



REFLECTIVE WRITING EXERCISE

FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS

Instructions: Answer the following questions as freely and openly as possible. Your answers are for you only and are not meant to be shared. As such, do not worry about the quality of your prose or grammar. There's no need to think much before you write; you can just write.

1. What values are most important to you?

2. How are those values related to our basic human kindness?

3. Think about a time when you were living in sync with your values. What was it like? What do you think was helping you to live in sync with your values? If there is no such time that you can think of, what do you imagine it would be like to live truly in sync with your values?

4. Think about times in your life when you lived or acted out of sync with your values. Why do you think you acted in that way? If you cannot think of a time, imagine what it might be like to act out of sync with one's values, or use an example from someone else's life that you have observed.

5. How would life be different if we acted more in sync with our values, individually and collectively?



MINDFUL DIALOGUE EXERCISE

FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS

Instructions: Each participant will select a partner with whom to have a mindful conversation. Take turns answering the following questions. The partner whose turn it is to listen should follow these rules:

1. Be totally present for the other person.
2. Avoid asking questions.
3. Avoid giving advice.
4. Maintain total confidentiality: anything that your conversation partner decides to share must be held in strict confidence.

Question 1: What values are most important to you?

Question 2: What benefit do you get from living your life in a way that reflects these values?

Question 3: Can you think of one thing you could do that would help you live out your values more fully?





BUILDING RESOURCE EXERCISE

SKILL 1: CALMING BODY AND MIND

In the space below, , describe or draw a visual representation of a resource for you. Try and include as many of your senses as appropriate (colors, textures, sounds, tastes, etc.) as you imagine this resource in your mind and include as many details as possible in your description or drawing. After you have finished, read your description or look at your drawing. Turn your attention to your body. Track any pleasant or neutral sensations in the body. If you do notice a pleasant or neutral sensation, pay attention to that sensation for a few moments.

This exercise is based on the Community Resilience Model designed by Elaine Miller-Karas.

RESOURCES

A resource is anyone or anything that helps you feel better.

It can be internal (something you like about yourself, something you like to do), external (a person, memory, place, animal, spiritual figure, faith tradition, etc.) or imagined.

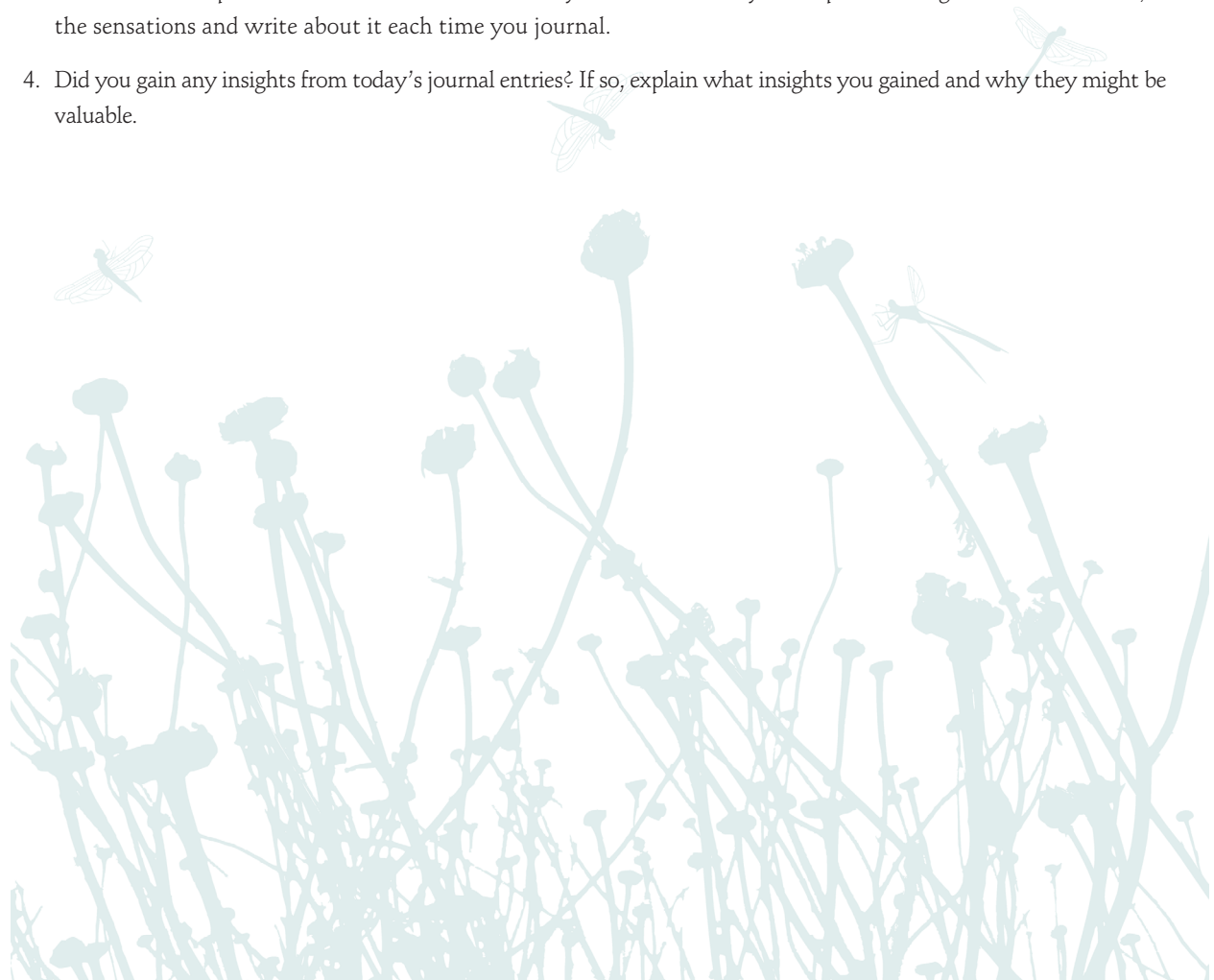


CONTEMPLATIVE JOURNAL QUESTIONS

SKILL 1: CALMING BODY AND MIND

Instructions: These journal questions are designed to help reinforce the skills you are learning in CIT. The greatest benefit will come from repeated consideration of these questions over time. They can be used in connection with, or in place of, the Contemplative Practice recordings found on the CIT website. Since space in this book is limited, you may wish to answer these questions in your personal journal.

1. Bring to mind one of your resources. Try to imagine the resource in as much detail as possible. Either draw your resource in your journal or list some of the most vivid details of your resource.
2. Notice what is happening inside as you think about the resource and notice the sensations that are pleasant or neutral. If you find a pleasant or neutral sensation, stay with it for a few moments.
3. Write down the pleasant or neutral sensations that you noticed. It may be helpful to bring a resource to mind, track the sensations and write about it each time you journal.
4. Did you gain any insights from today's journal entries? If so, explain what insights you gained and why they might be valuable.





REFLECTIVE WRITING EXERCISE

SKILL 2: ETHICAL MINDFULNESS

Instructions: Answer the following questions as freely and openly as possible. Your answers are for you only and are not meant to be shared. As such, do not worry about the quality of your prose or grammar. There's no need to think much before you write; you can just write.

1. Write down one or two examples of times when you lacked heedfulness, mindfulness or awareness and it may have caused you some difficulties.

2. Write down one or two examples of times when you employed heedfulness, mindfulness or awareness and it benefited you or saved you from an unfortunate situation.

3. What is one small step you could take to increase your heedfulness, mindfulness or awareness?



CONTEMPLATIVE JOURNAL QUESTIONS

SKILL 2: ETHICAL MINDFULNESS

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Start with bringing to mind a resource or focus on the contact of your body with a surface, object or another body part, and allow yourself to notice any neutral or pleasant sensations that arise in your body.

1. Write about a time you used (or forgot to use) ethical mindfulness this week.
2. Which aspect of ethical mindfulness in particular (heedfulness, mindfulness or awareness) did you use (or forget to use), and how did that happen?
3. How might this situation have turned out differently if you hadn't used (or forgotten to use) your ethical mindfulness?
4. What types of things can get in the way of our ethical mindfulness?
5. Did you gain any insights from today's journal entries? If so, explain what insights you gained and why they might be valuable.
6. If you are engaging in concrete steps or practices to increase your ethical mindfulness, how has that been progressing, or what have you been learning?

The next time you practice this exercise, try and use an example that involves one of the three aspects of ethical mindfulness (heedfulness, mindfulness, awareness) that you did not focus on this time.



REFLECTIVE WRITING EXERCISE

SKILL 3: EMOTIONAL AWARENESS

Instructions: Answer the following questions as freely and openly as possible. Your answers are for you only and are not meant to be shared. As such, do not worry about the quality of your prose or grammar. There's no need to think much before you write; you can just write.

1. Describe a time in your life when you could have let your thoughts or emotions get out of control, but you were able to stop the spark from becoming a forest fire.

2. How might this situation have turned out differently if you had not controlled your response or had let it get out of hand?

3. What would your life be like if you were able to be more emotionally aware and less reactive in general?



CONTEMPLATIVE JOURNAL QUESTIONS

SKILL 3: EMOTIONAL AWARENESS

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Start with bringing to mind a resource or focus on the contact of your body with a surface, object or another body part, and allow yourself to notice any neutral or pleasant sensations that arise in your body.

1. Describe an aspect of emotional awareness that you now have, but that you didn't have when you were younger (such as an insight into a particular emotion, or an ability to recognize emotions, etc.).
2. Since the last time you journaled, was there a moment when a spark could have turned into a forest fire? Or did? How would this situation have turned out differently if you had had less emotional awareness?
3. Reflect on the skills you used to prevent the situation from being worse than it was.
4. Did you gain any insights from today's journal entries? If so, explain what insights you gained and why they might be valuable.
5. If you are engaging in concrete steps or practices to increase your emotional awareness, how has that been progressing or what have you been learning?





REFLECTIVE WRITING EXERCISE

SKILL 4: SELF-COMPASSION

Instructions: Answer the following questions as freely and openly as possible. Your answers are for you only and are not meant to be shared. As such, do not worry about the quality of your prose or grammar. There's no need to think much before you write; you can just write.

1. Can you think of a time when you got overly attached to, or concerned about, something you were trying to achieve (e.g., financial gain, pleasure, status or praise) or avoid (e.g., financial loss, physical pain, blame/disrespect or loss of status)?

2. How did this loss of equanimity affect your life? Why did it seem so important at the time?

3. How would your life have been different if you have had more equanimity in this situation?



CONTEMPLATIVE JOURNAL QUESTIONS

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Exercise #1: Inner Versus External Factors of Happiness

Start with bringing to mind a resource or focus on the contact of your body with a surface, object or another body part, and allow yourself to notice any neutral or pleasant sensations that arise in your body.

1. List one or more internal qualities that you feel bring (or could bring) happiness to your life.
2. Choose one thing from the list above. What is it specifically about this thing that brings you happiness? If you had more of it, would you have more happiness?
3. List one or more material possessions or accomplishments that you feel bring (or could bring) happiness to your life.
4. Choose one thing from the list above. What is it specifically about this thing that brings you happiness? If you had more of it, would you have more happiness?
5. Repeat the questions from above, but this time looking at the internal and external things that you think bring (or might bring) unhappiness.
6. Did you gain any insights from today's journal entries? If so, explain what insights you gained and why they might be valuable.
7. If you are engaging in concrete steps or practices to increase your self-compassion, how has that been progressing or what have you been learning?



CONTEMPLATIVE JOURNAL QUESTIONS

SKILL 4: SELF-COMPASSION

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Exercise #2: Hedonic Treadmill

Start with bringing to mind a resource or focus on the contact of your body with a surface, object or another body part, and allow yourself to notice any neutral or pleasant sensations that arise in your body.

1. Thinking about the past few weeks or months, what are some of the things that have occupied most of your thoughts and actions?
2. What are you trying to achieve, if anything, by doing and thinking about these things (i.e., what goals are you pursuing)?
3. What are you trying to avoid?
4. How do these pursuits relate to your inner values?
5. Consider a time you achieved something similar to an item you described in question 2. How long lasting was the happiness you experienced when you achieved this goal?
6. Consider a time you experienced a difficulty like one listed in question 3. How long lasting was the difficulty? How long was it before you shifted your attention to the next difficulty that could befall you?
7. In looking back over your answers, is there any correlation between those goals that strengthen your inner values versus those that rely on external factors?
8. Are there times when striving for these goals and trying to avoid these difficulties causes you stress, anxiety or to act unethically, causing harm to yourself and others?
9. How could you approach these situations differently, where we continue to care appropriately for ourselves and others, without leading to as much anxiety, stress and harm?
10. What inner qualities could you develop to approach these situations with greater mental balance and self-compassion?
11. Did you gain any insights from today's journal entries? If so, explain what insights you gained and why they might be valuable.



CONTEMPLATIVE JOURNAL QUESTIONS

SKILL 4: SELF-COMPASSION

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Exercise #3: Unrealistic Expectations

Start with bringing to mind a resource or focus on the contact of your body with a surface, object or another body part, and allow yourself to notice any neutral or pleasant sensations that arise in your body.

1. Can you describe a time in your life when you set realistic expectations for yourself and you met or exceeded your expectation?
2. How did it feel to meet or exceed your expectations?
3. Describe a time when you failed to meet your own expectations and reacted harshly to yourself, or a current situation in which you feel you might fail to meet expectations.
4. Imagine someone you love dearly telling you about this situation and their feelings of self-judgment. What specific things would you say to them?
5. Do you think these same things would apply to you in your situation? Why or why not?
6. Although the outcome may not have changed, how would your well-being have been affected if you had set more realistic expectations for yourself?
7. If you are engaging in concrete steps or practices to set more realistic expectations for yourself, how has that been progressing, or what have you been learning?
8. Did you gain any insights from today's journal entries? If so, explain what insights you gained and why they might be valuable.



REFLECTIVE WRITING EXERCISE

SKILL 5: IMPARTIALITY AND COMMON HUMANITY

Instructions: Answer the following questions as freely and openly as possible. Your answers are for you only and are not meant to be shared. As such, do not worry about the quality of your prose or grammar. There's no need to think much before you write; you can just write.

1. Have you ever had an enemy become a friend, or a friend become an enemy or stranger? How did it happen?

2. Do you think there are any negative consequences of bias to a person or to a society? Conversely, are there benefits to having an unbiased, impartial attitude?

3. Would your life be different if people were less biased to you or around you? How?



CONTEMPLATIVE JOURNAL QUESTIONS

SKILL 5: IMPARTIALITY AND COMMON HUMANITY

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Exercise #1: Common Humanity

Start with bringing to mind a resource or focus on the contact of your body with a surface, object or another body part, and allow yourself to notice any neutral or pleasant sensations that arise in your body.

1. Bring to mind three people:
 - a. someone you consider a friend or loved one.
 - b. someone who you find difficult (start with someone who is only slightly difficult).
 - c. someone who is a stranger (someone to whom you feel neither close nor distant).
2. Write the name of the person or how you know them and three physical details or characteristics about each person. Try to imagine them in your mind as vividly as possible.
3. List five meaningful things that each person has in common with you. (This may be difficult at first for someone who is difficult or a stranger, but try your best.)
4. Do any insights arise as you think about what you have in common with each of these people?
5. Thinking of the difficult person and stranger, do you think each has ever experienced disappointment, loneliness, loss of a loved one, or some other difficulties?
6. As you think about their challenges, do any insights arise?
7. Do each of these people want genuine happiness and to avoid suffering?
8. Looking back at the list you created in question 3, is there anything you want to add?
9. Did you gain any insights from today's journal entries? If so, explain what insights you gained and why they might be valuable.
10. If you are engaging in concrete steps or practices to increase your impartiality and sense of common humanity, how has that been progressing, or what have you been learning?



CONTEMPLATIVE JOURNAL QUESTIONS

SKILL 5: IMPARTIALITY AND COMMON HUMANITY

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Exercise #2: Impartiality

Start with bringing to mind a resource or focus on the contact of your body with a surface, object or another body part, and allow yourself to notice any neutral or pleasant sensations that arise in your body.

1. Describe a time when something good happened to someone you find difficult, and it made you uncomfortable or unhappy.
2. Bring to mind someone you consider a friend or loved one, and try to imagine as vividly as possible this same good thing happening to this person. Write down the thoughts, emotions and sensations you notice as you imagine this good event happening to your friend or loved one.
3. Did you react differently to the beneficial thing occurring to your friend than to the difficult person? If so, why do you think that is?
4. Is it possible that some of the reason for the difference is simply based on the different way you relate to each person, rather than to the event itself?
5. See if you can list three or four people in your life who have moved between the categories of friend, difficult person, and stranger – for example, an adversary who became a friend, or a friend who became a stranger. Do you think these categories are fixed or changeable?
6. Did you gain any insights from today's journal entries? If so, explain what insights you gained and why they might be valuable.
7. If you are engaging in concrete steps or practices to increase your impartiality and sense of common humanity, how has that been progressing or what have you been learning?



REFLECTIVE WRITING EXERCISE

NAIKAN PRACTICE

Instructions: Calculate the number of hours your primary caregivers spent doing things to benefit you from the time you were born until you were independent, focusing specifically on the number of hours they spent:

1. Preparing meals for you,
2. Taking you from place to place, and
3. Doing your laundry and making sure you were clothed.

If there are other basic necessities you'd like to include, include them also. If it is helpful, use the chart below to aid in your calculations. When you have finished with your primary caregiver, you can continue with other caregivers if you like.

NAME	HOURS SPENT PREPARING MEALS FOR YOU	HOURS SPENT TRANSPORTING YOU FROM PLACE TO PLACE	HOURS SPENT DOING LAUNDRY AND PROVIDING CLOTHES FOR YOU	HOURS SPENT PROVIDING OTHER BASIC NECESSITIES FOR YOU	TOTAL HOURS
	_____ Hours/Week x 52 Weeks _____ = _____ Hours/Year x _____ No. of Years _____ = _____ Hours	_____ Hours/Week x 52 Weeks _____ = _____ Hours/Year x _____ No. of Years _____ = _____ Hours	_____ Hours/Week x 52 Weeks _____ = _____ Hours/Year x _____ No. of Years _____ = _____ Hours	_____ Hours/Week x 52 Weeks _____ = _____ Hours/Year x _____ No. of Years _____ = _____ Hours	
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REFLECTIVE WRITING EXERCISE

SKILL 6: FORGIVENESS AND GRATITUDE

Instructions: Answer the following questions as freely and openly as possible. Your answers are for you only and are not meant to be shared. As such, do not worry about the quality of your prose or grammar. There's no need to think much before you write; you can just write.

1. Identify a person or thing that you benefit from, like something that you enjoy or a person who helps you or whom you appreciate. To the extent possible, write down all that had to happen in order for that person or thing to be in your life. Focus especially on the people that took part in this process. If you like, you can draw a web of interdependence to illustrate this.

2. How would your life be different if people stopped providing you with intentional or unintentional benefit? Can you think of any concrete examples?

3. How would your life be different if the people around you had more gratitude?



CONTEMPLATIVE JOURNAL QUESTIONS

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Exercise #1: Gratitude

Start with bringing to mind a resource or focus on the contact of your body with a surface, object or another body part, and allow yourself to notice any neutral or pleasant sensations that arise in your body.

1. Bring to mind someone from your life on whom you would like to do Naikan practice. (If this is a person you have known for more than a year, you may wish to choose a specific time period to start with, such as the first year or few years you knew this person, and then continue from there the next time you do this practice.)
2. List all the things you received from this person, being specific.
3. List all the things you gave back.
4. List anything you did that caused trouble for this person.
5. What thoughts, emotions and sensations arise in your body and mind from doing this practice?
6. When you finish writing, end with bringing to mind a resource or focus on the contact of your body with a surface, object or another body part, and allow yourself to notice any neutral or pleasant sensations that arise in your body.
7. Did you gain any insights from today's journal entries? If so, explain what insights you gained and why they might be valuable.
8. If you are engaging in concrete steps or practices to increase your gratitude, how has that been progressing or what have you been learning?

Continue next time from the time point you left off, or move on to a different person.



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Exercise #2: Forgiveness

Start with bringing to mind a resource or focus on the contact of your body with a surface, object or another body part, and allow yourself to notice any neutral or pleasant sensations that arise in your body.

1. Describe a time in your life when someone forgave you.
2. What was it like to be forgiven?
3. Were there benefits to being forgiven by this person? If so, what?
4. Would your life be any different had this person not forgiven you? If so, how?
5. What does it feel like to harbor resentment?
6. Can you describe a time in your life when you forgave someone?
7. Were there benefits to you from forgiving this person? If so, what?
8. How might your life be different had you not forgiven this person?
9. How do you think society might be different if people practiced more forgiveness? What if they held on to more resentment?
10. Did you gain any insights from today's journal entries? If so, explain what insights you gained and why they are valuable to you.
11. If you are engaging in concrete steps or practices to increase your forgiveness, how has that been progressing or what have you been learning?



REFLECTIVE WRITING EXERCISE

SKILL 7: EMPATHIC CONCERN

Instructions: Answer the following questions as freely and openly as possible. Your answers are for you only and are not meant to be shared. As such, do not worry about the quality of your prose or grammar. There's no need to think much before you write; you can just write.

1. What are some drawbacks of lacking empathy? If you like, you can recall a moment from your own experience.

2. What are some things holding you back from feeling more empathy for others?

3. How would your life be different if you were more concerned for the well-being of others?



CONTEMPLATIVE JOURNAL QUESTIONS

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Exercise #1: Empathic Concern

Start with bringing to mind a resource or focus on the contact of your body with a surface, object or another body part, and allow yourself to notice any neutral or pleasant sensations that arise in your body.

1. Can you think of a time in your life when someone had empathic concern for you (they had a sense of what you were experiencing and showed a sense of care and concern)? If so, describe it. If you cannot think of such a time, describe what you imagine it would be like to have someone show empathic concern to you.
2. What were the benefits of this person's empathic concern? (Or what might you imagine the benefits of receiving empathic concern to be?)
3. If you can, describe a time in your life when you had empathic concern for another person? Or if you cannot think of such a time, imagine what it would be like and describe that.
4. When we show empathic concern to others, what benefits might there be for us from doing so?
5. How would our life be different if we were more concerned for the well-being of others, individually and collectively?
6. Did you gain any insights from today's journal entries? If so, explain what insights you gained and why they are valuable to you.
7. If you are engaging in concrete steps or practices to increase your empathic concern, how has that been progressing or what have you been learning?



CONTEMPLATIVE JOURNAL QUESTIONS

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Exercise #2: Sympathetic Joy

Start with bringing to mind a resource or focus on the contact of your body with a surface, object or another body part, and allow yourself to notice any neutral or pleasant sensations that arise in your body.

1. Bring to mind someone who is dear to you, such as a close friend, a loved one, or a pet. To bring them to mind more vividly, it may help to write down the individual's name and a short description of the person.
2. Close your eyes and imagine, in as much detail as possible, something good happening to this person. Describe what you imagine this person is feeling or doing when they experience this joyful event.
3. Write down the thoughts, emotions and sensations you notice as you imagine this good event happening to this person.
4. In reflecting on what you just wrote, were your feelings similar to or different from those of your friend? Explain.
5. What are the benefits of experiencing more sympathetic joy as opposed to jealousy or resentment?
6. Did you gain any insights from today's journal entries? If so, explain what insights you gained and why they are valuable to you.
7. If you are engaging in concrete steps or practices to increase your sympathetic joy, how has that been progressing or what have you been learning?

As you feel ready, you may want to repeat this Contemplative Journal exercise, and replace the loved one with a stranger, and, when you are ready, a difficult person.



REFLECTIVE WRITING EXERCISE

SKILL 8: COMPASSION

Instructions: Answer the following questions as freely and openly as possible. Your answers are for you only and are not meant to be shared. As such, do not worry about the quality of your prose or grammar. There's no need to think much before you write; you can just write.

1. Can you describe a moment in your life that exemplifies compassion for you?

2. What would it be like if you experienced more compassion from others around you?

3. Are there ways you could cultivate or express more compassion for others?



CONTEMPLATIVE JOURNAL QUESTIONS

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Seeing Suffering on a Deeper Level

Start with bringing to mind a resource or focus on the contact of your body with a surface, object or another body part, and allow yourself to notice any neutral or pleasant sensations that arise in your body.

1. Write down the name of one of the people you journaled about in the Empathic Concern skill.
2. List at least three ways this person has benefited you or others.
3. As you think about all the ways this person has benefited you and others, describe your feelings for this person.
4. Close your eyes and bring to mind whatever difficulties this person may be facing, faced in the past, or might face in the future. After you have done that, take a moment to think about what this person would really want more than anything else. Then imagine yourself giving them, or making it possible for them to receive, whatever it is they truly desire and feel would make them happy. If it is helpful, you can imagine sending white light from your body that envelops them and that symbolizes your compassion for them. After you have done this, note down how this makes you feel.
5. Recall the fact that every moment of every day we are supported by a vast network of people we know and do not know. Recognize that no matter our social status or economic privilege, we are all vulnerable to present and future problems. We all experience all manners of suffering, aging, illness, separation from loved ones, stress, worries, anxiety, physical and mental illnesses, and disappointments. Contemplate on how others, like your loved one, deeply wish for happiness. After doing this, note down any observations you have about your feelings or thoughts.
6. Did you gain any insights from today's journal entries? If so, explain what insights you gained and why they are valuable.
7. If you are engaging in concrete steps or practices to increase your compassion, how has that been progressing or what have you been learning?



REFLECTIVE WRITING EXERCISE

SKILL 9: APPRECIATING INTERDEPENDENCE

Instructions: Answer the following questions as freely and openly as possible. Your answers are for you only and are not meant to be shared. As such, do not worry about the quality of your prose or grammar. There's no need to think much before you write; you can just write.

1. What are some benefits of appreciating interdependence?

2. What are some things holding you back from appreciating interdependence?

2. How would your life be different if you were better able to appreciate interdependence while making decisions?



CONTEMPLATIVE JOURNAL QUESTIONS

SKILL 9: APPRECIATING INTERDEPENDENCE

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Exercise 1

Start with bringing to mind a resource or focus on the contact of your body with a surface, object or another body part, and allow yourself to notice any neutral or pleasant sensations that arise in your body.

1. Think of an event in your life such as an accomplishment or something that contributed or contributes to your well-being now (e.g. getting a job, earning a degree, finding accommodation, meeting a spouse or partner, or even a more minor event). Start to consider all the people who contributed to this event or accomplishment. Try to list everyone who played a role, even a minor role. If there are people whose names you don't know, list them by their role, profession or some other designation.
2. Now consider the people you listed. Who did they themselves depend on? Who did they need in order to be able to play the role they played in enabling your accomplishment? If there are people whose names you don't know, list them by their role, profession or some other designation. If there are groups of people, you can name those too.
3. Total up the number of people you come up with through this process.
4. Are you surprised by the number of people on whom this one event in your life depended? How many of these people were strangers or people you do not know very well?
5. What benefits might there be if we developed a greater appreciation of this type of interdependence?
6. Did you gain any insights from today's journal entries? If so, explain what insights you gained and why they are valuable.
7. If you are engaging in concrete steps or practices to increase your appreciation of interdependence, how has that been progressing or what have you been learning?



CONTEMPLATIVE JOURNAL QUESTIONS

SKILL 9: APPRECIATING INTERDEPENDENCE

Instructions: These journal questions are designed to help reinforce the skills you are learning in CIT. The greatest benefit will come from repeated consideration of these questions over time. They can be used in connection with, or in place of, the Contemplative Practice recordings found on the CIT website. Since space in this book is limited, you may wish to answer these questions in your personal journal.

Exercise 2

Start with bringing to mind a resource or focus on the contact of your body with a surface, object or another body part, and allow yourself to notice any neutral or pleasant sensations that arise in your body.

1. Pick an object in the room that benefits you, but you may not notice often. Draw a picture of this object in the center of a blank piece of paper in your journal. Then, using words, arrows and pictures, draw a visual representation of all of the people and things it took for you to have this object. You might ask yourself these questions as you complete this activity: "How did this item get here? How did it come to be? Who made it? What else was needed to get it here? Who made those items? etc."
2. After your diagram is complete, write down the number of people who are associated with each part of the process and then total up the number of all of these people.
3. How does this object benefit you? What would your life be like without this object or others like it?
4. Are you surprised by the number of people on whom this item depends? How many of these people are so-called "strangers" to us?
5. What benefits might there be if we developed a greater appreciation of this type of interdependence?
6. Did you gain any insights from today's journal entries? If so, explain what insights you gained and why they are valuable.
7. If you are engaging in concrete steps or practices to increase your appreciation of interdependence, how has that been progressing or what have you been learning?



REFLECTIVE WRITING EXERCISE

SKILL 10: ENGAGING WITH DISCERNMENT

Instructions: Answer the following questions as freely and openly as possible. Your answers are for you only and are not meant to be shared. As such, do not worry about the quality of your prose or grammar. There's no need to think much before you write; you can just write.

1. What are the benefits, if any, of recognizing that systems provide both benefit and harm to individuals?

2. What are the benefits, if any, of appreciating the aspirations and fears of each group of people engaged in a system?

3. Would our attitude toward these systems change if we better appreciated the common humanity of all those involved in them and affected by them?



CONTEMPLATIVE JOURNAL QUESTIONS

SKILL 10: ENGAGING WITH DISCERNMENT

Instructions: These journal questions are designed to help reinforce the skills you are learning in CIT. The greatest benefit will come from repeated consideration of these questions over time. They can be used in connection with, or in place of, the Contemplative Practice recordings found on the CIT website. Since space in this book is limited, you may wish to answer these questions in your personal journal.

Start with bringing to mind a resource or focus on the contact of your body with a surface, object or another body part, and allow yourself to notice any neutral or pleasant sensations that arise in your body.

1. Write down a system that you are involved in or wish to have a positive impact on. Be specific.
2. As you did for Appreciating Interdependence, on a piece of paper create a visual representation of the human and non-human components that make up the system.
3. On your system map, note the places where you see the system causing harm to people and where you see the system creating benefit for people. If you can, note whether this harm and benefit is direct, structural or cultural (as described in the manual). As negativity bias can sometimes push us to focus on harm, try and be fair with how the system also creates benefit.
4. For each group of stakeholders in the system, list what you think their aspirations and fears are. What insights emerge for you as you note these aspirations and fears?
5. How would the system change if at any place in the system there were more compassion? What about anger and resentment?
6. What would be the most compassionate way for you to positively impact the system and benefit others affected by the system?
7. Did you gain any insights from today's journal entries? If so, explain what insights you gained and why they are valuable.
8. If you are engaging in concrete steps or practices to increase your discernment, how has that been progressing or what have you been learning?