

Consciously My Self

Leading from Self, Living from Wholeness
FOUNDATIONS



A holistic exploration of Self By
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Opening

Welcome All Here and Now

A Message From Sara



Hi! Thank you so much for downloading Part 1 of my soon to be released book. I'm humbled to share what is the initial segment of a much longer journey with each of you. Contained within this segment is the foundation which our path is built on. I deeply believe that within the cornerstones of this foundation is all one may require to continue this path on their own.

My service is to empower all paths of Self.

Not to dictate them. Not to declare one greater than another.

The Path of Actualizing Self is each our own.

Let's discover yours!



An Invitation

This book is an invitation to become conscious of how we form connections.

An Invitation to invite awareness of our patterns, and what informs them.

It is an invitation to connecting consciously with our Self. The absolutely beautiful authentic version of ourselves that is at our core.

It is an invitation to transform and change from a space of embracing our wholeness.

On this journey we will ask our Self for **Courage** to step into intimate vulnerability with our most hurt aspects.

We will discover **Curiosity** to be with our own suffering.

We will know **Compassion** as the strength to hold ourselves in Love.

We will become **Confident** as we create life from our Self.

We will see with **Clarity** the stories we tell our Self and how they effect us, and others.

We will offer **Creativity** in service to our Self and the world.

We will be the **Calm** center of the stormy world around us.

We will sense with certainty the **Connection** we share with all things.

This book is an Invitation grounded an centered in your Self. In your **Mind, Body and Heart.**

How To Benefit Best From This Book



When designing this book, one of the primary principles I held close was this:
Empower the participant.

That means you, in all your complexity, uniqueness, and capacity for choice. You were at the heart of every page.

Rather than prescribing a single way to move through this journey, this book was crafted to meet you where you are, and support you in discovering the path that's right for you.

Some people will move through it start to finish like a guided unfolding.

Others may flip to the chapter that calls them most.

Some may write on every page. Others may just reflect, pause, and come back later.

All of these ways are valid. All of them are welcome.

There are no grades here. No right answers. No pressure to transform. There is simply space, lovingly offered, for you to explore your Self with curiosity, compassion, and sovereignty.



How To Benefit Best From This Book

You'll notice that each section includes:

- Gentle invitations to reflect
- Creative prompts to stir insight
- Practices designed to reconnect you with your Self
- Spacious writing areas for your truth to land on the page

All interwoven with my personal story.

This is your book now.

Mark it up. Skip around.

Return to it in the middle of the night.

Leave it untouched for a week and then write four pages in one sitting.

Use it in the way that feels most alive, most kind, and most real for you.

Because that's the heart of self-leadership:

Not doing it the "right" way, but finding your way.



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What It Means

Welcome All Here and Now

Before we begin there are a few concepts that I'd like to define together first! They are more than foundational to what we are doing together. It'd be understandable that you may be wondering what is Self Leadership and Wholeness. Let's clear that all up!

What is Self Leadership?

It may sound a bit odd when you first hear this term. Something without a "real" consistent definition.

Gratefully many before me have done amazing work to offer us a consensual understanding of the **Self** in **Self Leadership**.

Within the **Internal Family Systems** framework, the term **Self** refers to an internal presence. Not a part or aspect of personality, not a role, and not something you perform.

Self is the aspect of you that remains steady beneath the storms, curious even in discomfort, and compassionate even when we become defensive, angry, or want to shut down.

Self Leadership is the process of letting this internal presence lead your system.

Rather than being controlled by a part of ourselves, like the one that anxiously needs to please, or the one that avoids feeling anything at all. **Self Leadership** invites us to return to our center and meet our inner world with the qualities of Self.

These qualities are often described through the 8 characteristic or traits: **Curiosity, Calm, Clarity, Compassion, Confidence, Courage, Creativity, and Connectedness**.

You'll notice these are not things we "do".
They are natural ways for us to be
They are also incredibly practical.

When you feel reactive, it is **Curiosity** that helps you pause and explore.

When your parts are afraid, it is **Calm** that soothes without suppression.

When you're lost in overwhelm, it is **Clarity** that cuts through the fog.

When shame arises, it is **Compassion** that gently embraces what once felt unlovable.

Confidence reminds you that you can lead your own life.

Courage allows you to face what once felt unbearable.

Creativity opens new possibilities for relationship with yourself and others.

Connectedness brings the reminder that you are not, and never were, alone.

These aren't traits that only a select few embody or skills that demand to be trained to perfect. They exist within all of us. The more we experience **Leading From Self**, the more familiar these qualities become. We begin to recognize them.

We see them as our natural way of being.

Self Leadership isn't about perfection.
It's not about "healing once and for all."

It's about learning how to meet yourself as you are, over and over again, with presence and care.

It is not an end point.

While **Internal Family Systems** offers a powerful map for working with the inner world, the concept of a centered, unshakeable Self is not new.

Long before it was named in therapeutic models, Self lives in the teachings passed through oral traditions, ceremonies, and sacred relationships across many cultures.

In my personal experience this Self is not abstract.
It is ancestral.

It lives in my bones, in the blood memory of my kinship lines, and in the teachings I carry as a Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) woman raised near the Grand River knowing the stories of our people.

In Haudenosaunee culture, the teachings of the Great Law of Peace and the concept of Ka'nikonhri:io, offer a profound lens on Self and Self Leadership.

The concept of Ka'nikonhri:io, often translated as the "good mind" is more than a principle. It is a way of being. It reflects an internal clarity grounded in peace, reason, and the wellbeing of the whole.

The Good Mind is not about perfection.

It is about presence.

It is about leading oneself in a way that brings peace to others.

It is how we choose to speak, listen, and make decisions. It shows it's self in how we choose to hold responsibility, not only for ourselves, but for the collective community; for the next 7 generations.

Among the Siksikaitsitapi (Blackfoot), there is a similar truth encoded in the way of life known as Niitsitapiisinni: to be a real, authentic human being.

At the heart of this way of being is the Circle of Support, a worldview that honours reciprocal responsibility across the individual, the community, and the natural world.

No one is seen in isolation. We are embedded in a living system of support, where each person has inherent worth and a role to play.

This understanding of mutual support was deeply misunderstood by Western psychology.

Abraham Maslow, often credited with creating the "hierarchy of needs," studied extensively with Blackfoot elders. Yet what he observed as a living circle. A space where belonging is central, was later distorted into a linear pyramid where individual survival and self-actualization were treated as separate steps.

The relational wholeness that guided Blackfoot thought was stripped away and turned into a ladder.

What was lost in that translation was the most important truth of all: We do not become ourselves alone.

Self is revealed through **right relationship**.

Wholeness emerges through reciprocity and connection.

To lead from **Self** is not to climb.
It is to return. To remember. To root.

We may look as well at Eastern philosophies such as Daoism, Hinduism or Buddhism, those that shaped my own path. We can come to know **Self** in even broader ways.

In Daoism, the Dao is the Virtues Way that cannot ever be fully described or explained.

It is in the flow of being in all that exists.
It is not something we control.
It is something we align with through awareness.

To live from **Self** is to stop grasping, stop resisting, and begin flowing with that indescribable thing.

"The wise person acts without effort," the Dao De Ching says. "They teach without words. They let all things rise and fall, and they do not cling."

Self Leadership is to trust in this inner Way. To meet each moment, part, or person as they are with softness and a nurturing presence like water.

In the Avadhuta Gita, a ancient Hindu text, the **Self** is described as beyond time, beyond thought, beyond description.

It declares:

"I am neither bound nor free...

I am neither the doer nor the enjoyer...

I am pure awareness, the eternal witness."

This **Self** is not defined by your personality, your wounds, or your accomplishments.

It is the witness behind all of it.

It cannot be injured or improved.

It is already whole.

When I hold all these teachings together: Indigenous, psychological, and philosophical. We begin to see that they're not separate at all.

They're different languages pointing to the same truth:

There is something within you that is already wise.

Already whole.

Already in harmony with the world around you.

You don't need to become this **Self**. You only need to remember it.

Not as a concept.

As the living being that you are.



What is Wholeness ?

With Self Leadership out of the way, lets look at our next foundational concept, **Wholeness**.

Yes I mentioned it a ton in the previous section.

Yes that is completely intentional!

You've probably heard the word wholeness before.

It gets thrown around a lot, especially in wellness spaces. While it's made rarely clear what folks actually mean.

Sometimes it sounds like a goal:
Something you're supposed to get to once you've fixed all the messy parts of yourself.

Sometimes it sounds like a promise:
That if you do enough healing, you'll finally feel all "put together."

Wholeness, in the way we'll talk about it here, is about knowing all of ourselves in relationship to all of ourselves.

It's about being real.

It's about not having to hide the parts of you that are still figuring things out.

You don't have to earn wholeness. You don't have to wait for it.

It's something that's already there. You just might be out of touch with it.

Let's look at what wholeness really means in a practical way.

Wholeness is the act of relating to yourself with honesty, curiosity, and above all else compassion.

Wholeness isn't some big breakthrough moment.

It shows up in small, ordinary ways, often when no one else is watching.

It looks like...

- Pausing before you react and realizing you have a choice in how you respond.
- Noticing a critical voice in your head and choosing not to believe everything it says, while hearing it with compassion.
- Letting yourself feel disappointed without making it mean something is wrong with you.
- Owning a mistake without spiraling into shame.
- Taking a break when you're tired, instead of pushing through to prove something.
- Letting joy in even if part of you feels like you don't deserve it.
- Not hiding the hard stuff just to make others comfortable.
- Being honest with yourself about what you want, even if it's scary.
- Making space for mixed feelings and trusting that it's okay to feel more than one thing at once.

Wholeness doesn't mean you never struggle.

It just means you stop pretending parts of you don't exist.

You relate to yourself instead of judging or fixing yourself.

Over time, that way of relating changes everything.

You begin to trust your own experience more.

You bounce back faster.

You show up in relationships with more honesty and less fear.

Not because you've solved everything.

Because you've stopped running from your **whole** self.

Most of us weren't taught how to stay connected to our whole Self.

From a young age, we start picking up messages about what parts of us are "okay" and which ones are too much, not enough, or just not welcome.

Maybe you learned to stay quiet to keep the peace.
Maybe you had to be the strong one.
Or the responsible one.
Or the one who didn't need much from anyone.

Little by little, you adapt.

You put parts of yourself to the side, not because something's wrong with you, but because you're trying to stay safe, stay loved, or just stay standing.

That's where fragmentation begins. Where the forgetting starts. It happens when we feel we have to become someone else in order to belong. When we bury the feelings that were never safe to have. When we disconnect from our needs, wants, or voice because they've been ignored or punished.

This isn't failure. It's survival.

These strategies helped you get through what you needed to get through they also come at a cost.

Over time, the version of you that the world sees might feel like just one piece of who you are. You might start to feel hollow, stretched thin, disconnected from your own wants or reactions.

You might feel like you're performing your life instead of actually living it.

That's the impact of fragmentation: not just in your mind, but in your body, your relationships, your decisions.
And that's why this work matters.

Not to go back in time and change the past.
Not to become some ideal version of yourself.
To start meeting the real you again, **ALL OF YOU.**

The next chapter of this journey is about doing just that.

Are you ready to begin?

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Foundations:

Meeting Your Self

The Stories We Tell Ourselves

Everyone has stories they tell themselves about who they are. Some are easy to spot.

Others run quietly in the background, shaping our thoughts, and shifting our worldview. These stories can force decisions, and find space to exist in our relationships without us even noticing.

Stories like:

"I'm the one person I can count on."

"I can't trust anyone."

"I'm bad with emotions."

"I don't deserve good things."

"I always have to prove myself."

They can sound like facts, often they're learned.

Passed down through experience, family, culture, or survival.

We pick them up early. Without anyone saying them out loud.

Maybe your story began when someone ignored your needs, and you learned to stop asking. When you got praised for being "easy" or "strong," and learned that being anything else wasn't okay.

These aren't just personal stories. They're part of a much larger pattern of how humans make sense of ourselves and the world around us.

Psychologist Carl Jung described the idea of the **persona**. Masks of ourselves we develop to help us fit in and be accepted. It's not fake, exactly. It's just one version of us. One we put forward in the world to stay safe, liked, or in control. Over time though, these masks can start to feel like our whole face.

The longer we wear it, the harder it becomes to tell what's us and what's just a role we've learned to play.

That's the power of these internal stories:

They shape what we believe is possible.

They influence how we handle conflict, connection, and change.

They can hold us back when we are trying to grow.

They can empower us to survive.

The goal here isn't to get rid of your stories. we want to:

- Stay curious.
- Ask where they came from.
- Notice which ones still fit.
- Discover how they protect us and how they don't
- Dismantle the flat out lies.

This next section will invite you to explore those questions gently.

The more we understand the stories we carry, the more choice we have in how they continue.

Not all stories serve the same purpose.

Some help us understand who we are, while others are about what keeps us safe. Some explain where we belong, while others give meaning to the hard things we've lived through.

These stories are often formed in response to real experiences: moments of joy, struggle, silence, praise, harm, and connection. Moments when our emotions were big, and we were little.

They're not inherently good or bad.

They're adaptations. Placeholders for meaning we needed at the time they formed.

Here are a few types of stories we tend to carry:

Identity Stories

These shape the way we describe ourselves to ourselves and others.

They often reflect roles we've learned to play, sometimes out of choice, sometimes out of survival. These stories can become the lens through which we interpret our decisions, preferences, and place in the world.

Protection Stories

These are created to prevent us from experiencing further hurt.

They tend to develop after difficult or painful events and are built to help us avoid vulnerability, risk, or perceived danger. While they may reduce short-term harm, they often limit long-term connection or growth.

Belonging Stories

These focus on how, where, and whether we fit in.

They often form early in life and are shaped by the need to be accepted or included. These stories influence the ways we participate (or don't) in groups, families, communities, or cultures.

Capability Stories

These inform what we believe we can and can't do.

They are shaped by experience, feedback, expectations, and comparison. These stories often become self-fulfilling, influencing how we approach challenges, learning, and success.

Meaning-Making Stories

These help us make sense of what has happened to us.

They offer explanations especially for painful or confusing experiences. While these stories can provide comfort or structure, they sometimes reinforce blame, shame, or distorted beliefs about ourselves or the world.

Now that we've explored the types of stories we tend to carry, let's look at some real **examples**.

You might recognize one or more of these in your own life. Some may feel familiar now, while others might reflect a version of you from the past.

There's no need to rush into analyzing or changing them. This is simply about noticing.

When we name the stories we carry, we begin to loosen their grip. Not because they're wrong but because we get to decide which ones still belong.

As you read through the list, see what stands out. Let your awareness do the work, gently, without pressure.

Ready for the list of examples?

Identity Stories (with Roles Revealed)

- I'm the one who holds it all together.
 - (The Caretaker / The Controller)
- I'm not emotional.
 - (The Invisible One / The Protector)
- I'm always the responsible one.
 - (The Achiever / The Performer)
- I'm the helper; other people come first.
 - (The Caretaker / The Rescuer)
- I'm just not the kind of person who speaks up.
 - (The Invisible One / The Rebel in hiding)
- I don't belong anywhere.
 - (The Outsider / The Invisible One)
- I've always been the black sheep.
 - (The Rebel / The Outsider)

Protection Stories

- If I open up, I'll get hurt.
- I can't trust anyone, not really.
- People only care when I'm useful.
- I have to stay in control.
- If I need something, I'll be a burden.
- Letting people in never ends well.
- I'm better off handling things on my own.

Belonging Stories (with Groups They Often Relate To)

- I have to agree with others to be accepted.
 - (Family, Friend Circles, Work Teams)
- I never really fit in.
 - (Family of Origin, School, Workplace, Culture at Large)
- If I take up too much space, people will leave.
 - (Romantic Relationships, Friend Groups, Family Systems)
- I need to keep people happy or they'll reject me.
 - (Family, Partners, Friendships, Workplaces)
- If I'm different, I'll be excluded.
 - (Cultural Communities, Social Groups, Professional Spaces)
- They like me because they don't know the real me.
 - (Friend Groups, Workplaces, Social Media Spaces)
- There's no place I fully belong.
 - (Everywhere—Family, Culture, Society, Community)

Capability Stories

- I'm not cut out for that.
- I always screw things up.
- I'm too much / not enough.
- I'll never be successful like other people.
- I can't handle pressure.
- I'm just bad at relationships.
- I never follow through.

Meaning-Making Stories

- This always happens to me.
- There must be something wrong with me.
- If I were stronger, I'd be over this by now.
- I deserved what happened.
- I'm being punished for something.
- I bring problems wherever I go.
- It's my fault things turned out this way.

What Stories Am I Carrying?

Now that you've seen some of the common stories people carry, let's turn inward.

Take a few breaths

The goal here is not to judge your stories. **It's to notice them.**

Choice comes from our awareness of these stories.

In the space below or on a separate page make a note of any of the stories from the list that you know you carry, notices any that cause tension in your body. do any make you want to run away? write it down!

Maybe others you outright deny that story is yours. Is there a sense of anger? write it down as well!

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Story Spotting

A Practice of Gentle Discovery

Some of the stories we carry live so deep within us they feel like facts. They don't shout. They whisper.

They don't ask for our attention directly. They emerge sideways: in reactivity, withdrawal, self-doubt, perfectionism, defensiveness, or that strange flatness that tells us we've gone somewhere far away inside.

These moments are doorways.

The practice of story spotting is about presence.

Honoring the moment where a story is speaking and choosing to listen.

It's a bit like becoming an inner naturalist: learning to track the movements of the subtle ecosystem within.

We don't need to analyze or explain it all.

We just need to observe. Gently. Without force.

Begin by noticing moments when you feel:

- Emotionally charged (hurt, angry, ashamed, anxious)
- Highly self-critical or defensive
- Shut down or withdrawn
- Like you're repeating an old pattern
- Out of sync with what you really want

These are often the places where old stories emerge.

When you find yourself in a moment like this, pause and ask:

- What am I telling myself right now?
- What does this moment seem to confirm about me?
- Have I heard this before—maybe from someone else's voice?
- What is this story trying to protect me from?
- What part of me might be speaking here?

You don't need polished answers.

Let the raw, unfinished thoughts come through.

The first few tend to be the clearest windows into the story underneath.

Note: It's okay if nothing comes right away. Even the act of asking is enough. Sometimes a story will surface later when the nervous system feels safe. Trust your timing. Trust your Self to be there when the story chooses to be told.

Optional Deepening:

Recall a moment from the past week where you felt "off" or reactive. Without overanalyzing, write freely:

- What happened?
- What did you feel in your body?
- What did your mind start saying?
- What do you notice now about the story that was active?

Let your reflections land without judgment.

There is no wrong way to explore this.

A Gentle Reminder

Every story we carry was shaped in relationship.

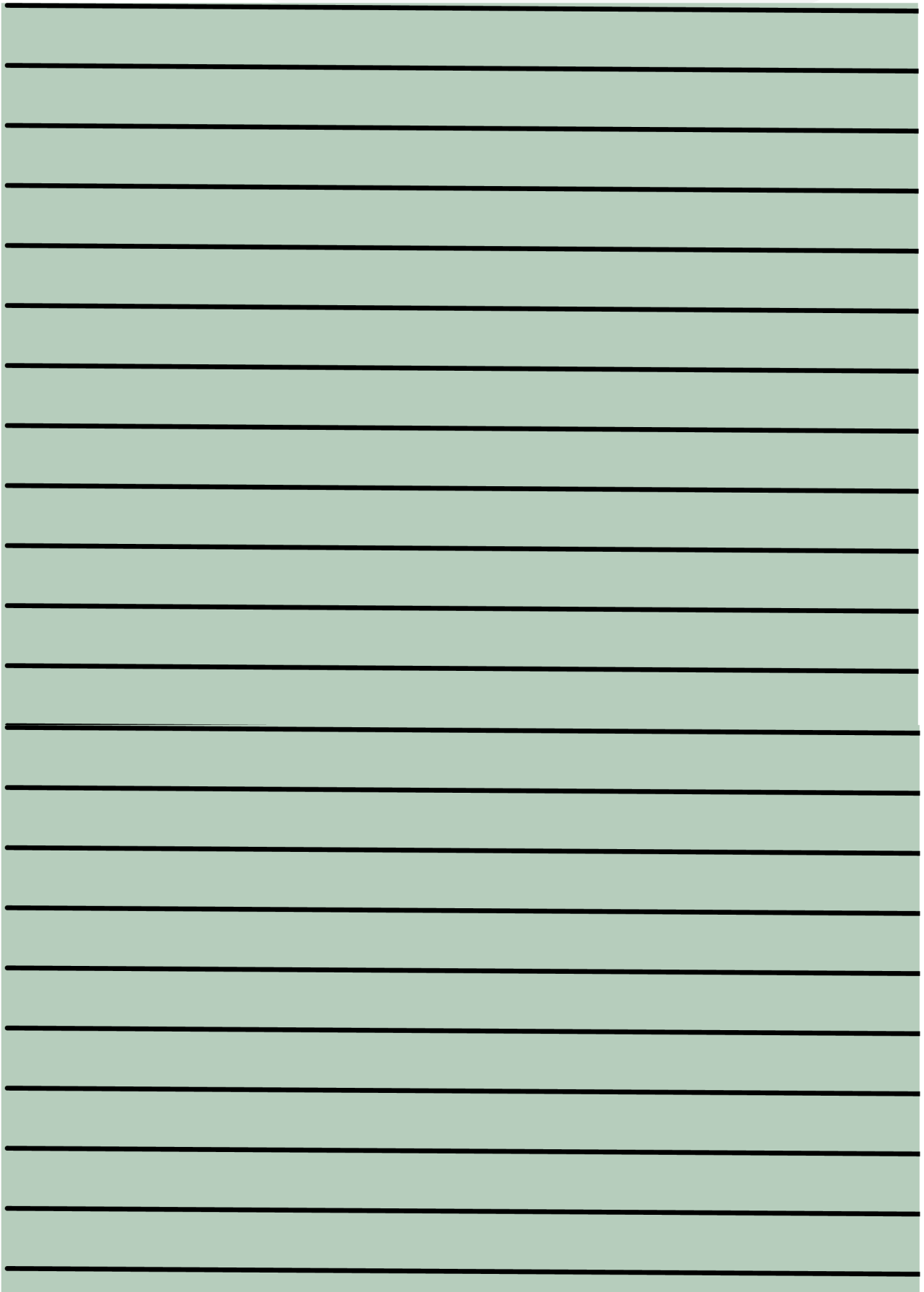
It served something once: belonging, safety, survival, recognition, control.

As we spot our stories, we're not tearing them down.

We're meeting them. With awareness. With curiosity. With compassion.

This the beginning of rewriting them.

Story Spotting

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Sentence Completion

A Practice of Unearthing Hidden Beliefs

This practice is about giving our half-spoken thoughts space to finish themselves.

Not from your “best self” or the version of you who has it all figured out. From the parts of you that are still holding the pen.

Think of this as opening a conversation with your inner world.
We are not looking for polished answers.
We are listening for what’s already there.

Let yourself be messy. Let it be honest. Let it be incomplete.

Find a quiet moment.
Take a breath.
And another one.
Let's make it three Breaths.

Let your shoulders drop.
Relax a little.

Then complete the following prompts.

Write what comes up without trying to sound wise, healed, or “correct.” Your truth doesn’t need to be tidy to be valid.

I always have to...

People expect me to...

If I show how I really feel...

Deep down, I worry that...

I’ve never been able to...

The story I tell myself about who I am is...

The story I’d rather be telling is...

After You Write:

You may find themes or repeating phrases.
You may notice contradictions. That's okay.
Let them speak.

You are not trying to find "the right story."
You are learning how to witness the story already living inside you
without shame, without rush.

This witnessing is powerful.
If in witnessing you are moved to emotion, be with it.
Let all of yourself be present with the feelings.

They are a part of the story asking to be heard as well.

When we stop editing ourselves, we begin to hear what's real.
And from there, new stories can begin to form.

Aspects, Roles, and Inner Characters

We Are Made of Many Selves

Carl Jung once said,
"The persona is that which in reality one is not, but which oneself as well as others think one is."

Each of us moves through life with different roles, different masks, different ways of being depending on who we're with, what's happening, or what feels safe.

This isn't a flaw. It's how we adapt.
Sometimes we've chosen these roles.
Sometimes they were chosen for us.
Over time, these patterns take on a life of their own.
When we pause and pay attention, we notice that there are many different parts of us inside. Many different aspect to our whole self.

Each one with its own voice.
Its own needs.
Its own way of trying to protect or guide us.

We've already begun to meet them.
They may now have a name, you've heard them as story.

Now we will seek to learn how they interact and work together.

How do they relate to each other.
How do they relate to your Self.
How do they express through you and relate to others.

Each of our inner worlds is unique and highly personal, yet many of the aspects that appear through our stories echo shared human patterns. You might recognize some of these:

The Caretaker: focuses on others' needs to feel worthy or safe

The Achiever: strives for success or recognition to avoid feeling "not enough"

The Inner Critic: tries to keep you in line to avoid failure, rejection, or shame

The Rebel: resists structure, authority, or vulnerability to reclaim power

The Invisible One: stays quiet or small to avoid conflict or being hurt

The Optimist: looks on the bright side to avoid discomfort or grief

The Controller: micromanages or over plans to feel secure

The Romantic: longs for deep connection leading them to be blind to who another person is, often to fill inner emptiness

The Protector: stands guard over pain and vulnerability

The Child: holds unmet needs, wonder, sensitivity, or grief

The Performer: shape-shifts to gain approval or keep peace

The Wise One: a quiet source of insight often buried under noise

You may carry versions of these roles in your stories.
You may carry entirely different ones.

Gentle Naming

A Practice of Compassionate Relating

Once a story has been spotted, once its voice has been heard, there is an important moment that follows:

The moment of naming.

Not labeling.

Not diagnosing.

Not analyzing.

Just naming with care and compassion.

This is where we begin to build a new relationship with the stories we carry. One that doesn't silence them or shove them aside, but meets them with presence.

Because how we speak to our stories matters.

How we speak to ourselves matters even more.

Try replacing internal criticism with compassionate truth:
Instead of...

"Why am I like this?"

"This again?"

"I should be over this by now."

Try softly saying to yourself...

- A part of me learned this story to protect me.
- This story helped me survive something important.
- This belief makes sense, given what I've lived through.
- I wonder if this story is still true.
- I don't have to believe this to love the part of me who does.

Practice:

Pick one story you uncovered from either of the prior practices

Then try writing a name for it.

Let it be short, tender, or symbolic whatever feels true.

Note: You can even try to ask the story what its name is, you might surprise yourself with the response.

Here are some examples pulled from my personal journey:

"Moon Dancer" - is the name connected to a vengeful angry story I carry.

"Cloaked Shadow Man" - is the name connected to stores of fear of my own anger.

We can bring this process deeper if we like by writing to that story as if it were a younger you, a trusted friend, or a companion.

Let your Self speak here.

This step matters.

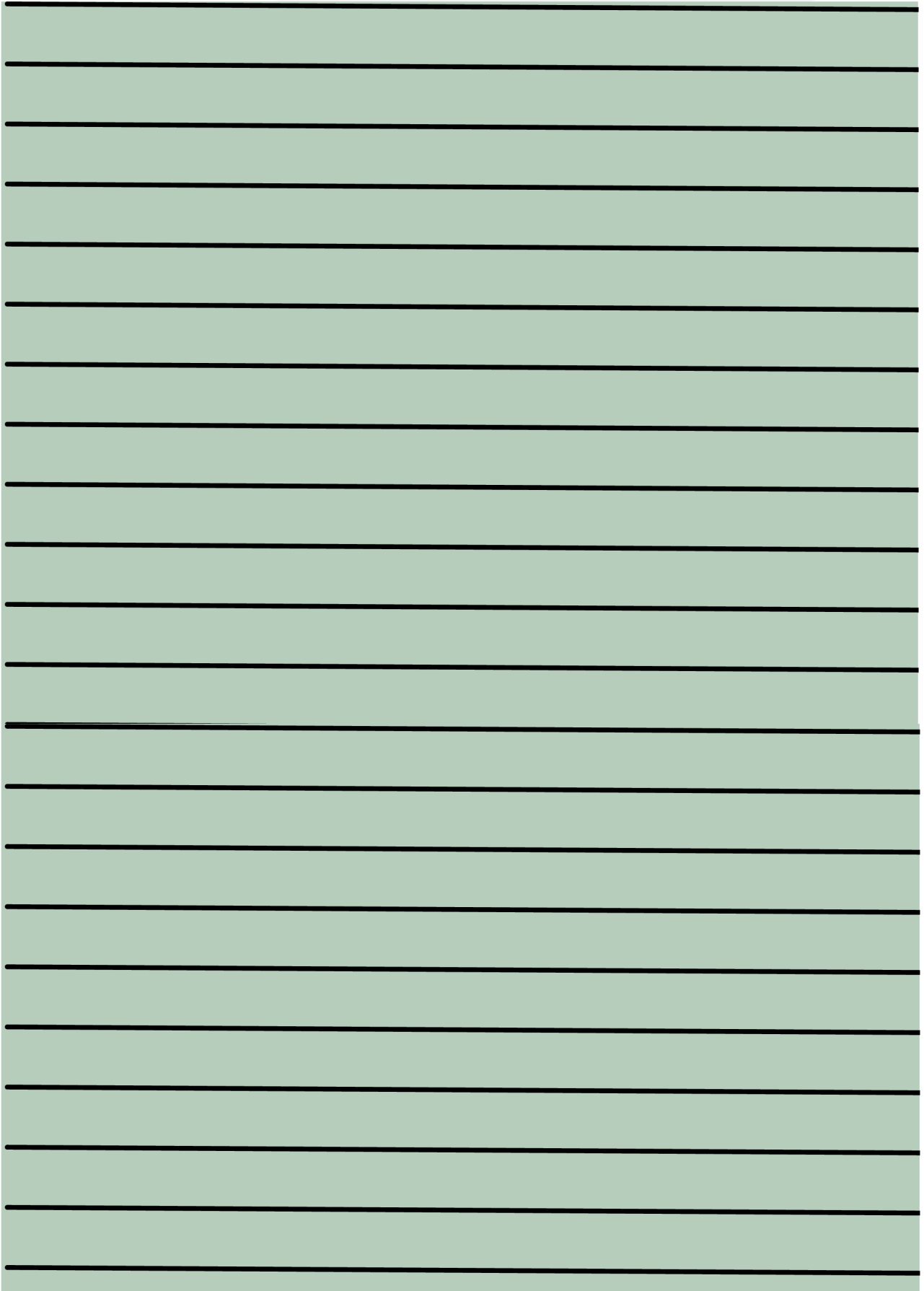
We're not just pulling stories apart, we're learning how to meet them with respect. To hear it. To be fully present with it.

To name something is to recognize it.
To meet it without fear.

To say: I see you. You are part of me.

And I can hold you now.

Gentle Naming



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The Many Introductions of a Lifetime

How Our Aspects Relate to Each Other and to Us

You've met some of your aspects by now.

They've shown up in old stories.

In emotional patterns.

In the quiet voice that pulls you inward, or the loud one that tries to protect you from being hurt again.

Maybe you've named a few. Maybe others are just beginning to take shape.

Here's what's important to know:

You don't just meet these parts once.

You meet them again and again.

In different moments.

In different disguises.

In different dynamics, both inside and out.

This is what we mean by the many introductions of a lifetime.

Our aspects often relate to one another in familiar ways, replaying scenes, acting out roles, and forming patterns we've experienced in our relationships with others.

When we begin to slow down and witness how our parts relate to one another, we start to see how they shape our emotions, decisions, and behaviours.

Meeting our wholeness takes **courage** from our **Self**.

A bit of knowledge doesn't hurt either. As you begin to form these relationships keep the following in mind.

IFS: Protectors and Exiles

In Internal Family Systems (IFS), the parts of us that carry the most pain are called Exiles.

They are often the younger aspects of us, hurt, scared, or frozen in time. They hold the burden of shame, grief, abandonment, or fear. They are tender. Vulnerable. Often hidden away.

To protect these Exiles, other parts emerge. These are our Protectors.

They do whatever they can to prevent us from feeling that old pain again. Some try to control everything. Some numb out or distract. Some keep us distant or always "on."

These Protectors are not trying to harm us. They're trying to help.

They just don't always trust that we can handle the truth of our Exiles with compassion.

That's where **Self** comes in.

Self as Relationship Space

Your Self, calm, curious, and compassionate, is not a referee between your parts. It's the spacious center where all parts are welcome.

Where relationships between parts can shift.

Self doesn't take sides. It listens. It witnesses. It **leads**.

Over time, with presence and trust, **Protectors can begin to soften**. Exiles can begin to feel safe and the drama inside begins to give way to connection. This isn't a perfect, linear process.

Sometimes a part will step back in just as quickly as it stepped out.

That's okay.

You're not doing it wrong.

You're just learning how to be in relationship with your whole self.

The Drama Triangle: A Familiar Inner Script

Psychologist Stephen Karpman introduced what's known as the Drama Triangle, a model that shows how we can get stuck in cycles of conflict and emotional reactivity.

There are three main roles:

- The Victim – feels powerless, helpless, or overwhelmed
- The Rescuer – tries to save or fix others, often to avoid feeling their own discomfort
- The Persecutor – criticizes, blames, or controls to feel safe or in charge

-

Most of us have played all three roles at different times.

Sometimes with others.

Sometimes within ourselves.

Inside, these might sound like:

- "Nothing I do matters." (Victim)
- "I have to keep everyone happy." (Rescuer)
- "Why do you always mess this up?" (Persecutor)

One part might feel victimized by another.

One might try to protect by rescuing.

Another might lash out to control or prevent vulnerability.

It's a loop, well-worn, familiar, often exhausting.

The Empowerment Triangle: A New Way of Relating

Author David Emerald offered a powerful reframe called the Empowerment Triangle, inviting us to shift out of reactivity and into conscious choice. These roles reflect how we show up when Self Leadership is present.

The three roles transform:

- Victim → Creator – sees challenges as opportunities for growth
- Rescuer → Coach – supports others without taking over responsibility
- Persecutor → Challenger – sets boundaries or offers truth without blame

When our inner parts move into these roles, everything changes.
The critical voice becomes a boundary-setter.
The overwhelmed part learns it has options.
The fixer stops rescuing and starts listening.
These shifts don't happen all at once.

This happens through **relationship with Self**.

How Do I Introduce Myself to My Self?

By now, you've started to notice that you are not just one voice.

You are not just your thoughts, your roles, your stories, or even your pain.

You are the space that holds them. The one who listens. The one who meets them all.

This is "Self." That thing this whole book is about.

It's not a part or aspect of you.

It's who you are underneath all the stories, all the parts or aspects.

Like any important relationship, the one between you and your Self is not automatic.

It's built.

It's built through presence.

Through returning.

Through introducing yourself, gently, over and over again.

Here's something to consider:

If you were to meet someone for the first time, how would you greet them?

You might pause.

Make space.

Offer warmth.

Ask questions.

Listen.

What if you met yourself that way?

What if, instead of pushing to fix or figure yourself out, you simply said:
Hi. I'm here. I want to know you.

The Meeting Place Visualization

Use this when you feel ready to meet an aspect of yourself or your Self as a whole.

You can return to it anytime.
Each time, something new may emerge.

Find a quiet space where you can sit or lie comfortably. Close your eyes or soften your gaze.

Take three slow breaths, letting your shoulders drop, your face soften, your jaw relax.

Imagine a place within you where all parts are welcome. It might look like a forest clearing, a cozy room, a garden bench, a campfire, a riverbank. Whatever feels safe and open to you.

There's no "right" image.

Let this place become clearer in your mind's eye. Notice what the air feels like. The sounds. The ground beneath you.

In this place, do you see yourself or are you seeing from your Self? Notice how you feel in your body. Do you feel connected to it, or does it feel distant?

If you are seeing your "self" acknowledge it's presence with you. Ask it to step back and allow you to have this experience.

Offer assurance that everything is safe. If they'd like to watch they are welcome to. All Parts are welcome here. Everything is welcome here.

If you are feeling disconnected from your body or if there is tension or tightness in your body. Ask it to relax, to step back and allow you to have this experience.

Offer assurance that everything is safe. If they'd like to watch they are welcome to. All Parts are welcome here. Everything is welcome here.

Continue forming these relationship with the aspects of you that arise. ask them to step back and allow you space for this experience.

Allow them to be as they are. They do not need to go anywhere.

At Some point you may feel as if you are in the space, seeing it from your eyes, your body present to it.

When this comes to awareness. Welcome it.
You are in Self.

Not a perfected version of you. Just your steady, calm presence.

Feel deeper into your Self. Bring further awareness to it.
Let it take any form: light, energy, you as you are, you as a younger version, or simply a felt sense.

When you feel ready, say hello to your Self. You don't have to say anything profound. Just greet with kindness. Curiosity.

If another part of you returns or appears, a worried one, a skeptical one, a tired one, that's okay. Let them be there. Just notice them from your Self. You can greet them too, without needing to fix or change anything.

Spend a few more moments in this space.

When it feels complete, thank your Self for meeting you.
Thank any parts of you that where present.
Thank all parts of you.

Take a breath. Begin to return to the present moment, carrying with you the sense of self you may have experienced.

You don't have to feel something big.
You don't have to do it "right."
Just showing up is the practice.

Each time you return, you strengthen this inner relationship.
Not by force.
By familiarity. You're not just meeting yourself once.
You're building the kind of relationship that can hold your wholeness
and all that you'll create together in cooperation.

Who Am I When No One Is Watching?

There are moments in life when we're alone, not just physically. Emotionally, energetically, and internally.

Moments when we're no longer performing, reacting, or managing others' expectations.

No audience. No applause. No pressure to play a role.
Just us.

With ourselves.

These moments can feel quiet. Peaceful. Or disorienting, Uncomfortable, even. Because for many of us, we've spent so long defining ourselves in relation to others that when the room empties, we're not sure who's left.

This is where deeper self-discovery begins.

Not in the spotlight.

Not in the roles we've mastered.

In the subtle spaces between doing and being.

A Reflection on Identity Without Performance

Who are you when no one needs you?

When there's no one to care for, impress, explain yourself to, or protect?

When your phone is off, your tasks are done, your mask is down...
What remains?

- What thoughts fill the space?
- What parts of you become louder? Quieter?
- What longings begin to rise?

And most importantly: What part of you is noticing all of that?

The Unwitnessed Self

Take a few minutes to sit in silence. No music, no movement. Just sit.

Notice:

- How your body holds itself
- Where your thoughts begin to drift
- What emotions or memories surface

Then gently journal or reflect:

- What part of me showed up first in the stillness?
- What surprised me about being alone with myself?
- Was there a moment of comfort or a moment of discomfort?
- What stories, beliefs, or roles seemed to fall away?
- What did I discover beneath them?

This isn't a test. There's no single answer to "Who am I when no one is watching?"

Sometimes the answer is messy. Sometimes it's beautifully quiet. Sometimes it changes day to day.

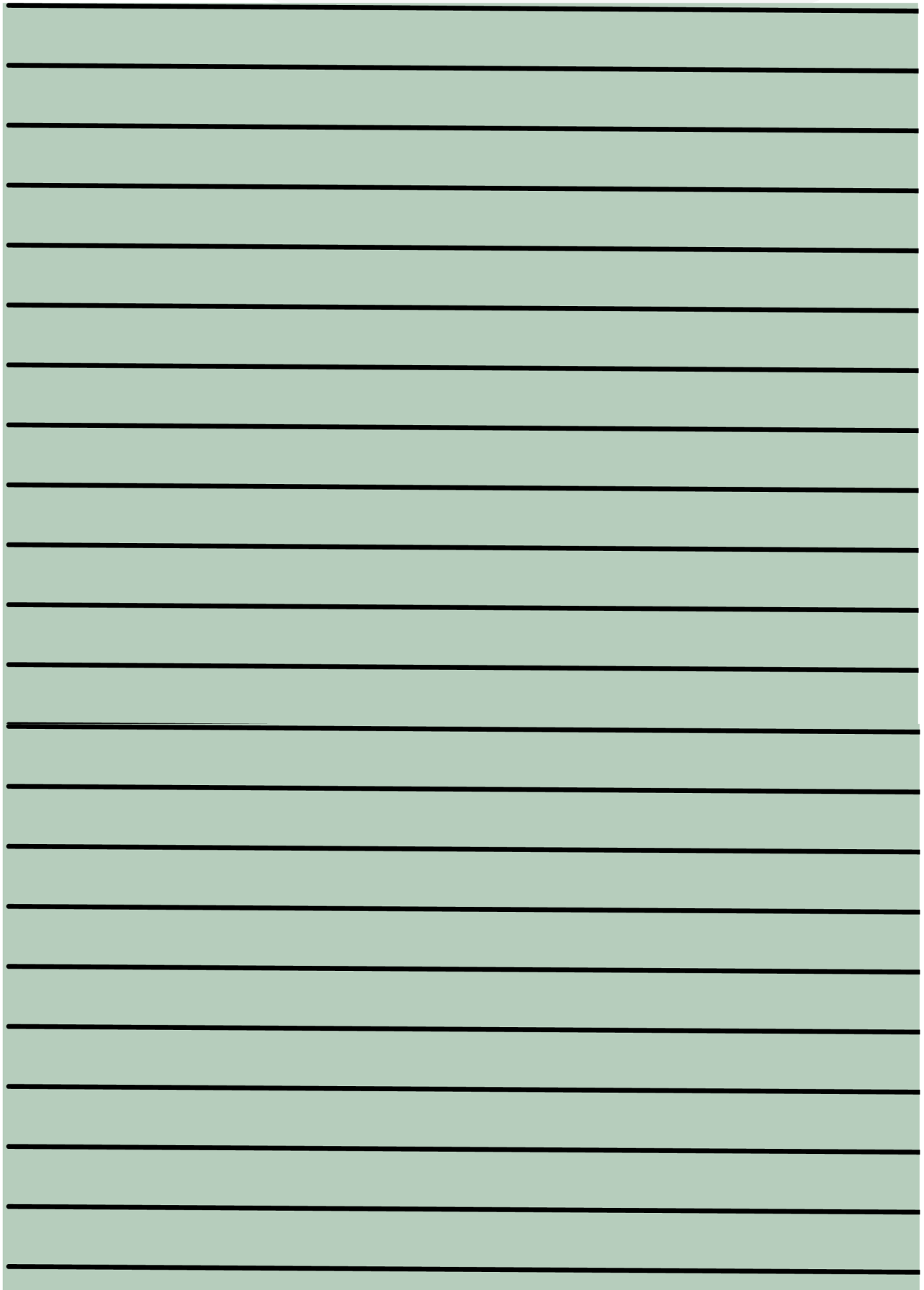
That's okay. This isn't about locking in an identity.

It's about becoming more honest with yourself.
It's about meeting the you that exists even when there's no one to prove anything to.

That version of you may be tender. May be powerful. May be unfamiliar.
Introduce yourself anyway.

Keep meeting them.
They are already waiting for you.

The Unwitnessed Self



A large rectangular area with a light green background and horizontal black lines, resembling a notepad or a space for writing. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the area.

Hidden Aspects and Gifts

The Parts of Us That Hold More Than Pain

So far, much of this journey has focused on the parts of us that carry pain, stories of protection, beliefs shaped by fear, adaptations built for survival. This is important work.

Yet it's not the full story.

Every part of us carries something more than what it was forced to become. Even the most wounded aspect, the most reactive protector, the most exhausted inner critic, each of them also holds something else:

A gift.

A strength.

A hidden capacity.

A piece of your Self that got buried underneath the burden it has to carry.

Trauma Covers. It Doesn't Define.

When parts are formed in moments of pain, they take on roles meant to protect. They learn how to survive, not how to thrive.

So the part that learned to shut down may also hold your deep sensitivity.

The perfectionist may carry your drive to grow and create.

The part that lashes out may also hold your sense of justice.

The one that hides may be guarding your creativity or intuition.

These gifts don't disappear. They get wrapped in layers of strategy, protection, and fear. Your work is not to fix them. It's to uncover them. To begin meeting each aspect not as a burden, as a carrier of something beautiful and essential to your wholeness.

Discovering the Gift Inside the Guard

Pick a part you've met in earlier reflections, one that feels familiar or often activated.

Then ask:

- What has this part been trying to protect me from?
- What would it do if it no longer had to protect me?
- What does this part long for?
- What qualities live beneath its survival strategy?

Let yourself be surprised.

Some parts may reveal an obvious gift, like confidence, insight, playfulness.

Others may take time. They may need to trust your Self before offering what they carry. That's okay. This is a relationship. Not a transaction.

The Gift is Often What Was True All Along

It's not about becoming someone new. It's about remembering who you already are. The gifts inside your aspects have been there the whole time.

What you're doing now is learning how to hold space for their return. To create enough safety, enough presence, for those gifts to come forward. This is how we come into wholeness, not by healing the hurt.

By reclaiming the brilliance that was never broken.

You've Already Begun

There's a quiet kind of power in choosing to meet yourself.
Not in performance. Not in perfection.
In presence.

That's what you've done here.
You've paused.
You've listened.
You've been willing to notice the voices inside you.
The ones that narrate, protect, resist, long, and hope.

You've sat with stories that once felt like truth. You've begun to name
the parts of you that often go unseen. You've stepped into relationship
with your Self. And you did it without needing to have it all figured out.

That matters more than you know.

This isn't the kind of work that ends with a finish line.
There are no checklists for wholeness.
No gold stars for self-awareness.

There is only this:
The ongoing practice of returning.
To your breath.
To your body.
To your Self.
Again and again.

With each return, something shifts.
Not dramatically.
Not all at once.
Gradually, meaningfully, undeniably.

You begin to trust your own experience.
You begin to respond instead of react.
You begin to recognize the difference between a part of you and
you.

You begin to live with a little more clarity.
A little more calm.
A little more compassion for all that you are.

As we close this first part of the journey, know this:
You are not behind.
You are not broken.
You are not too late or too much.
You are already in motion.
You are already enough.
And you are more whole than you've ever been allowed to believe.

What Comes Next

When you're ready, the next part of this journey will be waiting.
We'll go deeper into the parts we've only just begun to meet.
We'll explore belief systems, emotional patterns, internal conflict, and the path of integration.

We'll learn how to create safety inside ourselves and shift the roles our parts feel stuck in.
For now...
Pause. Breathe.
Let yourself land.

You've done something courageous here.
And your Self is already welcoming you home.

Consciously My Self — Part 1 (Preview Edition)

Self Leadership and Wholeness

Author: Sara Curley, CPC

Preview Release | Not Final Product

This digital preview is an early-release segment of the forthcoming full-length book *Consciously My Self*, a reflective and relational tool grounded in Internal Family Systems (IFS), attachment theory, Indigenous worldviews, and self-leadership principles.

Part 1: Foundations introduces readers to key concepts such as Self, Wholeness, the stories we carry, and the many roles and aspects that make up our inner landscape. It includes guided reflections, gentle naming practices, and introductory frameworks to support personal growth through a trauma-informed, non-pathologizing lens.

This edition is provided as a preview and is not the final published version. Content, formatting, and structure are subject to change in the final release.

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