

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration



VA Caregiver Support Program

A Caregivers Journey to Self-Enrichment



Discover You!

“Sometimes the smallest step in the right direction ends up being the biggest step of your life. Tip toe if you must, but take the step.” - Unknown

Introduction



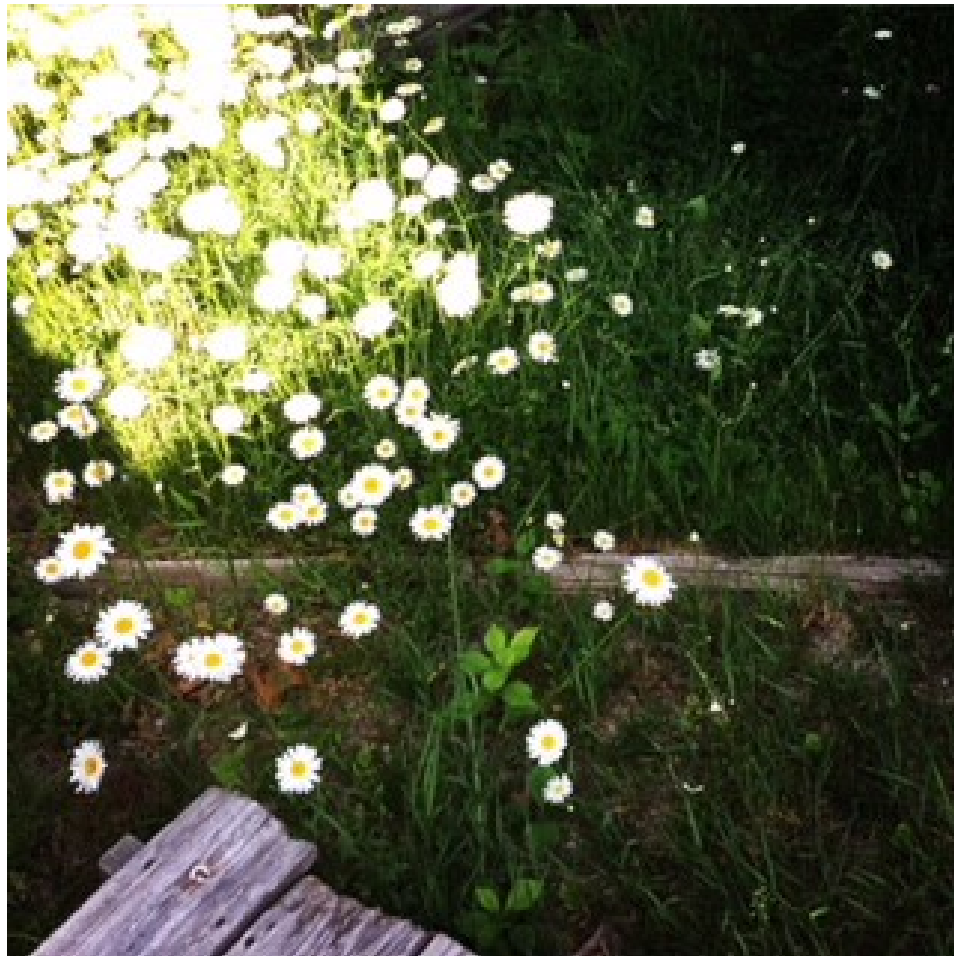
Welcome home to you!

This journal was developed with the intention of inspiring you to reflect upon and affirm who you have been, who you are, and who you hope to become. Your life has been influenced by many different people and life experiences that contribute to how you may view yourself. Beyond these influences however, you are at the core, at the heart of what drives your life journey. You are the source of your treasured gifts, your passion for living, and your connection to others.

Rediscover yourself by making time to clear away the expectations of others, the roles, the chores, and the activities. This time of reflection, can clear the path to arrive at your true center. Give yourself the gift of time to quietly contemplate the prompting questions in this journal. Our hope is that this offers you an opportunity to find clarity, direction, and greater insight into the unique and treasured gift that you are.

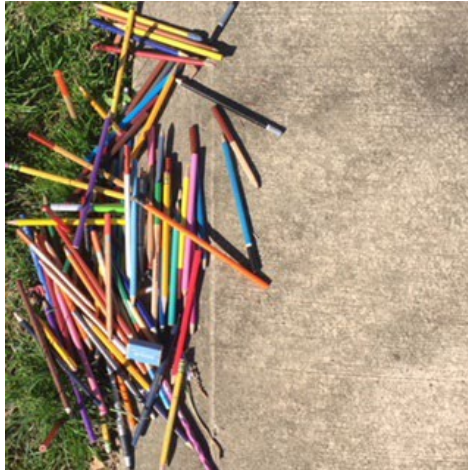
Enjoy the exploration!

This is Me: Early Childhood Years



This is Me!

The Early years



“Today you are You, that is truer than true.

There is no one alive who is Youer than You.” -Dr. Seuss

Find a favorite picture of you from your childhood and look at it closely. Think about what makes this picture a favorite. What are three personal qualities that you see captured in this picture of you?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Describe your childhood home environment.

Is the home you created as an adult similar or different from your home growing up? Why?

Identify 2 important adults responsible for your care as a child.

1. _____
2. _____

Identify 3 positive and 3 negative characteristics of each person.

Adult #1	
Positive	
Positive	
Positive	
Negative	
Negative	
Negative	
Adult #2	
Positive	
Positive	
Positive	
Negative	
Negative	
Negative	

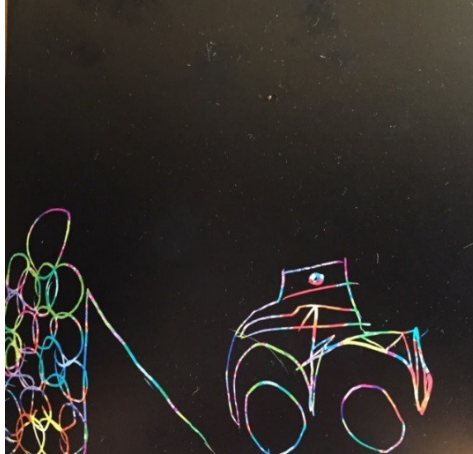
Identify 3 positive and 3 negative characteristics that you have acquired due to their influence.

You	
Positive	
Positive	
Positive	
Negative	
Negative	
Negative	

Identify one characteristic that you have which has helped you the most. Then, one characteristic which has been the most difficult throughout your lifetime.

This is Me!

The Early Years



“Don't give up! I believe in you all.

A person's a person, no matter how small!” -Dr. Seuss

What activities as a child brought you joy or comfort?

What was it about these activities that contributed to your positive feeling?

Who was a special childhood friend? Name _____

What was it about this person that made them important to you?

How do they represent what still matters to you in a friend?

Who was your favorite childhood teacher? Name _____

What did they appreciate about you and how did they support you?

What did you want to become when you grew up? For example, a circus clown, fire fighter, ballerina or doctor.

How are these interests still expressed in some form in your adult life?

What is your ethnic and cultural background or family history?

How was this background expressed or reinforced growing up? For example, was it in your language, the foods you ate, your values, spiritual beliefs or celebrations.

This is Me!

The Early Years



“What one loves in childhood stays in the heart forever.”

-Mary Jo Putney

Remember and describe a cherished childhood memory. Where were you? Were you alone or with others? How did you feel?

Why is this memory still so meaningful to you?

This is Me: Adult Years



This is Me!



Adult Years

“Be yourself; everyone else is already taken.” -Oscar Wilde

What is your favorite color?

How is this color a reflection of you?

Where is your favorite place to travel or escape to; to relax and restore yourself?

What is your favorite season and what do you enjoy most about this time of year? Are there activities you enjoy during this season?

Describe your favorite meal and dessert. When was the last time you enjoyed it?

This is Me!

Adult Years



“Amid a world of noisy, shallow actors it is noble to stand aside and say, 'I will simply be.’” -Henry David Thoreau

Name three (3) activities you enjoy that are relaxing, interesting or fun.

1.

2. _____

3. _____

When was the last time you engaged in these activities? Do you engage in them regularly, or not often at all? Would you prefer more often than you are?

Do you find you are more likely to engage in activities alone, with others or a balance of both?

What interferes with you doing things that you enjoy?

How does engaging in these activities influence your mood, change your outlook, alter your perspective of yourself, or support your self-esteem?

Name three (3) of your favorite physical characteristics.

1.

2.

3.

How would you describe your overall physical health?

What concerns do you currently have about your physical health?

What do you currently do to take care of these concerns?

What could you do to take better care of your physical health?

This is Me!

Adult Years



“To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment.” -Ralph Waldo Emerson

Name three (3) of your strengths.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Name three (3) of your weaknesses.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Would others describe your strengths and weaknesses differently than you do? If so, why?

This is Me!

Adult Years



“Use what talent you possess: the woods would be very silent if no birds sang except those that sang best.” -Henry Van Dyke

Identify your unique talents, or skills.

What do you do to express these talents and skills?

Would you like to develop these further, and if so, what might you do to accomplish that?

This is Me!

Adult Years



“Sometimes you find yourself in the middle of nowhere, and sometimes in the middle of nowhere you find yourself.” -Unknown

Name two (2) life accomplishments or goals that were a challenge for you to reach but that you are most proud of.

1. _____

2. _____

What personal strengths did you draw on to meet this challenge, or reach this goal?

How did meeting this goal alter your perspective of yourself?

Identify a difficult, or stressful time in your life. Whose example inspired you and/or whose support did you draw on to help you cope?

This is Me!

Adult Years



“The love we give away is the only love we keep.” -Elbert Hubbard

Name three (3) people that you admire. (famous or not)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

How do these people reflect who you are, or the qualities that matter most to you?

Name three (3) qualities that are most important to you in a friend?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

How do your friends support you?

This is Me!

Adult Years



“The Way is not in the sky; the Way is in the heart.”

— Gautama Buddha

What values, beliefs, or spiritual practices are most important to you?

How do you live out or express your values or beliefs?

What restores your peace of mind and awakens your appreciation for living?

Who or what are you most grateful for?

Goals and Dreams



This is Me!

Goals and Dreams



“The future depends on what we do in the present.” -Gandhi

Identify three (3) dreams or goals that you want to achieve.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What interferes with you reaching these goals?

Choose one goal and identify beginning steps you could take to pursue this goal.

This is Me!

Goals and Dreams



“Faith is taking the first step even when you don’t see the full staircase.” -Martin Luther King

What about yourself are you most unhappy with, that you could realistically change?

What initial steps could you take to address your unhappiness?

How do you imagine you would feel about yourself by making a change?

Identify three (3) wishes on your “bucket list” that you hope to experience or accomplish in your lifetime.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Restoration!



Restoration!

Physical



“Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food.” -Hippocrates

Healthy nutrition is the power source that you rely on to nourish and fuel your bodies strength and stamina. What you eat has the power to hurt or heal and can contribute not only to your physical but mental and emotional wellbeing. Food is also a source of comfort, a joy to the senses, and a focus of bonding and social engagement. Food is fuel. Food is fun. Food is medicine.

Identify the food choices that you make which fit into these categories below. For example, Comfort/Soothing: A warm apple pie and macaroni and cheese.

Nutrition/Fuel_____

Wellness/Healing_____

Enjoyment/Pleasure_____

Social Engagement_____

Adventure/Explore_____

Comfort/Soothing_____

Which food choices or habits negatively impact your health that you want to change?

Restoration!

Physical



“Exercise should be regarded as tribute to the heart.” -Gene Tunney

Physical activity can restore energy, strengthen muscles, build endurance, boost your immune system, relieve tension, restore balance and awaken your spirit. Exercise can target one or all four categories of improvement which include; endurance, strength, balance, and flexibility. Each category below supports your overall foundation of healthy physical activity.

- ❖ Endurance-Take a brisk walk, housework, garden, jog, bike, use the stairs
- ❖ Strength-Use hand or leg weights, do squats
- ❖ Balance-Balance on one foot hold the pose then repeat other leg, Tai Chi
- ❖ Flexibility-Stretch daily for 10 minutes, Yoga

Identify one activity you want to do to improve your physical well-being?

What benefits do you think you might find from engaging in this activity?

****Before starting any new physical activity assess your ability, think of any health issues or injuries and consult with your doctor if needed before beginning. ****

Restoration!

Physical



“Take rest; a field that has rested gives a bountiful crop.” -Ovid

Adequate rest supports your body’s ability to heal, reduces inflammation, quiets stress hormones, and boosts the immune system. Getting adequate sleep can be hindered by life demands, stresses, and worries. Attend to your bodies need for sleep as this time of quiet restoration supports your bodies health and wellbeing.

Tips to a better sleep:

- ❖ Set a sleep schedule. Go to sleep and get up at the same time each day.
- ❖ Avoid napping; If you do nap; limit it to no more than 30 minutes.
- ❖ Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and large meals 2-3 hours before bedtime.
- ❖ Include physical activity earlier in the day, fresh air, and daily sunlight.
- ❖ Wind down from a busy day with a relaxing bedtime ritual. Take a bath, read, meditate, or journal.
- ❖ Keep your bedroom temperature cool, quiet, dark, and avoid television, the computer, or looking at your cell phone screen.

What interferes with you getting a good night’s sleep?

What changes could you make to improve your sleep?

Restoration!

Physical Restoration Activities:

- ❖ Go for A brisk walk
- ❖ Take a deep breath
- ❖ Listen to a meditation or relaxation recording
- ❖ Try Yoga
- ❖ Turn on the music and dance
- ❖ Stretch
- ❖ Go for a bike ride
- ❖ Take a nap
- ❖ Attend your medical appointments
- ❖ Eat a healthy meal or savor a warm cup of tea
- ❖ Take a time out
- ❖ Acupuncture
- ❖ Take a vacation
- ❖ Go for a jog
- ❖ Walk your dog
- ❖ Get outside and soak in the sunlight
- ❖ Play with a pet
- ❖ Sweat out tension with a workout
- ❖ Get a manicure
- ❖ Avoid tight clothes
- ❖ Cook your favorite foods
- ❖ Get a haircut
- ❖ Go for a swim
- ❖ Lift weights
- ❖ Drink plenty of water
- ❖ Sing
- ❖ Sleep
- ❖ Take a hot shower
- ❖ Get a massage
- ❖ Give and receive affection

Restoration!

Emotional



“Crying doesn’t indicate that you are weak. Since birth, it has always been a sign that you are alive.” -Charlotte Bronte

Life is full of both joys and sorrows. If you pay attention and recognize both the painful and wonderful feelings without clinging to them, they will pass naturally. Resisting, ignoring, fighting or clinging to feelings only results in suffering. Practice these options below to support your emotional wellbeing.

- ❖ Pay attention and observe your feelings with curiosity.
- ❖ Name your feelings. For example, are you feeling angry, sad, happy or excited?
- ❖ Consider tracking how you feel in a journal or reflecting at the end of day.
- ❖ Explore what your feelings are telling you about an underlying need that is being met, or not being met.
- ❖ Accept the feeling. Attempting to ignore or resist a feeling may make it hurt more.
- ❖ Review the list of feelings and needs included in the following page to improve your awareness of the range of feelings and needs.

What are some ways that you release the feelings that come to your attention?
For example, do you journal, cry, exercise, talk it out, or take purposeful action?

Restoration!

Positive feelings that can arise when your needs are satisfied include:

Happy	Interested	Content	Sympathetic
Thrilled	Curious	Serene	Friendly
Amused	Engaged	Enthusiastic	Passionate
Rested	Relaxed	Hopeful	Eager
Restored	Amazed	Grateful	Secure
Appreciative	Safe	Loving	Fascinated
Delighted	Excited	Peaceful	Confident
Exhilarated	Interested	Ecstatic	Engaged
Satisfied	Thankful	Trusting	Joyful
Optimistic	Inspired	Absorbed	Compassion

Negative feelings that can arise when your needs are frustrated or unmet include:

Sad	Angry	Hurt	Vulnerable
Embarrassed	Tired	Scared	Terrified
Confused	Tense	Jealous	Hopeless
Unhappy	Devastated	Furious	Grief
Lonely	Restless	Depressed	Alarmed
Frustrated	Shocked	Disgusted	Guilty
Frightened	Depleted	Bored	Helpless
Anxious	Disappointed	Cranky	Fidgety
Edgy	Gloomy	Heartbroken	Pain
Despair	Startled	Jittery	Insecure
Discouraged	Enraged	Leery	Turmoil
Irritable	Puzzled	Nervous	Melancholy
Dejected	Frazzled	Distressed	Perplexed
Conflicted	Torn	Overwhelmed	Longing
Ashamed	Worried	Horrorified	Resentful
Ambivalent	Uneasy	Irritated	Suspicious
Self-Conscious	Annoyed	Dazed	Distant
Weary	Impatient	Remorseful	Stressed out

Restoration!

Emotional



“Listen. People start to heal the moment they feel heard.”

-Cheryl Richardson

While you may wish to have your feelings heard by another it is important to know that healing can also occur when you listen, accept, and attend to the feelings that arise within you. Read and think about this reflection below to support acceptance of the challenging feelings that may arise. Consider what the underlying need is that your feelings are an expression of. These needs are seeking your kind attention.

Breathe into acceptance.

If there is sadness,
breathe into your sadness.

Allow your breath to release the tears;
let them cleanse your heartache like a spring rain.

If there is anger,
breathe into your anger.

Let your breath cool the heat of your angry fire;
empowering you towards sound and purposeful action.

If there is worry and anxiety,
breathe into your worry and anxiety.
Let your breath slowly smooth the tangles of control;
rocking you gently in the tranquil boat of acceptance.

If there is restlessness and boredom,
breathe into your restlessness and boredom.
Let your breath find a channel for your energy;
exhaling energy towards an avenue of interest

If you feel trapped or stuck,
breathe into feeling trapped and stuck.
Let your breath awaken a new perspective;
finding a pocket of freedom and choice.

If there is embarrassment,
breathe into your embarrassment.
Let your breath lighten your self-consciousness;
finding humor and humility in its wake.

If there is fear,
breathe into your fear.
Allow your breath to soothe your fears;
deep in the belly of your breath, there is safety.

If there is loneliness and isolation,
breathe into your loneliness and isolation.
Your breath is a shared river in the sea of humanity;
You are not alone. Reach out!

-S. Dougherty 2018

Restoration!

Emotional



“We don’t need more stuff, we need more humanity.” -Seth Godin

Human beings all share innate human needs. One may try to hide needs to avoid appearing vulnerable, but needs are active in all human beings. Your feelings arise from your needs either being met or when your needs are unmet. Feelings alert you to your needs. Review the listing below of basic human needs. If you are aware of a feeling that is arising, consider what is the need listed below that is driving that feeling to arise? Acknowledging your needs can help you sort out appropriate ways to care for that need.

Well-being	Connection	Self- Expression
Air, Food, Water	Love, Friendship	Freedom, Independence
Rest/Sleep	Care, Respect, Trust	Self-responsibility
Exercise, Movement	Understanding	Passion, Inspiration
Shelter, Safety, Stability	Kindness, Empathy	Celebration, Mourning
Structure, Order	Acceptance	Honesty
Physical Touch	Appreciation	Meaning, Dignity
Play, Beauty, Peace	Belonging	Growth, Learning

Is there a need you have been ignoring that is calling out to you, for wise and purposeful action? What is the need and what can you do to try to meet it?

Restoration!

Emotional Restoration Activities

- ❖ Write your feelings down
- ❖ Cry
- ❖ Laugh
- ❖ Give yourself affirmations
- ❖ Get outside
- ❖ Take a walk or hike
- ❖ Practice self-compassion
- ❖ Buy yourself a gift
- ❖ Write about things that are bothering you
- ❖ Express and communicate what you feel directly and appropriately
- ❖ Seek Counseling
- ❖ Forgive others
- ❖ Learn to be with and accept your feelings
- ❖ Find a “vent” partner
- ❖ Laugh
- ❖ Let go of something
- ❖ Foster Self-Forgiveness
- ❖ Give yourself permission to feel your feelings and let them go
- ❖ Write a loving letter to yourself
- ❖ Make a list of ten things you’re good at
- ❖ Schedule “Me” time
- ❖ Make a list of music you can play when you’re feeling upset
- ❖ Seek the comfort of a friend or loved one
- ❖ Engage in soothing activities
- ❖ Refocus your attention
- ❖ Write a letter to the person you are upset with
- ❖ Advocate for yourself
- ❖ Set boundaries with others

Restoration!

Mental



“Minds are like parachutes; they only function when open.”

-Thomas Dewey

Awakening your mind to new ideas sparks the imagination. Opening your mind to new perspectives expands your understanding of yourself and the world around you. Learning ignites your interest in living. Open your mind and reap the rewards. What would you like to explore or learn more about?

Identify two skills or something new you would like to learn. For example, is there a topic, a book you have wanted to read, a class you have wanted to take, or a new skill you want to learn?

It is not easy to see things from a perspective different than your own. Having an “open mind” takes practice. Select a conflict, topic, or problem in which you are stuck in your own point of view. Now, step back and challenge yourself to see things from the others perspective or to argue from a different perspective than your own. How has your understanding of the situation changed?

Restoration!

Mental Restoration Activities

- ❖ Learn something new
- ❖ Take action! (one small step on something you've been avoiding)
- ❖ Try a new activity, learn a new skill, or craft
- ❖ Immerse yourself in a crossword puzzle or word search.
- ❖ Learn how to say no, be aware of your decisions
- ❖ Break down large tasks
- ❖ Look at problems as challenges
- ❖ Strive for excellence, not perfection
- ❖ Set priorities
- ❖ Turn off all electronics
- ❖ Get Organized / De-clutter
- ❖ Plan and write down short-term and long-term goals
- ❖ Sign up for a class that excites you at a local college, adult school or online
- ❖ Educate yourself on you loved one's condition
- ❖ Watch a movie
- ❖ Listen to music or the radio
- ❖ Leave work at work
- ❖ Visit your favorite Web sites or create your own
- ❖ Do a puzzle with a lot of pieces
- ❖ Make a scrapbook with pictures
- ❖ Write a letter, poem, a song, or write your life story,
- ❖ Go to a library or bookstore
- ❖ Read your favorite book, magazine, or newspaper
- ❖ Go to the mall or the park and watch people; imagine what they're thinking
- ❖ Listen to guided imagery or meditation recordings
- ❖ Plan a trip or take a drive to somewhere you've never been before
- ❖ Visit a museum, local art gallery, or look at art
- ❖ Build a support network
- ❖ Create your own list of self-care activities
- ❖ Create or try a new recipe

Restoration!

Social



There are no strangers here; only friends you haven't met."

-William Butler Yeats

A strong support system is one of the most significant tools in maintaining your health and wellbeing. Your connection to others can act as a buffer from life's struggles and enhance your joy in living. It is never too late to develop positive connections with others.

Are you satisfied with the supports that you have in your life? Why or why not?

Since you have become a caregiver is your network expanding or getting smaller?

Identify one person in your life that you want to thank for being a support to you. What could you do to show this person your appreciation?

Restoration!

Social



“Solitude is where one discovers one is not alone.”

-Marty Rubin

There are times when the company you need to keep is your own. How do you know you need alone time?

Is there a balance between your time spent alone and your time spent with others? What interferes with a good balance for you?

What are your favorite alone time activities?

What are the benefits you notice from spending time alone?

Restoration!

Social Restoration Activities

There are many ways to reach out and expand your social connections. Feeling isolated, bored, disconnected? Expand your range of activities and connect to the community in new and exciting ways

- ❖ Contact the VA Caregiver Support Line at 1-855-260-3274 to learn about services and supports through VA's Caregiver Support Program.
 - ❖ Take a class at a local college or attend a community adult education class
 - ❖ Join a gym, attend a Yoga or Tai Chi class
 - ❖ Volunteer at your local VA medical Center or contact community organization
 - ❖ Write a letter, make a phone call
 - ❖ Organize a class reunion
 - ❖ Get involved in a political campaign
 - ❖ Connect with a local senior center or community center
 - ❖ Join or start a book club
 - ❖ Join a hiking, biking, or running club
 - ❖ Join an on-line community or social media group
 - ❖ Seek a spiritual or church community
 - ❖ Explore local newspapers for current events, live music, or lectures
 - ❖ Explore your city's Department of Parks and Recreation for classes and activities
 - ❖ Plant or work on a community garden
 - ❖ Attend your local library and explore offerings available
 - ❖ Visit State Tourism Web sites and explore the State's history or attractions
 - ❖ Attend free community concerts
 - ❖ Visit or support your local art gallery or museum
 - ❖ Provide support to local schools or hospitals in need of volunteers
 - ❖ Other (Write your own ideas)
-
-

Restoration!

Spiritual



**“It is through gratitude for the present moment,
that the spiritual dimension of life opens.” -Eckhart Tolle**

There are many ways to quiet the mind to be fully present in the moment. A labyrinth is one tool you can use to bring your attention to the present moment. Throughout centuries and in many different cultural and spiritual communities, people have utilized labyrinths to find calm, increase focus, insight, and clarity.

Labyrinths are ancient patterns or circular paths which wind to a center. Labyrinths have one entrance and one exit in which one would walk in contemplation or prayer. These walking paths were often grass paths outlined in stone or were created in tile floors. Labyrinths can be found in churches or temples all over the world and now are also found in hospital gardens, parks, schools, or home gardens as they are found to be calming.

The finger labyrinth on the following page is a replica of the labyrinth found in the floor of the Chartres Cathedral in France, circa 1220 A.D. A finger labyrinth provides the opportunity to “walk” the path with your finger instead of your feet.

Try it, take a walk within, and see what you will find!

Restoration!

Spiritual- Trace with your finger the winding single path to center. Rest. Retrace your steps out. Bring your attention to the path, in the present moment.



Chartres Labyrinth-Original Drawing by Robert Ferre, final graphic by Vicki Keiser

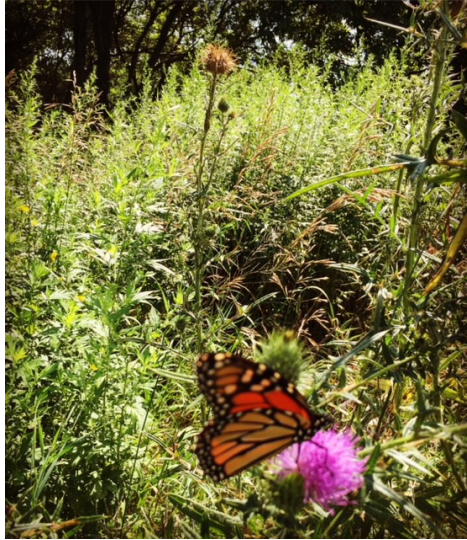
Restoration!

Spiritual Restoration Activities

- ❖ Light a candle and reflect
- ❖ Meditate
- ❖ Write in a journal
- ❖ Pray
- ❖ Share your spiritual beliefs with loved ones and invite them to share with you.
- ❖ Name something good that happened today
- ❖ Identify your blessings
- ❖ Notice the little miracles
- ❖ Connect to God / Higher Power
- ❖ Remember what and who you love
- ❖ Recall a peaceful time
- ❖ Be present and fully participate with your heart.
- ❖ Say Thank you
- ❖ Volunteer to help someone
- ❖ Go to your church, synagogue, temple, or other place of worship
- ❖ Write a letter to your higher power
- ❖ Read inspiring quotes or spiritual books
- ❖ Reflect on what gives life meaning to you
- ❖ Reflect on how you have contributed
- ❖ Reflect on what you are thankful for
- ❖ Talk to a member of the clergy
- ❖ Make a list of ten things you would like to do before you die
- ❖ Write a letter to someone who has made your life better and tell them why
- ❖ Reflect on the lives you have touched in a positive or meaningful way
- ❖ Engage in random acts of kindness

Restoration!

Nature



“Adopt the pace of nature, her secret is patience.”

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

The natural world has healing properties that awaken your senses and heal the soul. It does not matter if you live in an urban, suburban, or rural setting, there is always an opportunity to allow nature’s influence to restore your spirit.

What activities do you engage in that bring your attention to the gifts of the natural world?

Consider bird watching. Set a bird feeder outside your window, or find a park bench or window, to watch, listen, and learn. Enjoy these captivating creatures. Observe their unique traits, and enjoy their interactive antics unfold before your eyes!

How does watching the birds affect your state of mind?

Restoration!

Nature



**“I go to nature to be soothed and healed,
and to have my senses put in order.” -John Burroughs**

Connecting to nature does not need to be difficult. There are many ways you can enjoy the natural world. Consider these options below.

- ❖ Take a lawn chair or blanket and stretch out beneath the sky. Feel your weight grounded to the earth. Allow the sky to lift you to a state of weightlessness. Wander through the twinkling stars or drifting lazy clouds.
- ❖ Awaken early in the peaceful quiet to welcome the morning sun or plan a date to attend the closing sunset to reflect and unwind from the day.
- ❖ Get your hands in the soil. Plant a flower box, a pot of kitchen herbs, an indoor plant, or a vegetable garden.
- ❖ Go on a walk and search for autumn leaves, acorns, pinecones, wildflowers, a unique stone, a fallen feather, grape vines, or moss. Such objects of beauty may be used to create a wreath or be simply placed on a table to admire. Gather nature’s bounty and bring it home!
- ❖ Visit the National Park Web site:<https://www.nps.gov/planyourvisit/passes.htm> to search for local bike and walking paths.

Go Exploring!

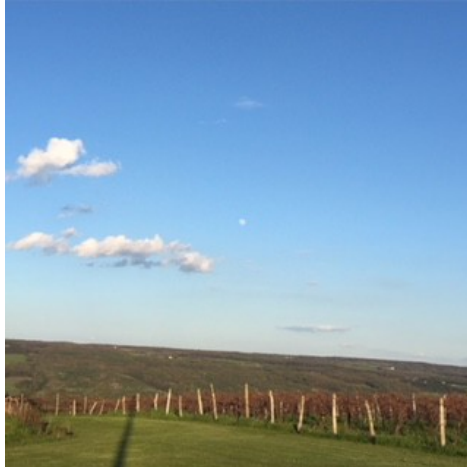
Restoration!

Nature Restoration Activities

- ❖ Sit down where the afternoon sun streams in a window
- ❖ Walk in the rain
- ❖ Walk barefoot or lay down in the grass
- ❖ Look up at the stars, study the constellations
- ❖ Sit by a lake, on a beach, listen to the waves
- ❖ Raise chickens or another animal
- ❖ Pick fruit off a tree or vegetables from the garden
- ❖ Observe what the wind blows; leaves, branches, hair
- ❖ Go boating, canoeing, kayaking, camping, waterskiing.
- ❖ Listen to the rain
- ❖ Listen to thunder, marvel at lightening, look for a rainbow
- ❖ Look at snowflakes fall
- ❖ Build a snowman, snow castle or sculpture, throw a snowball
- ❖ Go sledding, snow skiing, snowmobiling, or ice skating
- ❖ Build or sit by a fire
- ❖ Walk barefoot on a sandy beach
- ❖ Plant a garden or a tree
- ❖ Smell the flowers
- ❖ Go for a walk or hike in a park, the woods, a trail
- ❖ Feed and watch the birds
- ❖ Gather flowers from the garden or create a bouquet
- ❖ Appreciate the changing seasons
- ❖ Go fishing or hunting
- ❖ Open your windows and let in fresh air
- ❖ Follow the clouds in the sky, identify their shapes
- ❖ Hang up a wind chime
- ❖ Watch the sunrise or sunset
- ❖ Gather beautiful leaves
- ❖ Look for interesting sea shells or stones

Restoration!

Rituals



“Any ritual is an opportunity for transformation.” -Starhawk

Throughout time, across cultural and geographic boundaries, despite diverse spiritual beliefs and practices, humanity has sought comfort, connection, inspiration, and celebration in the form of rituals. Rituals are repeated activities infused with an extra dose of attention, meaning or significance. Rituals can be completed as daily activities which offer a moment of comfort or reflection, or can be a seasonal activity or event. Rituals provide moments to look forward to, add structure to the day, offer the security to know what you can count on, and are opportunities to connect to yourself or others. Rituals can reinforce beliefs, highlight seasonal changes, or provide opportunities to celebrate and give thanks.

Identify daily rituals you engage in that give you comfort, add structure to your day, or provide a moment of contemplation or reflection?

Think about the past year, identify the rituals and celebrations you engaged in that you looked forward to, or were the most meaningful to you.

Restoration!

Relaxation Exercises



“There are always problems to face, but it makes a difference if our minds are calm.” -The Dalai Lama

A practice of meditation provides an oasis of calm and a path to return to a balanced center. A calm body, mind, and spirit makes it easier to approach life’s challenges with clarity. When calmly centered in the present moment, you render your heart open to experiencing life’s beautiful treasures in each moment.

Make use of the gift of relaxation!

Follow this link to the VA Caregiver Support Line Relaxation Exercises:

<https://www.caregiver.va.gov/support-line/presentations.asp>

A Caregivers Journey Home



“Start where you are, use what you have, do what you can.”

-Arthur Ashe

Everyone is faced with a multitude of unique challenges throughout the course of this life. Life challenges can be opportunities for growth. Your ability to face these adversities and grow from them depends on how well you draw upon your own internal strengths, and how able or willing you are to reach out for the external supports available to help you negotiate these difficulties.

Managing adversity will require attention to recognizing your needs and expressing your feelings. Managing life’s challenges will also depend upon your ability to identify multiple and varied sources of support and self-care options to care for your needs.

It is in these moments of adversity that you are called upon to reflect on who you are, to take ownership of your responsibilities, to summon your courage, draw on your strengths, and creatively make use of the support at your disposal.

Facing these challenges with courage will afford you the lasting gifts of resilience, wisdom, insight, and wholeness. We hope that this journal has encouraged you to reflect upon your supports and identify the many avenues available to restore and revitalize you on your journey. We hope that as you have reflected upon; who you were and who you hope to become, that you have discovered that your greatest resource, and most treasured asset, is You!

Welcome Home!

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