate; it can help to tune into them periodically. This practice helps pull qualities and various sorts of power out of you that you do not recognize fully in yourself. Like attracts like, and the beings whom you are attracted to are specific to you. If you don't feel an attraction to any beings right now, you may want to Google spiritual being images. Close your eyes and meditate a few minutes with the intention that you will discover a being who you resonate with. Place your hand on your heart, and keep it there as you open your eyes. Scan the images in front of you slowly, noticing any sensations or emotions in your heart. You will likely be surprised at who shows up for you. Of course, you can always just simply meditate on this subject and ask your heart for guidance.

Once you have your being(s) and you call them in every day, you will notice your meditations improve. Don't we all do a better job when we feel deeply connected and strongly supported? This is a spiritual support that you just can't buy; it can only be created within you. All of the practices you do in this book will be better and more effective if you take a few minutes to do this daily.

Love

I talked about the power of breath and how it helps us heal. Now, I would like to talk about love. You know the saying, "Love heals all." This saying is true, but how do we make that work for us? If we haven't had a lot of love in our lives or haven't experienced deep love, this can be challenging. Even if we had loving relationships and easily experience love, we can never experience too much.

Just over twenty years ago, I led a group of friends in meditation on our usual Monday evening. I felt a great love within me and realized it was also outside of me and absolutely everywhere. I experienced love, and we breathed it in the air in that room. Love filled the entire Universe. It is one thing to think this intellectually, but to experience it is a whole different experience. I'm sure you have heard people say, "There is nothing but love; love is everything."

Well, one way to help us tune into this all-pervading love is to repeat the word, and one of the best times to repeat it is during meditation.

Up until this point, you have been counting heartbeats with numbers. We are going to switch from counting with numbers to counting with the word “love” by creating a melody. We’ll use eight counts in and eight counts out as an example. What I do is go up a musical scale for the first four and down a musical scale for the last four on the inhale and repeat the same on the exhale. This helps bring us more into our hearts and less into our mind because we no longer have to think as much by thinking of numbers. The word love becomes superimposed on and in our hearts and in our beings through the repetition. We can take this a step further and try to feel love every time we silently say the word. We say the word “love” silently, doing our best to feel the emotion of love.

This may take a bit of practice to get used to, and please do not expect perfect results right away with any of these practices. That’s why we call them practices; we are practicing. Bringing in the spiritual support and the word “love” helps us not only prepare for our healing, growth, and empowerment but also begins to ease us into it.

Empower Your Heart Chakra

Let’s take this a step further by empowering our hearts. So many of us today say, “Follow your heart” and somehow we think we know how to do that, or maybe we admit we don’t entirely know what that looks or feels like. By empowering the heart, we can tune into it more and feel a deeper connection – a greater sense of who we are – and this makes it much easier to listen to the heart and follow it.

We are going to do an energizing practice that helps develop the heart chakra. In order to heal the throat chakra, we need to start developing and healing the other centers. We will start with the heart because the throat chakra is the chakra that the heart is expressed most through. The clearer and stronger the heart center, the clearer and stronger the expression.

Heart Chakra Meditation

Let’s begin by getting into the posture. Take your time to make sure your spine is straight and your head is lifted up toward the ceiling, feet flat on the floor and palms facing up. We can take a moment to notice what the regular breath is like before we take on the full breath. When it feels right, find your heartbeat, and begin to count heartbeats or seconds silently with the words love. Remember, it is like a musical scale going up for three or four counts and down for three or four

counts. Once you are comfortable with this, we can move onto the next step. Please know it can take days or weeks to get comfortable with this way of counting.

After the inhale, the next step is to hold the breath physically in the lower abdomen and energetically in the heart center. To begin with, if your count is six, you will hold for six, and if it's eight, hold for eight, still counting with the word "love." Then exhale for the same count. This may feel uncomfortable or awkward at first, so please be patient with yourself. Know that the word "love" brings you unconditional love, which is very patient. Once you have mastered this, either today, tomorrow, or the next day, I encourage you to increase the hold portion to twice as much. If your count is eight, you are now holding for sixteen counts. The melody with the word "love" goes like this: up the scale "love, love, love, love," down the scale "love, love, love, love," up again "love, love, love, love," down, "love, love, love, love." This may feel very easy or very hard. The key to holding the breath for a double count is completing the exhale. Be sure to exhale all the air, and remember, you can always start over.

We are consciously bringing love into the heart and exhaling love. Remember, love is all-pervading; it is everywhere, within and without. You can imagine or feel yourself breathing in love, even breathing in all the love in the entire universe. If you don't feel or imagine much, we just fake it 'til we make it! This practice helps to energize and empower the heart center and will support us greatly in the work ahead.

Healing

Now is a good time to make use of these practices and begin to look at healing our wounds of the past. Why do we want to do this? Our physical pain is pretty much always associated with emotional or spiritual wounds or hurts of the past, which usually originated in our childhood. Therefore, we want to heal these wounds so that we can reduce the pain in our necks and shoulders. You are also reading this because you know your throat chakra could use some improvement. Maybe you feel stuck in your life or maybe you would like to express yourself in the world in a way that you are not doing right now.

Regardless of the pain we have or the desires and goals we long for, the fastest way to get there is through healing those old emotional wounds. It is far from fun and takes some courage, trust, and faith, and is so worthwhile. When I think of the value of healing, I think of the beautiful light and love that shines in your heart. It is meant to shine, and fundamentally, you are a being of light and love. The soul comes from light and love and will return to light and love. Becoming

human creates a cover over that light and love. We are born into this earthly plane to our earthly parents in our earthly bodies, and we all get wounded in childhood. I have never met anybody who hasn't. Sure, some people may tell you, "My parents were so great. Sure, they may have made a few mistakes – nobody is perfect — but I had a wonderful childhood." However, they are wrong. These people are simply not ready to admit that they have any childhood wounds, let alone face them. We all have wounds of various degrees. Sometimes wounds go as far back as when we were invitro, and some wounds go back to infancy. Something happens, and we are emotionally or spiritually injured. The wound doesn't heal when there isn't anybody around who is able hold us in our pain and fear, and when there is nobody to love us through it unconditionally. We are not usually encouraged to cry the tears or to feel our emotions fully, so these emotions become stuck in us. The wound becomes familiar, and after a time, we don't even notice it.

You've heard the saying "Like attracts like." This saying applies to wounds as well as people. The wound attracts more of the same, and this repeats throughout our lives. We end up with patterns that we usually don't recognize at all, or when we do, it is a well-ingrained pattern, a pathway for the same type of wound repeated over and over. This remains in our subconscious until we find a means to let the wound come to the surface, to let it become conscious.

Is it beginning to make sense as to why you may feel stuck in some area(s) of your life? This is why we do our best in meditation to access the subconscious through the full breath so that we can feel the trapped emotions and the pain of the distant past and give ourselves the gift of feeling all of it in the here and now so that it no longer holds us back; it can no longer cover our light in the same way. When we do this long enough, our behavior begins to change. We are not using the mind to change the behavior. There is so much out there on how to control the mind to create change, but this can only go so far.

Using the mind doesn't get to the root of the problem. Going as deeply as we can into the chakras, the energy centers that hold all of who and what we are, allows us to heal the problem and the result is that our behavior changes; what we say changes. The triggers that used to prompt reactions no longer exist. We change for the better in permanent ways, and the soul is so satisfied because that is part of its mission. The soul signs up for the wounds that hurt us so that the soul can heal and evolve in this human body. The soul will go on forever, and this life here is but one small stage of its evolution. Let's work together here and now and do what we can to access the

wounds of the past and remove the covers that hide your light so that you can begin to shine more and more every day.

One of my clients – I'll call him John – who initially came to me with neck pain and excruciating hip pain insisted that he had those wonderful, loving parents and had a great childhood. Everyone around him was kind and loving. He admitted to a few childhood wounds that he suffered but dealt with years ago. One day, he called me up in desperation that his hip suddenly hurt so badly he could hardly walk. I did an online healing session, and he went back to the little boy in the boy's restroom who was threatened sexually by a bully at school. I helped him feel into the fear and terror that younger boy felt and helped him move through it. It was a memory he hadn't thought about in decades, and when he first remembered it in the session, he felt no emotion. Once the emotion came, I helped him move through it, pulling the toxic energy out of his sacral chakra. Once the session finished, he could walk again, and by the next morning, he was completely pain free. He later began to uncover terrible abuse by his grandmother, and this man, who went to the chiropractor one to four times a month for over forty years because of neck and back pain, has been pain-free for months. Not only is his pain gone, but his heart is also shining in a way it never did. He experiences a level of joy and happiness he could only imagine previously. As you can see, healing wounds is extremely worthwhile.

Do you want what John now has? You can have that. You can uncover that beautiful heart of yours that wants to shine the light and love that is inherent in you. You made the commitment to yourself earlier on, and now would be a good time to review that. You've practiced the meditations, which essentially puts that commitment into action. These basic meditations can be healing in and of themselves. If you felt any uncomfortable emotions during any of the meditations, please do not stop meditating when they arise. The breath may change and go from smooth to jagged, or it may become more difficult to breathe. Please continue breathing in the best way you can, breathing through the emotion or physical discomfort. I promise you will come out of the other side. It may return again and again, but your entire being wants to feel all these repressed emotions until they are complete, so you can more freely move into uplifting emotions like joy and happiness. Feeling these emotions and moving through them uncovers the light and love of the heart. It removes the darkness so your light can shine.

Locating and Healing Wounds

Let's move into locating our wounds. I first learned to locate wounds in a therapy session with an amazing therapist who practiced Hakomi, body-centered psychotherapy, developed by Ron Kurtz. When my therapist helped me discover my wound, it was so big that it was larger than my body and was out in front of me, attached to my heart chakra and solar plexus. I was ready and willing to do whatever it took to make some serious changes in my life. My therapist helped me move through that painful experience, and then invited me to a weekend workshop for lay counselors who she taught in a community program. She told me that she was impressed with how open I was to heal and admired the difficult work I was so willing to do. I initially felt a little out of place, but once I settled into it, I discovered it was the perfect place for me. Everyone wanted to heal and most of them wanted to help heal others. That was about twenty-three years ago. I brought the Hakomi work into my meditations, uncovering and healing emotional wound after emotional wound. I later studied Hakomi again when I earned a diploma in Jin Shin Do acupressure, using Hakomi to help my acupressure clients heal their wounds. I remember finding multiple emotional wounds in my neck and when working with others, finding the same in them. I also discovered Peter Levine's work, somatic experiencing and somatic touch, and discovered and healed wounds through those methods. While practicing shamanism, I discovered methods to locate and heal others' emotional and spiritual wounds as well as my own. Meditation has served me greatly in healing wounds. Like I said earlier, the Full Rhythmic Breath is the technique that the others didn't have. The hara breathing came pretty close in acupressure. I now practice Hurqalya Healing, a form of energy healing developed by Puran and Susanna Bair, and I bring into that aspects of other healing work I have done and work with wounds located in the physical body, energetic body, and specifically the chakras.

Recently, I had a spiritual teacher tell me that I healed all my wounds, but when I began writing this book, issues still came up. I knew one day I would write a book, but like most people who want to write a book, all sorts of things get in the way, but mostly it's ourselves that get in the way. Whatever stopped me from writing a book earlier came up, and I was able to quickly and easily heal that and move forward. I will tell you that emotional and spiritual wound healing usually becomes more difficult once you start, but the more success you have, the easier and faster it gets until you find your level of happiness, peace, joy, and contentment increases and replaces the negative self-talk, sadness, despair, etc. Happiness becomes the daily norm.

All these methods help one locate emotional wounds by locating them as physical sensations in the body. If you feel an emotional wound as well, all the better. We can work with the physical, emotional, and mental wounds. If you already have physical pain, the first thing to do is breathe into that pain wherever it is located in the body. Then try and find the emotion, though the emotion can come first too. Say you keep noticing a particular emotion coming up and it won't go away. Let's say you feel sadness around some news you received from a friend; you have been thinking about the news a lot, and you feel sad. You can meditate on the emotion and then find the location of the emotion in the body. Often, the more intense or long-lasting emotions in your current life are rooted back to wounds in your childhood, which I will discuss more later. Let me help you locate a wound or two.

Chakra Healing Meditation

Please sit in the posture, back straight and feel flat on the floor. Lift the crown up toward the ceiling and bring your awareness to your spine, following it up and down. This can help us get into our bodies. Take on the full breath, breathing into the lower abdomen and make it rhythmic, silently using the word "love" to count the heartbeats. Invite in your spiritual support and once you feel this support, focus on breathing in their love into your heart every time you say the word "love" silently. Do this for a few minutes. Notice your level of safety. It's important that we feel safe before doing this kind of exercise. Make any necessary adjustments. Spend some time, at least five minutes, breathing love into and out of your heart center. Breathing love allows the heart center to become energized and rejuvenated. Feel free to just continue with this practice if you want and continue on to the remainder next time.

Breathing fully, counting heartbeats with the word love, let a memory come of any difficult moment or time in your life. Let the memory come to you. Notice the first one that comes; let yourself remember what it was like and how it felt. Keep breathing fully. Notice if you feel any sensation(s) in your body. Take a moment, while staying with the memory, to scan your body for any physical sensations. If you notice something, that is great! Keep your focus on the physical sensation while you still hold onto the memory. If you didn't feel anything in the body, do a slower scan, starting with the top of your head and moving downward, very slowly scanning your body, looking for any physical sensation. Notice whatever shows up. If more than one location shows up, go with the prominent one.

Now we are going to send energy from the heart to the location. Exhale your heart's energy from the heart center to the physical sensation for your count, still using the word "love." Then inhale the energy from the location back to your heart. Continue to breathe fully and count the heartbeats with the word "love" on the melody. You can put the intention of sending all the love and light in your heart center to the area, which we will not refer to as the wound. Then inhale the energy of the wound into your heart center. It may seem kind of scary to inhale the wound's energy into the heart, but the heart is so powerful; it can easily integrate it. Notice if there is an emotion that arises with the physical sensation. Continue to do the breath, regardless of the emotion. Let yourself feel the emotion fully. If tears start to flow, let them flow, and just do your best to continue with the practice. You can just take it one breath at a time. If you only feel the physical sensation, that is great too. Continue with this practice until the physical and/or emotional symptoms are completely gone. Your beautiful light and love-filled heart has integrated the wound.

You have done an excellent job of locating wounds and healing them. Please continue to practice this meditation every day for at least one week. It is a practice you will have for the rest of your life, and you will hopefully return to it again and again.

You have learned to call in spiritual support, and this is worth doing every time you meditate and at any other time in the day. You have learned how to heal through meditation, how to locate wounds, experience the emotions and let them move through you, transforming themselves. You have not only physically located your chakras, but you have learned more about your own chakras and what they represent to you. We will continue on this healing journey in the next chapter, going deeper into the chakras and deeper into healing.