

Chapter 7

THE SEVENTH SACRED RESPONSIBILITY: RELAX AND CELEBRATE

Well-being is making its way to you at all times. If you will relax and find a way to allow it, it will be your experience.

—Abraham (Esther Hicks)

Our seventh Sacred Responsibility is one that will keep us enjoying the journey. Everyone looks forward to relaxing and celebrating, right? You may have noticed that after reading this far, and participating in the Practices, that you have become more open to the idea of something different in your days. I know it seems simple enough. “Just relax,” said the Lion to the Lamb. Just relax...

As we practice calling back our joy, and our time, we will need to be patient with ourselves as we continue to unravel our old programs. One of the most difficult and confusing areas of our lives is relaxing. As a yoga teacher, I have been watching people relax for over fifteen years now and I see how difficult it is for many to just surrender for even two minutes at the end of a yoga class. Yet it is the most effective way to reduce stress in our lives.

Yes, conscious relaxation will reduce stress for human beings. Unconscious relaxation will look more like watching shows that don't lift us up, or having conversations that exhaust us instead of enriching us. These things do not equal relaxation but would be in the category of an addiction to stress if you do them repeatedly. It is something that will need gentle tending as you take sacred responsibility for your happiness.

Who am I kidding? Some of our stress-inducing choices may need to be pulled right out by their roots!

This brings us back to the absolute importance of acknowledging the gifts of a woman in her third act. Remember, way back at the beginning of this book, we accepted the fact that we are simply not needed in the same ways we have been in the past, which frees up our time and focus to do the things that bring us the most vitality.

We are talking about conscious relaxation here and it is no coincidence that it lies in the position of our Seventh Sacred Responsibility. As we are rewiring our brain for radical happiness, we needed all the steps before this to be our foundation so that we may fully experience the freedom that comes with conscious relaxation.

Relaxation is indeed a game changer and we have the wisdom now to take the time to show the younger ones exactly how it's done. It is our sacred responsibility to relax, not just because we have

some new-found hours of the day to fill with something and it may as well be relaxation, but because it is directly related to our Self-Care Practice.

Since we have tuned into the fact that making our happiness and our health is a priority, it only makes sense that we are responsible for a practice of relaxation. In conscious relaxation, we allow for the kind of rest that actually benefits our minds and bodies. This is an empowered relaxation. Our empowerment comes from the wisdom of our over fifty years on this earth and we no longer gain self-worth from rushing to multi-task our days away. We are empowered in our relaxation, we are empowered in our peace of mind and body.

I'm reminded of a time a few years back and being in a healing circle. In this particular experience, we would have long sessions of prayers, music and healing. I recall our Elder Teacher saying, as he looked around the room at half of us sitting up, while the other half were stretched out lying down and many dozing off to sleep, something like, "This is an example of how stressed we are in our day to day lives that we can't even tell the difference between relaxing and needing to sleep."

He went on to remind us that this is what it feels like to relax, and that it's doubtful that we need to fall asleep or even lie down.

I thought this was fascinating and I replayed what he had said many times over the years—checking in with myself around my true energy levels. I began to pay attention to allowing myself to relax while in a state of movement. I began to lower my shoulders from the position they had found themselves—up around my ears—and let myself relax and enjoy my tasks without any need at all to "look as if" I was "busy" to anyone. I began to luxuriate in taking my time, to savour the tasks and activities in my life that made up my days. I began to relax into who I am and the things that I enjoy. And it took practice.

Those of you who attend my yoga classes know quite well I like to ask the students what their energy levels are. I ask who has high energy and those who do raise their hands; who has moderate energy and those who do raise their hands; and who has low energy and those people raise their hands.

I have noticed that people typically do have a gauge of their energy levels. But more often than not, I see a handful of people who don't know what level of energy they have brought with them. Know yourself, expand your self-awareness and become clear on the ways you increase your energy and the ways you decrease your energy. Begin to understand what the state of relaxation feels like for you. We have years of fast paced stress-induced activities. We need to detox our minds, bodies, and hearts, and conscious relaxing is a direct line to stress reduction.

The Fountain of Youth

I am going to just put this out there because it came to my mind in meditation and when it did a feeling of relaxation came over my body. It also felt intuitively correct.

I would like to propose that, as modern-day women in our third act, we consider that conscious relaxation may very well be our fountain of youth.

Yes, our relaxation practice combined with our wisdom, combined with the desire to thrive, all collaborating to support us. Throughout history, people have been searching for the elusive fountain of youth. What if it was always in our reach? Our inner reach, yet we had been looking outside of

ourselves all this time. If I am wrong on this one at least we will have fun doing the research. Ladies, I want you to help prove my hypothesis is right!

Relaxing reduces stress of course, and we know that short-term stress can be helpful, but long-term stress is linked to many health conditions like frequent colds and infections, insomnia, impaired memory and learning, high blood pressure, hair loss, and stomach ulcers. Ladies listen up. Stress zaps our libido, and relaxation keeps us “in the mood”!

Being relaxed also helps us to make better decisions for ourselves. Let’s keep this conversation going in our circle as we all delve deeper into this movement of a life well-lived. I want us to prove that relaxation is the actual fountain of youth we have all been searching for, so put on your lab coats, ladies, and start your research. Use your practices as your foundation of your research and let me know your results!

The Perfect Combination

Relax and Celebrate is a perfect combination for a sacred woman to end each day. I’m not saying to have a house full of friends over every night (and I’m not saying not to do that either) but what I am saying is a good part of the richness of life at this stage is relaxing and celebrating.

You have a life of so many amazing accomplishments, creative expressions and friendships to celebrate. It is important to celebrate these now that you have the time to reflect and remember the things you have done in your life—including standing beside someone else in their celebration. Yes, we celebrate others’ accomplishments too, collaborating in celebration!

You may have come across gratitude practices on your journey that tell us to write down five things we are grateful for at the end of every day, and I love to do that. I also recommend we write down five things we have to celebrate, as a daily practice. We will be discussing our gratitude further in the next chapter as we delve into the Eighth Sacred Responsibility. But while we are here in the Seventh Sacred Responsibility to Relax and Celebrate you will come to find that the Seventh and Eighth Sacred Responsibilities are constantly merging. A dance of gratitude, celebration and relaxation is more prominent in our lives than it has been in our past. It is more available to us as we have a renewed focus on what really matters to us. It is in the celebration where what is truly of value to us is exposed. We celebrate our past, present and future because all of life is a celebration.

Five Things I Celebrate Today.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

5.

I inadvertently created a great new practice a few years back of waking up in the morning and the first thing I would do was call out, “Yay, we made it!”

You see, I had taken in a couple of elderly cats, a brother and sister named Arizona and Sedona who had been found in a less-than-beautiful situation. During their first year of living with me their age and health conditions became apparent. I found that Arizona had a form of cancer that made his wee bones terribly brittle and that he was in a lot of pain. It was his time to leave this earth and I was glad to have been able to provide a loving home for him in the final year of his life. Arizona was absolutely gorgeous, and I will post a photo of him on our group site for the cat lovers to admire. His sister and I, alone now, created a very sweet bond, and in my attempt to help her through her loneliness, I started a morning celebration of being really excited to see her when I woke up and called out, “Yay! We made it! One more day!”

Even though I thought I was doing it for her, I found that I kept it up after she passed, and I still do it to this day. The new fluffy edition to my life, Phoenix, is much more aloof around my morning outburst but I love doing it and will continue my waking celebration happily each day.

Celebrations are what you decide they are. Moments and glimpses of appreciation for anything that made you smile. I can easily find myself celebrating almost anything. I had someone recently tell me, “you say thank you a lot.” I was happy to hear that, even though I knew it wasn’t meant as a compliment, but sometimes you just have to hear things the way that works best for you!

A sacred woman not only has a keen ability to celebrate herself, she celebrates others with an equal amount of enthusiasm. To truly dive into celebration as a sacred responsibility means that celebration is a natural part of your way of being. It means that you respect and celebrate life overall. If you haven’t celebrated a full moon or a first snow fall yet, oh you will. This community of fiery celebrating women has so much to share with each other. Learning how each of you celebrate and what you are celebrating is one of my favourite parts of this work.

There is a huge conversation going on right now over social media and “fake” or “artificial” happiness posted in everyone’s feeds. How we all seem to know that it is BS, that people are not being transparent and how seeing all the happy posts out there is making some people feel bad about their own lives, how they are lacking the frolic and glee that those on the internet seem to have found.

And for sure this is a conversation worth having. If you are so saddened by someone else’s celebration, it would benefit you to change that up for yourself, because you are missing out on a free good time when you don’t allow yourself to celebrate another person’s joy.

We decide what activities are celebration worthy and if one of my friends wants to celebrate a cupcake with a bite out of it with a big icing grin then I would be crazy not to feel good when I see that photo. The cameras on our phones are amazing these days. At the right angle with the right lighting I could make the back side of a cat look worthy of celebration. (Great... now I have created a challenge for myself. Watch for more cat photos to be posted on our site. Yes... I am that person.)

Social media is just that, a mostly public, social community of every type of person with access to the internet. Some posts will speak to the inner activist in you, some with speak to the silly side of you, some will make you hit the heart button and some will make you delete, but all can make you

celebrate the fact that you are able to be connected to millions of people all over the world, doing things that matter to them and letting you have a glimpse into a moment in their lives. And if you look at someone's happy post and think, "I know them, they aren't really that happy", then how about not being their Change-back Monster. Let them eat cake!

Our Seventh Sacred Practice

Our Daily Statement

Today I open myself fully to living a sacred life, I call in now the people, places and things that lift me up, light me up and hold me up as the accountable, responsible and authentic woman I am here to be. And so it is.

The Relax and Celebrate Imagination Practice (Imagining/Thoughts)

A Celebration Award Ceremony!

We begin grounding the Seventh Sacred Responsibility, Relax and Celebrate into our hearts with a huge celebration.

Connect to your breath and allow a smile to come across your face, imagining yourself at an awards gala event.

Imagine hearing the hum and excitement of the crowded room.

You can hear glasses clinking as people toast each other in celebration.

Imagine yourself moving through the crowds of people saying hello and smiling. You know so many of these people and it is a grand celebration.

As you move through the crowds of people, you shake hands with some, greet others with hugs, and wave across the room as you recognize friends from the past.

You begin to notice how strong and comfortable you feel.

You notice yourself in a fabulous outfit in your favorite color, and you feel great.

It is time now for you to make your way to the stage.

This is your celebration ceremony and it is you who are giving out the awards to all the people who have been part of your growth in this life.

Imagine yourself now taking your place on stage at the podium.

You raise your glass and welcome everyone to the awards ceremony.

Imagine looking around and seeing how happy everyone is to be there.

The room is filled with every person you have connected with along your life's journey.

You notice how beautiful everyone looks, radiant and healthy.

There are people of all ages there and they represent all the time lines of your life.

You see teachers, friends, family, mentors.

You see people who have changed your life by simply having met them.

It is time now to give the first award.

You look at your long list and you call out the first name.

This award goes to _____ for playing a supporting role in my life.

Imagine handing over the golden statue or crystal trophy, or a plaque.

See yourself handing them their award, shaking their hand, hugging them with gratitude and sending them back into the crowd.

You look at your list and call out the next name.

This award goes to _____ for playing a supporting role in my life.

Imagine handing over the next trophy to this person, shaking their hand, thanking them, and hugging them with gratitude and sending them back into the crowd.

Calling out the next name on your list, then the next name, and the next name.

Imagine yourself continuing to hand out these awards to all of the people from your life who have supported you, who have guided you, who believed in you.

Each award is unique to that person.

Imagine yourself thanking every person for the award-winning roles played.

And be sure to hand out awards to those who have distracted you in this life, giving them the distraction award.

Give out an award to the people who have disappointed you, thank them for playing the leading role in a disappointment in your life. Shake their hand and hug them send them back into the crowd.

Continue giving out awards to everyone for everything that was brought into your life so that you could learn, grow, and change.

Give awards out to everyone who stood by you in your darkest days.

Give awards out to those who saw your light even when you could not see it yourself.

Give awards out to those who lied to you, as they taught you about truth.

Give awards out to those who tricked you, as they taught you about trust.

Give awards out to those who were inspired by you, as they taught you about leadership.

Give awards out to those who made you laugh so hard you could hardly breathe, as they taught you the feeling of freedom.

Give awards out to those who you have had the most fun with, as they taught you the meaning of life.

Continue giving out awards until everyone in the room has received one.

When your ceremony is complete, raise your glass, and toast everyone who has been part of your life. Thank them one final time, then cue the band to start the music. Imagine yourself spending the rest of the evening dancing up a storm with these award winners. Celebrate the rich tapestry of amazing award-winning people and experiences in your life for all of the wisdom they have brought to you.

The Relax and Celebrate Breathing Practice (Breathing/Words)

With this breath to anchor Relaxation as a Sacred Responsibility we shift the breath pattern in our mind and begin with the exhale.

Still honouring all four parts of our breath.

Exhale, pause, inhale, retain.

Exhale, pause, inhale, retain.

Exhale, pause, inhale, retain.

Bring all of your focus to your breath and with your next exhale begin to follow the pattern

Exhale, pause, inhale, retain.

Say it in your mind.

Exhale, pause, inhale, retain.

Follow the pattern that has now shifted to focusing on beginning your breath on the exhale.

Exhale, pause, inhale, retain.

Stay focused on your shifted pattern of breathing for a full minute.

Then relax and tune in to how you are feeling and start again for another minute.

Take breaks if you feel ungrounded or dizzy.

This simple shift of mindset gives our breathing practice a whole new perspective to come from. Not only does it deepen our state of relaxation, but it helps to open our minds up to change; it shows us how easily and gently we can “flip the script”, to change the stories we tell ourselves and to learn we are safe to write a new story for ourselves.

This particular breathing pattern brings about deep relaxation and can be used anytime of the day. It is extremely helpful to send us off into a deep sleep, kind of our own personal “counting sheep” exercise.

It is always funny to me how much coordination it actually takes to execute the new thought pattern as we breathe this way. Here we go, happily building new neuropathways in our brains!

The Relax and Celebrate Physical Practice (Physical/Actions)

Your Relax and Celebrate physical practice is to dance, so find a song or a piece of music and get ready to move. Dancing builds coordination, strength, and a sense of wellbeing, increasing our range of motion and our ability to connect to our beautiful bodies. Studies show that frequent dancing improves memory and increases mental clarity. It has also been shown that people with Alzheimer’s disease are able to remember forgotten memories when they dance to music that they used to know. Dancing helps keep our ability to think on our toes sharp as well as our ability to think ahead and plan. Dancing contributes to our feelings of happiness and experience of fun in our bodies.

We begin much like we did in the create and play exercise, and we sway.

Breathe and sway, then begin to add your arms.

Sway your hips, shake your booty and move your arms.

Experiment with moving fast and moving slowly.

Dance for one minute and then pause, breathe and notice how your body is responding to your movements.

Begin to sway, shake it, and get a little groovy.

For any of you fiery and fabulous sisters who are new to dance I recommend checking out *Body Groove* with Misty Trippoli. She is one of my absolute favorite dance therapy instructors of all time! A link to her website is in the resource section.

Extra fun: I like to put on the radio and commit to dancing to the next song that comes on no matter what it is. This is usually pretty fun and many times hilarious. Don't judge the song, just dance to it, you may be surprised at how free spirited you actually are! Let this be a celebration of your body, a celebration of life and a celebration of your love for yourself. Listen ladies, we have nothing to lose by getting our groove on, and everything to gain. Get creative, get fancy, and get down and boogie!

A personal secret, I believe dancing heals everything. I have a pole in my living room.

A confession, I own four Hula Hoops™. Insert sassy winky face here.

You are so amazing sisters, be free in your bodies, enjoy your creative energy and move with love.

Your Personal Body Movement Secret

Your Sassy Confession