



#ShesSacred

It's a book, it's a guide, it's a movement!

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Enjoy getting to know me through these 20 pages,  
Stay Wild!  
Cathy

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## WELCOME TO THE MOVEMENT!

**D**ear Sacred Woman, you have joined a movement. A movement that is launching the most wonderful and creative project you will ever embark on. This is a project where you are both artist and muse, inspired and the inspiration. A project where your personal heart song joins with women across the globe in harmony. Whether you are singing at the top of your lungs, humming softly or tapping along to your own unique beat, you have joined a movement that starts you on a course of thriving in your third act.

Together we walk the way of the sovereign woman taking sacred responsibility for every aspect of our thoughts, words and actions in a fiery act of defiance over boredom, self-sabotage and old programs.

The Eight Sacred Responsibilities are designed in a way that gives us a protocol to follow, to keep us on track, inspired and in collaboration with all that makes our heart sing. The Responsibilities speak directly to the women who are compelled to rise and shine and want to be part of a plan to make it so. Through each Responsibility we call back the parts of us that are longing to be revived, nurtured and lived to the fullest. We do this by immersing joyfully into sacred responsibility.

Guided by *The Eight Sacred Responsibilities* we re-configure ourselves in ways that honour our highest values and our richest creativity. The protocol gives us a foundation of simple living and by conscious participation, a life well lived begins to unveil itself to us.

Today we commit to the Eight Sacred Responsibilities as we declare to ourselves and each other the following.

### ***Declaration:***

*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.*

We are calling back the parts of us we have forgotten about, all the parts we set aside long ago. Calling back those parts of us that still flicker in our hearts like fireflies sparking our memory. Lean in here, ladies, while I whisper in your ear...

You are already fiery and fabulous.

That is what brought you here. What we do now, together, through our practices and community is to enhance our lives in ways that continue to fan our flame. The Eight Sacred Responsibilities are designed to enhance our lives, but make no mistake, you are already fiery and fabulous just by showing up!

**The journey of our connection begins here.**

**May it be a grand collaboration.**

**In gratitude,**

***Cathy***

## INTRODUCTION

**T**he Eight Sacred Responsibilities is a movement of the fiery and fabulous women over fifty who have chosen to make their third act one that includes a future filled with personal standing ovations! Or gracefully seated ones, we get to choose!

This is not only a guide book for the solo sister but a movement that brings women in their “Third Act” together for transformation, collaboration and to hold each other accountable to living an empowered life that honours happiness, creativity and some serious fun!

Fact: we are living 25–30 years longer than the generations before us and that means we have time for an extra full-adult life. This book suggests, and most times insists, we use that time to transform ourselves into the greater version of the passionate, interested and self-knowing women we are here to be, and in that inspire others to rise and shine.

Sacred sisters, it is my absolute pleasure to know you, to stand on this stage with you and to be held accountable by you. Today, together, we step into a community of like-hearted, spirited women who join us in awakening to the next act of our lives, our third act.

You will want a companion notebook or journal while on our journey as this book will inspire your creativity as well as your self-reflection and we want to start to collect all of our juicy personal musings as we begin to live a refreshed and empowered life through the Eight Sacred Responsibilities and their practices. When inspiration rises write it down, even if it is just one word circled in purple highlighter. You may find poetry comes to the surface, songs, drawings, and “*Aha!*” moments emerge while uncovering the data stored deep in your cells from your many years of life experience. A Sacred Responsibilities journal has no rules; it evolves as you do. Write, draw, fold corners, spill tea on it, press leaves in it, just let it be as wild as you are!

### **Defining Sacred Responsibility.**

What exactly is a “Sacred Responsibility”? Let me begin with a bit about the word “responsibility”. During my teachings of the Sacred Responsibilities I have come across every resistance that I could have imagined, and the one I found stood out above the rest is the reaction to the word “responsibility.”

It is my hope that together we can re-establish our enthusiasm for responsibility in this life. I wish for us to ignite a passion for the sacredness of human responsibility. Somewhere down the line we have been convinced that responsibility is something to be burdened by. I believe it is something to be elevated by, something to help us thrive, something on which to build a strong foundation. It is our Sacred Responsibility to ignite the fire of our third act.

Let’s break it down for ourselves so we have a clear understanding of what it truly means. I have used a combination of Webster’s, English Oxford and Collins dictionaries definition of each word to help us to develop an understanding of the foundations of this book and the Eight Sacred Responsibilities: Self-Care, Rise and Shine, Know Yourself, Collaborate, Honour Your Intuition, Create and Play, Relax and Celebrate, Gratitude.

**Responsibility:** The state of being the person who causes something to happen.

**Responsible:** a moral obligation or duty; a charge of trust; a thing one is responsible for. The opportunity or ability to act independently and make decisions without authorization.

Adding to the definition of responsibility: our ability to respond. Responsibility to respond in all the ways that increase our life force and vitality. Our ability to choose the response of happiness, love and kindness. And knowing this is a work in progress.

**Sacred:** Regarded as holy; worthy of or entitled to respect; regarded with reverence. Too important to be changed or interfered with.

In addition to our dictionary definitions we will add: something that is sacred to us and cannot be taken away from us. It is something that is directly connected to the spirit of living an earthbound life while tethered to the great mystery, God, Creator, Great Spirit and all of the names we know of to indicate a force greater than we understand with our minds. The force of love.

From all the above, we can develop a definition of a Sacred Responsibility.

**Sacred Responsibility: A highly valued course of action towards personal happiness that is regarded with reverence. A moral obligation to respond to life in ways that increase our life force and vitality.**

And before we get our noses out of joint around the word moral, here is how Webster's Dictionary defines moral: "Ethical, good, honest, honourable, just, upright, virtuous."

While we are at it, let's look at the definition of obligation: "Accountability, responsibility, agreement, bond, contract."

What we have here is a Sacred Contract for the benefit of our mind, body and soul which we enter into, rooted in accountability and wild reverence. Today we drop to our knees in gratitude for the opportunity to reclaim our love for life. It is our Sacred Responsibility to do so.

### **Taking Sacred Responsibility for Our Happiness**

I have always had a deep feeling that we are fully responsible for our own happiness in this life. I have always found myself looking for the fun, joy and connection wherever I am, whatever I am doing. Many times, it is like digging through the rubble of a forgotten city. Women, in particular, have forgotten that we can love and care for those around us without losing ourselves in the process. We are now starting to dig ourselves out from the rubble of meeting everyone else's needs before our own and finding our fabulous selves buried deep, still very much alive! To you sisters who have given all of yourself to others in your life, I welcome you to this fantastic dig site. It is time to get our hands dirty and unearth ourselves. To choose the parts of us that lift us up and leave buried the things that hold us back.

In this book we learn how to reclaim our love of life and steep in it rather than simply seeing sparks of it on occasion. We give ourselves full permission to make self-care a priority in any and all of the ways that suit our state of need. If we are tired, we have permission to sleep. And not just regular old sleep but luxurious sleep! If we are unsure how to solve a problem or balance a situation in our lives, we have permission to meditate, breathe and be alone to think from our hearts, because we know the power of our alone time. We now give ourselves full permission to live our lives from a perspective of sacred responsibility.

We begin our sacred assignment now with a Magical Moment by breathing together as we dive into this material. Today we, as a collective of seekers from all parts of the globe, deeply honour the simple yet complex gift of our breath. Acknowledging the four parts of our breath in this gentle breathing exercise that helps us re-establish our conscious connection of the breath and body, as well as the conscious connection to one another and to the creative source we all come from.

We breathe in through the nose and out through the nose for this practice. Breathe at your natural pace and luxuriate in each of the four parts as you flow through them.

1. Inhale deeply
  2. Retain your breath (hold)
  3. Exhale deeply
  4. Pause (rest here)
- Inhale, retain, exhale, pause  
Inhale, retain, exhale, pause  
Inhale, retain, exhale, pause

Breathe with the intent to connect to this collaborative effort. An effort where we keep these conversations going, expanding our hearts and minds. Taking our lives directly by the hand and walking ourselves straight towards the most authentic expression of who we are in this life and all that we have to offer in this, our third act.

Breathe with your imagination. Imagining as you breathe that we are all connected in this flow of togetherness, support and aliveness.

Now, feel it. Feel it if only for a moment as this is the theme of our practice. Imagine it, feel it, and be it—fiery and fabulous in our third act.

May our breath entrain with the breath of the universe and the breath of each reader as we reclaim the wild and creative connection to our life well lived. This breathing technique is our tether to each other, and our road home to our inner peace. Use this focused breath as part of your everyday practice.

Now you can grab a pen or a highlighter because it's going to get messy! I want you to make notes in this book, fold corners down on the pages that speak to your heart and highlight the heck out of the words that you love. We made the margins of this book extra wide for your notes. Starting now, go ahead and write today's date, this is your Third Act Conception date. Now calculate the date forward, as eight months from now is your second birthday, your fiery and fabulous Sacred Birthday and we are going to celebrate! It is on your Sacred Birthday that together we reflect on where we have shifted, changed and created our next chapter in our life well lived. Get ready; our commitment to taking responsibility for our happiness is the fun and messy icing on the cake! (Or for us A-Type personalities you can keep all the icing neatly in your journal.)

Conception Date:

My 2<sup>nd</sup> Birthday:

January February March April May June July August  
September October November December

Conceive it, believe it, achieve it.

## **Our Sacred Practices**

We women share in the protocol practices with reverence for the potent possibilities that lie dormant within us. We accept our practice with open hearts and open minds in the knowing that these tiny acts of self-care grow quickly into a renewed love of our lives. We know in every cell of our gorgeous being that our practices fill us with the vibrancy of universal life-force.

*Ordinary people focus on the outcome, extraordinary people focus on the process.* That was the title of a great article by Anthony More that was printed in *Medium Daily Digest* and I loved it! (link to this article is in the back of the book)

Here's to us enjoying focusing on our practice, we all know there will be an outcome, but how about we enjoy the journey and let the outcomes surprise us!

Now let's get really clear on the formula of our practice so that when we get to our exercises you will know exactly why they work and how they will support your life empowered by Sacred Responsibility. At the end of each Sacred Responsibility chapter you will find three practices:

One Imagination (Meditation exercise). Representing our Thoughts.

One Breathing (Life Force exercise). Representing our Words.

One Physical (Body Care exercise). Representing our Actions.

That is our practice formula. An exercise directly connected to the Sacred Responsibility of the power of our own Thoughts, Words and Actions.

I recommend that as we begin to establish the repetition, habit and flow of our practice, that we cycle through them in order as they appear in the book. Let's keep it simple and attainable as we start to get to know our practice. Prepare to start out with a 1-minute practice daily.

We will make a commitment to ourselves and each other to choose one Imagination, Breathing and Physical practice each day and do it for 1 minute, just to warm ourselves up as we are getting to know ourselves, our bodies and minds and each other. One minute, no excuses, and if you find you are without your book and you are ready to do your practice, but you think you can't remember what to do, go rogue! Use your imagination and move, breathe and imagine yourself in an excellent state of being.

Once you are comfortable with 1 minute, work your way up to 8 minutes of the three exercises for the Sacred Responsibility you are working with. We are always enjoying our exercises and making them a priority each day. We are tapped into the benefits of our breathing, moving, and imagination exercises. We carve out the best time for ourselves personally for our practice. Some of us will Rise and Shine with a morning practice, some of us will Know Ourselves and enjoy an afternoon practice and others will enjoy an evening practice in Gratitude. Personally, I have a mixed schedule and slide into my practices at different times each day, and I work very hard to answer the call of impulse. If I



have the impulse to do any of our practice exercises I do my very best to act on it and move my body, breathe and imagine. I am always intrigued by impulse and the creative flow that comes with answering its call.

Once you have built up to an 8-minute daily practice, open yourself up to an expanded practice of 8 minutes for each exercise of imagination, breathing and physical exercise.

Let me do the math for you here - that would mean that our basic practice will, in time, build up to 24 minutes a day: 8 minutes of Imagination/Meditation/Thoughts, 8 minutes of Breathing/Life force/Words and 8 minutes of Physical/Body Care/Action.

Sisters, we have a whole adult life to live together so we have time and a plan! And we most certainly have 8 minutes a day to give 100% focus on our Sacred Responsibility to ourselves. Did you catch that? 100% focus, oh yeah, that's where we are going with this. 100% focus on our practices, on ourselves and cultivating our joy for 8 minutes a day.

We also have audio instructions plus a downloadable PDF of the practices available to you. Enter our Sacred Portal at [www.reachyogalifestyle.ca](http://www.reachyogalifestyle.ca) for fun and support. If you have contraindications for any of our physical exercises, do not leave them out of your practice, simply switch them from physical to imagination and do them in your mind. This is a great exercise to play with even if you are capable of doing them physically. Doing the exercises in your mind will still continue to build new neural pathways.

Repetition of our practices helps us become more conscious of the quality of our thoughts, words and actions. Plus, practice makes perfect they say! Which really means our practice rewires our brain and creates new pathways. Learning makes new connections. This is the basics of brain growth, of neuroplasticity. Our brain will assemble new circuits with our practice. *And* we will enjoy doing it, laying down the circuits of our new third act personality, mind and body!

The idea of our practices having a time limit is simply our way to begin to create new pathways in our brain. We now do something new every day that benefits the sacred health of our mind, body, and heart. As we find ourselves mastering the practices, we get creative, we expand our imagination even more, our breath goes to the next level of richness, our connection to the physical becomes more enjoyable and we do the practices for the length of time that feels most natural to each of us.

How will you know when it is time to extend the number of minutes? First, you will be surprised that the 1-minute or 8, or 24 minutes is up already. And second, you will find yourself in a rhythm of inner peace that is so luxurious and real that you will prefer to hold yourself in this Sacred State for longer. We set up our template, get grounded in it, then fly as high and as far as we desire.

Once we are established in easeful repetition of our exercises, these practices can be done in any order, as often as you like and for as long as you feel good doing them.

The power of our practice is simple.

Our thoughts create our reality, and it is imperative to have an imagination practice rich with healthy ways of thinking and imagining ourselves in our lives. The subconscious mind (from which we are operating 95% of the time) accepts everything we think and tell ourselves as true, and it will work outside of our conscious awareness to prove us right. Which is exactly why we have a daily practice of thinking and imagining our life well-lived. We may as well think, imagine and create each day in ways that serve to reduce stress, make us laugh and bring us joy.

The first way we take Sacred Responsibility for ourselves is by luxuriating in the thoughts and feelings that we most desire to experience. We will learn and practice sending “Sacred Packages” forward, look into the sciences that support our practices and you will be pleasantly surprised at the power in the simplicity of our practice.

Throughout our time together reading, connecting and co-creating our third act we are building a practice. A daily practice that is unique to each of us yet modeled by the Eight Sacred Responsibilities.

Self-Care, Rise and Shine, Know Yourself, Collaborate, Honour Your Intuition, Create and Play, Relax and Celebrate and Gratitude. For the record. I never get bored typing them out, and I do not cut and paste The Eight Sacred Responsibilities. Writing or typing them makes me happy and begins to build the foundation of the practice by knowing them not only in my mind, but in my heart and in my cells.

I have found what matters most to me at this junction in my life. What has helped me most to find more glimpses of happiness than sorrow, is my practice of these particular things in my life, The Eight Sacred Responsibilities. I enjoy writing them out, I write them in my journal, in my emails, texts, and in the art I create. I sing them, and I say them and when I notice someone naturally doing one of them or talking about one of them, I say, “Hey! That is amazing, that’s the Sixth Sacred Responsibility: Create and Play!”

In order for me to be the best example, I have made it my life’s work to live by these pillars. I work (well really play) with the practices, I teach them, and I look for signs of them manifesting in all ways in my life. I collect stories from others who are also using this practice as a roadmap to a life well-lived, and because I have a road map to follow I am in a continual flow of building resilience, strength and flexibility. This means if, or when, I am hit with a physical or an emotional challenge I have a strong foundation from which to respond. This is what I wish for all of us!

### **Then and Now. Resiliency and the Sacred Woman**

The platform and guidance of the Eight Sacred Responsibilities is our foundation to thrive from in our third act as well as the foundation of our community. A sacred community of women where we can hold each other accountable to living a thriving and fulfilled life.

Together, as we walk through the gates of a reclaimed life ready and willing to rise and shine, we pause in honour of all our life’s experiences up until this point. We pause and honour all the experiences that have shaped us, and many times surprised us.

It is often hard to see the strength, purpose or wisdom of things from our past experiences until we get a little space between then and now. You know how hard it is to see the details of something that you hold right up to your nose. But if you hold it at arms-length you begin to see all of it.

This applies to our experiences, too. Putting some distance between us and our experiences in life often reveals the wisdom and the lessons. As we find ourselves here in our third act we have plenty of space and time between so many things we have experienced and where we are now.

I often make this point in my classes that it’s Monday morning and we are all gathered around the proverbial water cooler, talking about what we did on our weekends and the conversation inevitably goes something like this.

“Hey, how was your weekend?”

“Great! I ran a half marathon.”

“Wow that’s impressive. Woot Woot!”

“How about you? How was your weekend?”

“Oh, it was great too! I did a breathing meditation and some barefoot walking in the park.”

...crickets...chirp...chirp...

We haven’t quite got to the point in society where peaceful practices are seen with equal enthusiasm as highly active practices. But persevere, sisters, we are pioneering souls shining a light on living authentically where both marathons and meditation reside together for the choosing. We continue with our simple practices quietly, and sometimes secretly, building up our strength and resilience. Our practices teach us how not to leak our energy and in that, prepare us for the marathons of life.

### **Beginning in the Past**

Women in the third act, it is time to move ahead. What we have been doing no longer works. More importantly we are no longer needed to do the same things we have been doing. The things that we have been directing our time and attention towards no longer need us in the same ways that they have in the past and this puts us at a crossroads.

A big part of shifting ourselves fully into the third act of our lives is acknowledging that much of where we gave our attention in our adult lives is no longer necessary to the same extent it was in the past.

We are no longer raising small children at this stage of our lives. Whether you have been doing this as a parent, an aunty, a teacher, or a friend, we are now watching the children in our lives growing into adults, thriving in their own right, working, educating themselves, and having life experiences of their own—including having children of their own.

We are deep into our careers now, not starting out in the workforce, and many of us are thinking about what retirement could look like, or are even fully in it. We are at a place that we are satisfied with the work we have already done, and we are ready to put in the time and energy to focus just a little more on ourselves in a loving and exciting new way.

This includes opening up to creative projects. You may find you have a book to be written and dance to be danced, a quilt to be stitched or a Harley to be ridden down the Pacific Coast! Whatever you have still to express is going to start coming to the surface in this next stage in your life, so we are preparing ourselves to act on those creative impulses that arise in us. We are preparing the soil for our growth.

We are not in the stage of life where we are accumulating things. We now see the value of accumulating experiences. You may find you are passing on many of the things you have accumulated. With more time behind us than ahead, we start to be choosy about our experiences, too, only giving our precious, non-renewable time to people, places and things we truly value. Putting our time and efforts into the people, places and things that value us also! When we apply the Pareto Principle, or the 80/20 rule, we may discover that our most valuable relationships reside in 20% of people in our lives. And the remaining 80%? Well, they are more arms-length support staff. Some even begin to fall away as you redirect your time and focus to living your own authentic life.

## **Reconciling with our present past**

It is time to face the very exciting prospect that we are simply not needed in the same ways we have been and that means reclaiming time and energies to thrive in our own lives.

We have outgrown the old or current model and are being brushed by the veil of a more self-inspired way of living. We can see what is on the other side as we look ahead at the footsteps of the women who have walked this road before us. We can most certainly take the leap from our past into our vibrant, present place of re-branding ourselves as we claim the best life ever for ourselves in as many different ways as there are fiery and fabulous women who are getting up close and personal with themselves and each other, holding ourselves accountable to lean in and live!

I extend my hand to you to take and walk with me into the mystery as we shift our consciousness and step up as leaders, mentors and pioneering souls for all women ready and willing to thrive in the third act of life.

May our commitment to living illuminated by the Eight Sacred Responsibilities be a historical shift for the women in your families, surrounding communities and your ancestral lineage, inspired by you and your pioneering soul. May we continue to find creative new ways to honour, respect and enjoy who we are and our many gifts.

Dearest sister, you are an amazing woman setting a stellar example of living a life of authentic happiness supported by a foundation of Sacred Responsibility. It is my great joy to stand beside you, because together we are stronger.

As I offer myself up as your guide through this powerful process of shift, I also ask of you to hold me accountable to the process, too. Let's keep a dialogue flowing and wish the best for each other as together we become the greatest expression of ourselves. United in the process of living from our wildest dreams from our wild, creative hearts, we embrace the Sacred Responsibilities as we would embrace a winning lottery ticket. Because when we begin to live from our sweet wild hearts we have most certainly hit the jackpot!

## **How we hold each other accountable. Read this out loud, often.**

When a Sacred Woman holds another accountable she does so with ease and grace, with humour and love. A Sacred Woman will always see our beauty even on the days we can't see it ourselves. When a Sacred Woman holds us accountable we feel respected and inspired by her and we learn from the Sacred Woman how to hold our own selves accountable in Sacred Responsibility without judgment or shame.

## **Rebranding at Corporate Headquarters**

A rebranding at corporate headquarters is what we are looking at here. In the same spirit of rebranding a company with a new logo, new stylish uniforms, enhancing a great product and a fresh hook line to draw a new kind of customer closer, we, too, embark on a protocol to rebrand ourselves and our attitude towards living out the next stage of our life.

Using the idea of rebranding ourselves much like a company would do is a fun and inspiring way to look at the shifts we are about to make and how we take responsibility for creating a new experience

in our lives. The Eight Sacred Responsibilities offer simple practices and the steps we take to launch our new brand. A rebranded and truly authentic self that is ready, resilient and resourceful.

This is a movement of women over fifty taking full responsibility for our happiness and I am asking you to join me. To stand beside me, to hold me accountable to what I am asking of you. It is a book about our sacred responsibility to keep reasonable balance in our lives and to be actively thriving in our gifts. It is a book where I am willing to be vulnerable with you as I try my damndest to Rise the F#ck Up! Sisters, we are in our creative prime and our time is now. And I have no idea why I have taken up swearing lately but I have been enjoying the exclamation point it seems to put on things joining the ranks of the many fabulous women who do what makes them happy and allowing my true authentic swearing-self feel safe to contribute her word-smithing sass! I welcome all parts of me to the table here, the more of me I show up with, the more we can relate to each other.

Over the years I have been blessed to stand beside and help many women who could not seem to give themselves the permission to see past the complicated parts of their lives. To take a few moments to reach out and grab a good laugh or even a few moments to completely relax into full-bodied gratitude. To truly move from our wounds to wisdom together.

Now through this book and The Eight Sacred Responsibilities we expand our community of women who stand beside each other, who help keep each other's hearts held safe and who mentor each other along the way as we learn to love our lives from this new perspective of fiery and fabulous women over fifty!

Together we are entering into an exciting movement of change, sustainable change. A movement of women advocating for happiness. Happiness for themselves and each other. What the world needs now is more people who are willing to quit the cycle of complaining, disappointment and gossip and step into a new way of being in life. Now is the best time ever to shift from our wounds to our wisdom and be the leaders, mentors, and change-makers we naturally are simply by reclaiming our own vibrancy through Sacred Responsibility.

Sustainable change makes for thriving people and introducing gentle shifts, creating positive new ways to view life in a simple and steady way will be our way of maintaining our enthusiasm for the practices. We are re-establishing our enthusiasm for taking responsibility for our own happiness and by doing that, the happiness of those closest to us. Because happiness is contagious, we are in the position of writing the guide book! We are women in our third act and are at the head of the table. We are indeed the matriarchs of the third act and we can create a life that rises and shines so brightly that we are the beacons of light humanity is calling for. It is our time to shine!

If we demand of ourselves that we *immediately* become our thriving vibrant self as soon as we have read the last page in this book, we will not have built a strong sustainable foundation. We are going for change that we can sustain, and this change takes the desire to live your most authentic life, a commitment to doing things that are most true to who you are. (the things that increase your energy) It takes patience, and effort. It takes an empowered gentleness and it takes igniting our inner passion and joy for the sacredness of human responsibility. Let us lead ourselves easefully with our light, with our fire, with our illuminated hearts.

I am committed to you. I commit to being one of your greatest cheerleaders. I believe in you and I am grateful for every thread in the tapestry that makes up the divine, unique warrior of a woman you are. I believe in us...May our path be blessed.

## FOUNDATIONS

### **Our Thoughts, Words and Actions**

**O**ur thoughts, words, and actions are the foundations of how we communicate who we are in any given moment and situation. They are the ingredients that make up our personality. So, the quality of our thoughts, words, and actions will be directly related to the quality of our lives. Period. And at this stage of the game, we are our own quality control board. We choose how we think, what we say, and how we move in this life. We get to choose how we express ourselves in our lives and moving into this third act, this extra adult life, we have the opportunity and capability to consciously create our reality.

### **Taking Sacred Responsibility for the quality of our thoughts**

It is time to lovingly call, “timeout”. When we find ourselves consciously creating an elaborate backstory to fight for our disappointment, to stand vigilant for all that has hurt us, even if it was decades ago, we have got to call ourselves out and take responsibility for the current opportunity of happiness that we have access to right now.

We need to shine a light on the limiting beliefs that have held us back from enjoying our lives and living from the most authentic places within ourselves. While we re-establish and cultivate the things that increase our vitality as our own more natural system of beliefs, we mourn our losses, grieve our life’s pains and deeply feel our experiences as part of the process of tending to our hearts. We honour everything about our past, honouring all the terrains we have walked on our journey, honouring each thread of the tapestry that makes up the life we have lived. We stand in our powerful wisdom of each experience.

Our past experiences are part of the foundation that makes us strong enough to stand beside another in pain; our past pain is also our building blocks of radical resilience. Our past pain, disappointments and wounds are our battle scars; they do not define us, instead they are proof of our resilience and a powerful reminder of our strength. May we gracefully stand as a shining example of women resilient, battle scars our proof that every day we rise again.

We stand here, now, ready to rewire our brain for radical resilience through self-care, rising and shining, knowing ourselves, collaborating with one another, creating and playing, relaxing and celebrating and being grateful for the opportunity to do it.

### **Thoughts—Our imagination practices**

Our imagination practice has the power to put us right in the center of change, shifts and new ways of thinking about ourselves and our life well lived. We begin today with using our creative genius to take our thoughts to any and all places imaginable.

We have a plan, and the very action of planning a well-lived life in our imagination practice is our way of installing new circuits in our brain that look like the experience has already happened. You read that right. Imagining our plan or our journey fires up the circuitry, creating new pathways in the brain.

And our imagination will lead us directly into feeling when we focus completely on our imagery. The mind does not know the difference between something going on in our outer environment or our inner environment, but it will draw towards us what we think/imagine/meditate or ponder.

We use our imagination practice to create a greater state than we currently feel, and this applies even when we feel fabulous. We use our imagination practice to continually expand our creative plan for ourselves and all we do to kick off the plan is to begin to imagine it in all of its glitter and glory. There are no limits to our imagination. Leave no new idea unexplored.

Dr. Joe Dispenza teaches us about how we use our thoughts and says:

“If you can’t think greater than you feel right now, then you are thinking in the past.” I loved the first time I heard him say that! This is a life truth we have not been taught in school.

And here is some more interesting information. We think sixty to seventy thousand thoughts per day. Ninety percent of those are the same thoughts as the day before. The brain is an amazing thing, we set up pathways through our growth experiences in life and they get locked in. As we live our lives the brain is constantly delivering us data to keep us organized and in a place of relying on the data we have created from our experiences. We don’t wake up each day and have to relearn how to brush our teeth or put our shoes on; the data has been stored and available for reference - it is our fabulous personal data bank. Lucky for us whomever said, “you can’t teach an old dog new tricks” has been proven wrong.

In a great article by Debbie Hampton, she makes it simple to understand, “...neuroplasticity is an umbrella term referring to the ability of your brain to reorganize itself, both physically and functionally, throughout your life due to your environment, behaviour, thinking, and emotions.”

Our environment is a key player and we will come back to that later (the link to her full article is in the reference section at the back).

Scientific research tells us that our brain grows. The brain is malleable. This knowledge has been understood for the last century but now advances in technology can show it to us through brain scan imaging.

We know our brains grow and reorganize themselves, so what I'm interested in, ladies, is getting deeper into that ten percent of our daily thoughts that are not a repeat of the day before. I am interested in all of the space and opportunity to grow our brains, increase our creative thoughts, and build new pathways in the brain, so that when it is doing its day to day work of keeping us tapped into our data storage, it is continually being replenished and updated with plenty of great new material to reference and begin living from.

In his very interesting book, *The Brain That Changes Itself*, Norman Doidge describes the brain “more like a living creature with an appetite, one that can grow and change itself with proper nourishment and exercise.”

Our conscious thoughts and our environment create our reality, so back to Dr. Joe. If we are thinking in the past, we are functioning from that ninety percent of repeated thought data and normally that is awesome, but there is scientific evidence showing us that time and time again, when people change their thoughts and focus on something greater than they currently feel, the entire body responds in ways that decrease stress.

Drop the mic.

What I am suggesting here is that us fiery and fabulous women over fifty are going to make our practices our key to growing our brains, living as resilient beings in our bodies, and reducing the stress in our lives so that we may model a life well-lived to future generations.

### **Words – Our breathing exercises**

Of all the exercises, our breathing exercises are the ones that continue to surprise me with their effectiveness and power, and by how much my students and I benefit from them, every time.

We are co-creators in this on both an individual level and a collective level. We are tapping into and unleashing our own personal creative force, which, in turn, aligns us with the greater creative force that we are all breathing from and animated by.

When you do your practices, stand firm in the knowledge that your breath work, body work, and work of your imagination are your new superpowers because we are shifting, changing and re-writing our script from our old story to our new story. What we are doing through this practice can very well be the new normal for the generations to follow. Where it is not only normal to have a “love your life” attitude, but it is encouraged, modelled and encoded into the field.

You may come to this point in your life with your own breathing practices and knowledge of the breath as an ally and anchor. I encourage you to apply your practices in harmony with the breathing practices I put forward here. Be creative, adapt the breathing practices you already have in place and enjoy the ride.

For those who are new to having a breathing practice or a focus on breathing to reduce stress, focus the mind and cleanse the body, welcome! You are going to *love* putting yourself right into the flow of this life-force enhancing practice the yogis call *pranayama*, which loosely translates into life-force regulation or lengthening.



A focused breathing practice supports us in lengthening our lives, because if we are not breathing we are not living, and if we are not breathing well, we are not living well. What we do in our practice is to begin to observe the quality of our breathing from a place of understanding the full potential of this part of our practice. Our breathing exercises balance, energize and recharge our vital energy.

The quality of both our breath and our thoughts determine our state of mind. There is a reason that when someone is really upset we direct them to breathe, to take a deep breath and tell us what is wrong. We all know this medicine. We all know that a few deep breaths before any activity that needs our full attention will focus us. We know that a few deep breaths when we realize we have been holding our breath, brings a whole new sensation of ease into our mind and bodies.

We are going for mastery in this area, ladies. Our breath is our anchor in life, and our go-to practice the moment we find ourselves in stress, in fear and in rumination over things we cannot control. The moment your mind starts to have thoughts of uncertainty, that you don't know what to do, what decision to make or where to turn, make it your priority to focus on your breathing. This will bring you to a clearer minded and grounded place from which to make your choices, including the choice to be patient with yourself. Understanding the power within your breath will be a game changer.

We have the ability to reconcile lost or leaked energy through our breathing exercises, we can reduce stress and tension in the body and mind, and we can change the quality and the level of our own energy by being fully committed to a conscious breathing practice. This is radical Sacred Responsibility! For our breathing exercises, we always breathe in through the nose and out through the nose unless instructed otherwise. If you feel light headed during our practices simply take breaks, pause and continue when it feels right for you. We have plenty of time together, there is no need to rush any of our practices, especially our breathing.

If you consider that our breathing is happening whether we focus on it or not, then we owe our breath a lot of gratitude! We go about our day-to-day routines and hardly think about the breath and the life-force that is animating us, yet we are in a continued state of deep relationship with our breath. Perhaps if anything, it is time to honour the people, places and things we are in deep relationship with through our renewed respect for our breath. We are in the flow of our life guided by our breath, slowing down, taking life in fully, and allowing ourselves to be soothed by our breath like the flow of ocean waves moving in and out. Air is free, so fill up your energetic bank account and make conscious breathing practices a priority and your Sacred Responsibility.

### **All hail the exhale!**

Your exhale is your power play. For me it has been a life saver. Counterintuitive, as it would make more sense that the inhale would really be the defining moment of life or death, but I discovered the power of the exhale and its ability to shift me back into my power at a time of my own depleted energy.

On the exhale, our diaphragm is activated in a way that pushes up and it includes muscles of our abdomen in its execution. You activate a power place in your body on the exhale. Notice it now, on your next exhale squeeze out all the air. The area of your body you are feeling now is the place I am bringing to your attention.

In yogic philosophy we talk about this place in the body as an energy center, an energy organ called a chakra. It is called *Manipura*, meaning “lustrous gem.” It is the third chakra and it resides in the solar plexus area of our body. It is from this place we relate to the consciousness of our personal power, our willpower and our self-esteem. It is from this place I regained my own strength, reclaimed my depleted energy, and got back to living my empowered life, and this is why I say, “All hail the exhale”!

In the yogic traditions, we learn that our body has seven main energy centers where we can focus on an alignment that maintains our vitality. The seven main energy centres (chakras/Wheel) are found from the base of our spine to the crown of our head. Our movement, meditation and breathing practices are all sources of tending to our energy body and the balance of our vital life force. Our practices assist us in keeping the energy system in our body flowing, and clear of blockages. It’s not unlike a log jam in a river. For various reasons through our life experiences, our environment, the quality of our thoughts and how we care for ourselves; these energy centres can become blocked and over time cause us dis-ease in the body. For a crash course in chakras, see Appendix I.

Begin to make your exhale as much of a superstar as your inhale; your exhale holds its own powerful force that we now elevate and bring into its rightful position of honour in our lives.

Oh, and I highly encourage inhaling also, they make a great team. It is helpful to have at least a beginner’s knowing that these energetic organs exist, as everything we are doing together rides on maintaining our fiery and fabulous vital life force.

### **Actions—Our physical exercises**

The physical part of the practice is built on an understanding that there is something for everyone. As we change from day to day, getting physically stronger or occasionally being challenged in our bodies, we will always have a movement practice we are able to participate in. On the days you have high energy, increase your time and effort on the physical practice. On the days you have lower energy, choose the more simplified variations.

Our movement practice will keep us in a consistent flow of caring for our bodies. It will maintain a “tuned in” state of our energy levels, our strength, flexibility and our coordination day to day, and we can adjust our movement accordingly. If we are not tuned into our physical body each day we may indeed miss something of substance, something that we would want to tend to. If we notice that we are losing flexibility or strength in an area, we can bring more focus and care to that area.

These are simple rules of self-care: move your body, pay attention to your body’s needs and tend to them. Our physical practice deepens and for many of us will awaken a new connection to our body. Loving our awesome over-fifty body is a Sacred Responsibility. It is the vessel for our beautiful hearts.

In a world full of busying ourselves, moving here and moving there, filling up our schedules and an underlying fear of missing out (FOMO), there is movement. There is physical action and movement in all this rushing around that we understand and relate to as satisfying in some way. The old program we have been running, where we base our self-worth on the length of our to-do list, is obsolete. That kind of movement is *not* the same as consciously caring for our bodies with a physical movement practice.

It is that movement we approach with reverence, like a prayer. We all have an understanding that moving our bodies is indeed beneficial. We have less of an understanding (or interest at times) that

tending to our thoughts/mind or our breathing as an exercise is equally important. So, for our fast-paced culture we typically meet at the physical first. Then, as if by some magical understanding, our yoga teacher bestows on us about the breath and the mind while we are in a physical activity (my bestie likes to say ‘to socialize the idea’), we begin to find the mind and breath exercises more interesting. But inevitably we will all meet in agreement that moving our body is important especially as we grow wiser. Use it or lose it, right!

We will continue to create audios and videos of our practices making them available to support and enjoy the movements together, and just because they seem easy do not discount their potential to keep you strong, flexible and totally tuned into your body. (Links to our videos are on [www.reachyogalifestyle.ca](http://www.reachyogalifestyle.ca) Just enter the Sacred Portal to access them.)

We are embarking on our life as a moving meditation and our practices are designed to slow us down a little, to get to know ourselves more deeply and in that experience a deepened relationship with ourselves.

One of the things that is genius about getting into a ‘moving meditation’ rhythm with our bodies is that it is a stable bridge from our previous lives that had us moving extremely fast, into this new smooth, sultry way of enjoying life in our bodies. I’m finding myself luxuriating in life more, taking the day-to-day things a little slower, the sound track from *Burlesque* playing in my head... I am definitely more in my body than ever before. This is part of the power of a woman in her third act!

It has been a process getting to this place of ease in my body. I didn’t expect myself to stop on a dime the day I turned fifty, and overnight, emerge from the chrysalis a graceful, sultry butterfly. Quite the opposite. I had plans! But as those years have passed now and I have gained a clearer picture of how genius the physical practices have been for me during the transition into my fifties, I will shout it from the mountain tops.

### **Keep moving your beautiful body!**

As we transition into our third act together, taking Sacred Responsibility for ourselves, we enjoy our movement, maintain our energy and we can put the brakes on as fast or as slowly as we like. You don’t see the Grandmothers rushing around the fire at a Ceremony, now do you? Watch them. They are the physical embodiment of cool and calm. (I love you Grandmother Vera, thank you for teaching me how kick-ass gentleness is!)

As in any of our practices we work up slowly no matter how “easy” you think the exercises are. We are cultivating focus on a whole new level now. We are way too fabulous to rush our practices. Our minds are cool and calm, and we are building our resilience one breath at a time.

Have no doubt there is plenty of time and room for joining a running group or to take up hiking or any number of physical activities, but for now we practice simple movements for strength, flexibility, balance, cleansing and overall connection to our beautiful bodies.

### **Feeling it**

It seems that every section of the book I write is the most important part of the book. Because it all matters - the tapestry of all of the sections of the book making up the wholeness of the message of our movement. But I’m going to point out that feeling our positive emotions, shifting into a moment

of truly feeling our happiness, our joy, our enthusiasm, or any number of positive emotions to assist us to move forward in a fabulous state of well-being, may indeed be the most important part of our work together. Keep this idea in your mind until it makes its way into your heart and into your body. We are aligning our thoughts and feelings with our plan of a life well lived. Feeling it is where it's at.

Feelings move through us on a stream of chemical reactions cascading through our bodies. We will have streams of “happy” chemicals—dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin and endorphin—and we are also up against “stress” hormones, cortisol, noradrenaline, adrenaline. Obviously, we will feel fabulous when bathed in happy chemicals and not so fabulous when bathed in stress hormones. But before we go throwing the baby out with the bath water, we want all our chemicals available and working for us. We are taking Sacred Responsibility for our happiness and will have our focus on creating positive experiences in our lives by making a conscious choice, as a practice, to intentionally play with positive, more balanced responses to life. We are working with our brain's ability to create new pathways, new ways of seeing ourselves and our place in this world. *And* we don't disrespect our stress chemicals in the process. Our brain is so incredibly tuned in that we will be in a dance of chemical reactions that are all doing their best to keep us safe and alive, and we will need to learn how best to take the lead.

Conversations on happiness are no longer left up to the philosophers and artists; scientists now have a huge impact on what we know about feelings and happiness. So, as we take a deepened interest in our happiness we can find our paths through the arts, the sciences and the philosophical discussions that support our journey of reclaiming happiness as a respected attribute in life. Rise and Shine!

### **The Laws of Attraction**

There are many folks having this discussion about attracting things into our lives and the best ways to do it. I have a couple of things to say about this. As we embark on a revised way of living our lives in this second maturity we begin to take note of what contributes to our energy reserves and what depletes our energy reserves. It will take time and effort to sort out one from the other, the people, places and things that lift us up or bring us down. But as we slowly wade through these conversations the one thing we can be sure of is whatever we put our focus on we will magnetize towards us. We will attract to us the things we focus on.

In order to “attract” the very best for us it only makes sense to focus on the very best things, right? Technically yes, but we are in a place of change in our lives and while we are making shifts and changes it is important that we are patient with ourselves. Some days we will not waiver on our gratitude for this life and some days we will wonder what the heck we are doing here. Remember even in the plan to attract to us the people, places and things that light us up we will have many moments of discouragement and wishing for a quicker leap into our fabulous third act.

If you truly understand that our thoughts, words, and actions will attract to us what we are thinking, saying, and doing, we will be able to have the deeper conversations with ourselves about exactly what it is we desire to attract or magnetize. We will learn how to upgrade our ways of thinking about ourselves and our environment so that we experience what we desire in the present moment.

Now normally I am a big supporter of the statement, “you are never too old to...” fill in your own blank. But there is one exception to that rule, and that is, “we are *way* too old not to enjoy our lives”.

So, let's get on with it as my Grandmother Marguerite would say!

