



### **Welcoming words from Octavia Raheem....**

“What if your weariness and wiring is older than you?

What if a reservoir of respite and a pathway to healing is both within and older than you too?

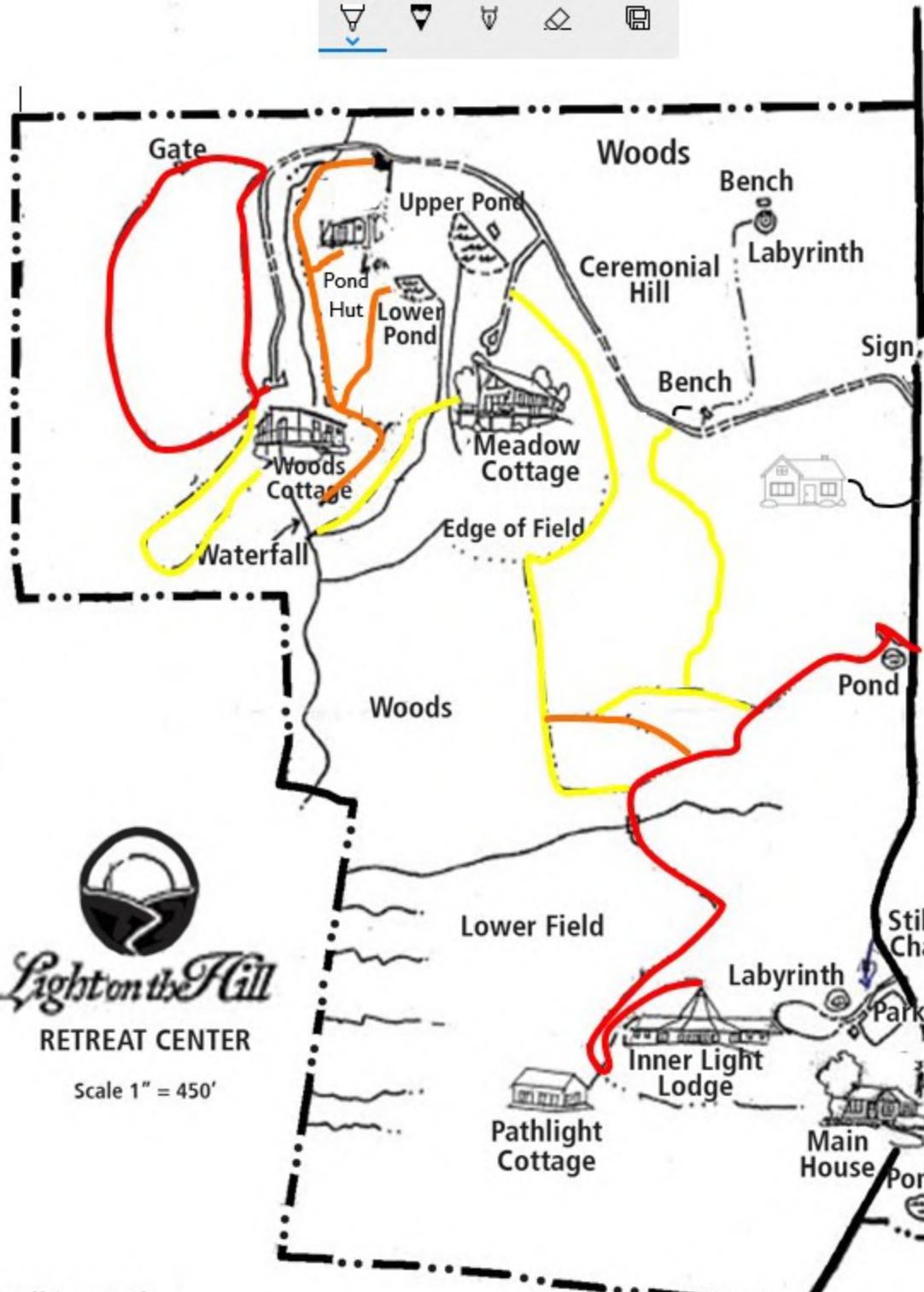
What if rest is the way to truly begin that process?

On one level, resting is nourishing and feels good.

On another level, rest can be excavating. Resting on the earth is an unearthing. It can be confrontational in the way that feelings and wounds emerge to be healed when we allow them space and time. It is one reason many "never have the time" to rest. That's like saying you never have time to heal.

Rest. We can talk about it. Read about it. Listen to every podcast about rest. At some point we have to embody it. We have to practice it. We have to shut down all of the distractions and go lay down.”

***Welcome! We are so glad you're here!***



# *Light on the Hill* RETREAT CENTER

## RETREAT CENTER

Scale 1" = 450'

## Walking Paths

## Property Boundary



Galactic Get-Together, photo from Chandra X-ray Observatory

“We approach our lives on different trajectories, each of us spinning in our own separate, shining orbits. What gives this life its resonance is when those trajectories cross and we become engaged with each other, for as long or as fleetingly as we do. There's a shared energy then, and it can feel as though the whole universe is in the process of coming together. I live for those times. No one is truly ever "just passing through." Every encounter has within it the power of enchantment, if we're willing to look for it.”

— Richard Wagamese, [\*Embers: One Ojibway's Meditations\*](#)

## Light on the Hill Housekeeping Instructions

The guiding principles for Light on the Hill are love, harmony, and beauty. We ask all our guests to be **respectful of the property and the buildings**, and to leave each area in the same condition in which they found it.

### What to Know About Your Room & the Lodge

**Outdoor shoes** are not permitted in the Lodge beyond the entranceway. We encourage guests to bring slippers or cozy socks to wear inside the Lodge.

**Outside towels** are available in the downstairs laundry room. Please do not take interior blankets, towels or bedding outside.

Please be careful about **locking yourself out of your rooms**. The locks flip easily and because of new code regulations, the door handles still move even when the door is locked. Thus, it is easy to not realize one has locked one's door. Ask a facilitator for help if you do get locked out.

Most of the **shades** work on a loop system. Just pull one of the strings to get desired height. Be gentle! They are delicate.

**Please do not open any of the windows all the way** and, if there is a wind, close them most of the way. Open windows hit by wind strip the crank mechanism, which then must be replaced. To close the windows, use the crank to move the window to  $\frac{1}{2}$ " from the frame. Use the lever to close the window the rest of the way.

**No candles or incense** can be lit/burned in the individual rooms (it will set off the fire alarm).

The **laundry rooms are for staff use only**. Please do not use the machines for personal laundry.

The **restrooms** are marked: 2 female (one upstairs, one downstairs), 1 male (downstairs), 1 gender neutral (upstairs). In the gender-neutral restroom, one toilet stall and one sink are reserved for female staff.

It is important to **flush the toilets** after each use, otherwise the septic system gets blocked. The toilets are low water use and there is also plenty of water on the property. Kindly do not flush feminine hygiene products. Use the receptacle next to the toilet for tampons and pads.

### Food/Drink/Meals

The **beverage station** is available to you at any time for water or tea.

**Food and beverages are not allowed outside the dining room.** People are free to put your food on the dining room table closest to the meeting space, or in the small refrigerator. **Only water** is permitted in the building beyond the dining room.

There is a **small refrigerator** in the dining room. You are welcome to put any food you bring in this refrigerator. You'll find OJ, grapefruit juice, dairy milk, plant milk, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  and  $\frac{1}{2}$  there.

We ask guests to **bus your dishes**. All food we serve is compostable. Please scrape uneaten food into the compost bin. Place napkins, paper towels, and foil wrapping into the trash bin.

We **recycle** CLEAN plastic and metal containers, as well as paper. Check the recycling sign above the bin if you are unsure whether something is recyclable. If your container is recyclable but dirty, please place it in the bins with the dirty dishes.

## **Check Out & Departure**

On the day of departure please **strip your bed and bring your towels and sheets to the appropriate bins in the laundry room** (1 on each floor). There are laundry rooms on each floor. Guests do not need to strip the quilts, comforters, blankets, or mattress covers, just sheets and pillowcases. We also request that you close the **windows**, turn off **the ceiling fan** and set the **thermostat** to its lowest setting.

## **Enjoying the Grounds:**

People are free to **wander the property**, walk the labyrinths, and visit the chapel. Maps are provided. Please do not drive or walk near any of the cottages or huts in order to ensure the privacy of the retreatants staying there.

You may walk the labyrinth or meditate/pray in **Stillpoint Sanctuary** at any time. We for silence in the sanctuary. When you leave, be sure to fully latch the door (so the wind doesn't blow it open).

**LOH on-call phone—607.592.4450 (call or text)**

# Teachings of Leaves, November 22nd – November 24<sup>th</sup>

Light on the Hill Retreat Center, Van Etten, NY

<b>Friday, November 22<sup>nd</sup></b>		
3:00pm – 4:00pm	Arrival & Registration Settle into your room   Rest   Explore the Grounds or Meditation Chapel	Main Entrance Foyer
4:00pm – 6:00pm	Welcome, Settling in, Overview & Introductions	Main Meeting Room
6:00pm – 7:00pm	Dinner	Dining Hall
7:00pm – 8:00pm	<b>Part I: Let Go, Lay Down.</b> Candlelight rest/yoga practice with sound healing	Main Meeting Room
<b>Saturday, November 23rd</b>		
7:30am – 8:00am	Optional morning yoga with Himanee	Main Meeting Room
8:00am – 9:00am	Breakfast	Dining Hall
9:00am – 10:30am	Make my name: the Liminal Space	Main Meeting Room
10:30am – 10:45am	Break	
10:45am – 12:15pm	<b>Part II: Meeting the Earth</b> Concurrent Sessions: Outdoor Session: Meeting the Earth: Sensory Nature Walk Indoor Session: Letting Go: Oak Leaf Silk Cloth Dying/Reflection	Grounds Dining Hall
12:15pm – 1:30pm	Lunch & Unstructured time	Dining Hall
1:30pm – 4:15pm	Discernment Circle Triads	Main Meeting Room
4:15pm – 6:00pm	Unstructured time Optional video interviews Teas with Meliq?	
6:00pm – 7:00pm	Dinner	Dining Hall
7:00pm – 9:00pm	<b>Evening Offerings</b> 7:00pm – 8:00pm: Folklore and making of corn husk dolls by Maryjo 8:00pm – 9:00pm: Drumming and music Circle with Damon and Friends Vocal/poetry by Meliq	Dining Hall Outdoor Fire Pit
<b>Sunday, November 24th</b>		
7:30am – 8:00am	Optional morning yoga with Himanee	Main Meeting Room
8:00am – 9:00am	Breakfast	Dining Hall
9:00am – 10:45am	<b>Part III: Meeting Joy</b>	Main Meeting Room
10:45am – 11:30am	Break, housekeeping, Group Photo	
11:30am – 12:15pm	Gratitude & Closing, the Growing Together Community, Plan for Winter Peer Learning Circles, Silks ceremony	Main Meeting Room
12:15pm – 1pm	Lunch & Travel Home	Dining Hall
1:00pm – 2:00pm	Optional Video Interviews	

# Courage & Renewal® Touchstones



## Give and receive welcome.

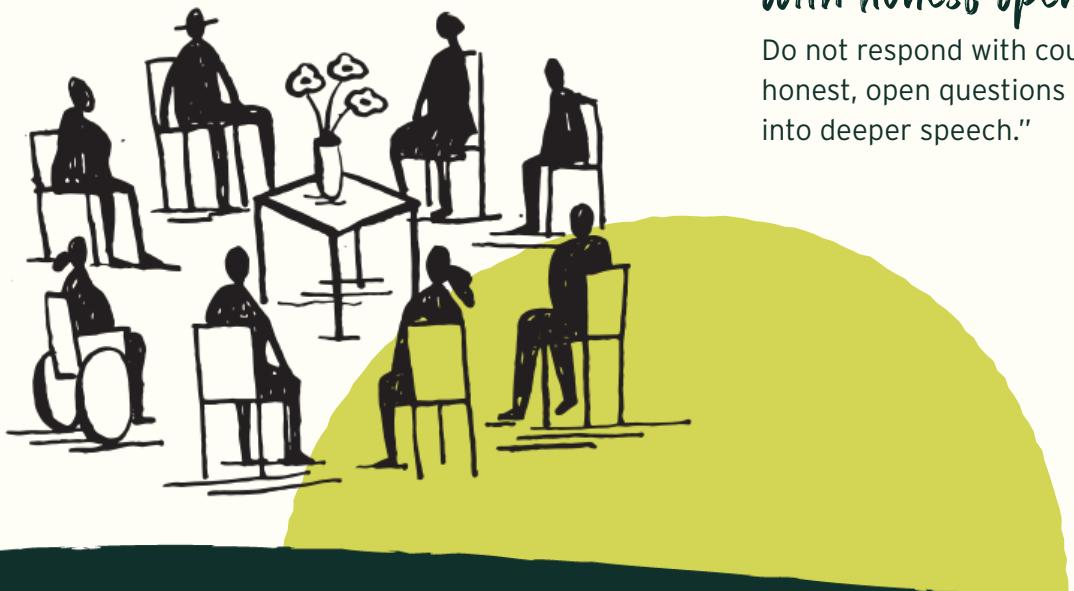
People learn best in hospitable spaces. In this circle we support each other's learning by giving and receiving hospitality.

## Be present as fully as possible.

Be here with your doubts, fears and failings as well as your convictions, joys and successes, your listening as well as your speaking.

## What is offered in the circle is by invitation, not demand.

This is not a "share or die" event! Do whatever your soul calls for, and know that you do it with our support. Your soul knows your needs better than we do.



## Speak your truth in ways that respect other people's truth.

Our views of reality may differ, but speaking one's truth in a circle of trust does not mean interpreting, correcting or debating what others say. Speak from your center to the center of the circle, using "I" statements, trusting people to do their own sifting and winnowing.

## No fixing, saving, advising or correcting each other.

This is one of the hardest guidelines for those of us who like to "help." But it is vital to welcoming the soul, to making space for the inner teacher.

## Learn to respond to others with honest open questions.

Do not respond with counsel or corrections. Using honest, open questions helps us "hear each other into deeper speech."



Learn more at [www.couragerenewal.org](http://www.couragerenewal.org)

# Courage & Renewal® Touchstones



## *When the going gets rough, turn to wonder.*

Turn from reaction and judgment to wonder and compassionate inquiry. Ask yourself, "I wonder why they feel/think this way?" or "I wonder what my reaction teaches me about myself?" Set aside judgment to listen to others—and to yourself—more deeply.

## *Attend to your own inner teacher*

We learn from others, of course. But as we explore poems, stories, questions and silence in a circle of trust, we have a special opportunity to learn from within. So pay close attention to your own reactions and responses, to your most important teacher.

## *Trust and learn from the silence*

Silence is a gift in our noisy world, and a way of knowing in itself. Treat silence as a member of the group. After someone has spoken, take time to reflect without immediately filling the space with words.

## *Observe deep confidentiality*

Safety is built when we can trust that our words and stories will remain with the people with whom we choose to share, and are not repeated to others without our permission.

## *Know that it's possible...*

to leave the circle with whatever it was that you needed when you arrived, and that the seeds planted here can keep growing in the days ahead.



Learn more at [www.couragerenewal.org](http://www.couragerenewal.org)



Art by Kasia Derwinska

“Let us not become trapped or caught up in the mystery and fear surrounding us. You who are not black or white. Day or night. Good or bad. When you come and swallow us in your luminous darkness, may we have the good sense to simply lie down, float for a while, and dream. Let us dream of something new and ancient.”

*-from Pause, Rest, Be by Octavia F. Raheem*

#### **Introductions: 2 rounds, 20 minutes each, groups of 4**

When you arrive in your group, we invite you to share your name, pronouns, where you’re from and share as much as you feel comfortable in response to the following questions:

**Round 1** - What drew you to this Retreat? **or** How is the theme of rest calling to you?

**Round 2** - What do you hope to explore as you ‘float for a while’ here at Light on the Hill? **or** What new or ancient things have you been dreaming about lately?

## make my name

make my name a cracked seed  
surrendering to wet soil  
in a square of sun  
such tiny hope  
a child could sing me to life

make my name a thread of light  
pulsing between two whitebark pine  
that know themselves  
to live as one  
we hide no rivers, that's our love

make my name a dream spell  
whispered against your sleeping spine  
arched, growing bright for you  
an electric hush  
life flooding through you

make my name a prayer  
celestial, urgent, even selfish  
a way to dream beyond this moment  
a talisman of joy  
a manifestation

make my name a portal  
to deeper breath, belief, balance  
fall backwards into the arms of a stranger  
find roots already intertwined  
every letter is still dirt

- adrienne maree brown



You may want to begin by writing the words “Make my name” in the center of your paper.  
**Questions to guide your exploration:** As I rest, who am I? Who am I becoming? What colors or images speak to me? Where is light? Where is movement?



Image: Ellen Senisi

Here we are, late autumn, a period of deep stillness, a pause before we start to walk more fully into the darkness.

As I gather rich dark fruits from tree and hedgerow, I honour the wild harvest of these days and taste all the wild growth that has created such medicine, such goodness.

It draws my mind to my own life's harvest, and the taste left within me, of all I have gathered from journeying with myself in the last year. It makes me ponder, what perhaps, do I need to compost down, no longer needing it to grow, knowing that that crop or way of being, that work, that habit does not produce fruits that feed me anymore, that no longer taste good or does not serve my life.

And I look at ways of turning them into rich dark fertile matter, so they can feed the life I want to step towards.

I love this time, as I feel the land facilitates me, to fall into the earth, into the darkness, into the richness of inner landscapes, so I can feel what needs to die, what needs to unbecome so I can truly honour life and all its rich becomings.

- Brigit Anna McNeill

# Peer Support Discernment Circle

## Questions you may want to focus on....

At this time, what do I want or need to let go of?  
What realizations surfaced about my life while in rest?  
What have I discovered while connecting with the earth?  
What does transformation look like in this season of my life?  
What new 'becomings' am I aware of?

Question of your own....

## Schedule

1:30 – 2:15	<b>Preparation: Listening, Open Questions, Opening up the Throat</b>
2:15 - 2:30	<b>Form Groups, Find a Cozy Spot, Introductions</b>
2:30 – 3:00	<b>Session 1</b>
3:00 – 3:10	<b>Short Break*</b>
3:10 – 3:40	<b>Session 2</b>
3:40 – 3:50	<b>Short Break*</b>
3:50 – 4:20	<b>Session 3</b>

**\* Take a 10-minute break and when you come back, switch roles.**

## Timeframe for each Session:

**5 minutes:** Speaker introduces question and offers some context

**20 minutes:** Others offer attentive listening and ask open, honest questions.

**5 minutes:** Closing appreciations and celebrations. Offering appreciation to the speaker for their speaking time.

## Guidelines:

- Our whole task is not to problem solve, but to provide space for the speaker to think and reflect on what they would like to do.
- Allow our focus to remain on the speaker.

- Only ask honest and open questions – no sharing of your experience or offering advice.
- Double confidentiality – not only will we never repeat what is spoken of, we will never bring it up. Imagine that someone has shared something confidential about their workplace – we would not casually bring that up at a work event, for example.
- Not about satisfying your own curiosity or putting forward any ‘agenda’ of your own.

**\*Please note, the discerner is never obligated to answer any question.**

### **Relevant Touchstones**

- What is offered in the circle is by invitation, not demand.
- No fixing, saving, advising or correcting
- When the going gets rough, turn to wonder

## The Practice of Asking Open & Honest Questions

*Adapted from the work of Parker Palmer, John Morefield, Marcy Jackson and Susan Kaplan.*

Inspired by the work of Parker J. Palmer and Center for Courage & Renewal

([www.couragerenewal.org](http://www.couragerenewal.org))

Open & Honest Questions are a thoughtful pathway for inquiry and discernment, moving us beyond our normal patterns of communication. Often our questions are laden with advice, problem solving, or meeting our needs to be a “competent leader or engaged Helping Professional.” Open & Honest Questions serve to invite a more spacious, authentic conversation.

This practice enables us to:

- Create a more authentic and deeper exploration of a problem or question for both the person talking and the one listening;
- Step away from our tendency to jump to solutions, assign blame, or otherwise approach our exchanges attached to a specific end (teaching with a specific goal in mind, defend what we know, problem solve, or respond as a “good educator” would);
- Invite a person to call upon their own wisdom and knowledge of self. This builds capacity for their own leadership from within by exploring their own assets, truth, questions, and answers, inviting a discovery of their own “hidden wholeness.” A person accesses their inner teacher by thinking about the situation in new ways, applying past learning and experience to now, while listening to both feelings and thoughts.
- Support a deeper inner conversation within oneself;
- Slow down the pace of our conversation and develop a deeper mutual engagement;
- Expand and deepen an exploration rather than narrow or restrict possibilities;
- Explore and “hold” important questions or complicated issues. This practice recognizes significant value in listening without judgment with a view for understanding instead of reacting with a quick, simple or incomplete answer for an immediate direction (that may make things worse in the long run);
- Use meaningful metaphors to reframe or help “step out” of the situation;
- Invite more authentic responses rather than second guessing the “right answer”;
- Changes the dynamic of our tendency to want to fix, “save”, change or give advice. In these responses, we see the person as “broken” or with deficits. Our new role is to create a safe and meaningful process in which we help the person access their own “hidden wholeness”.

## Framing Open & Honest Questions

1. The best single hallmark of an open, honest question is that the questioner could not possibly anticipate the answer to it. *What surprises you? What moves or touches you about this? What inspires you? What was easy? What was hard?*
2. Ask questions that aim at helping the person rather than satisfying your curiosity. Ask questions directed to the person as well as to the problem – about feelings as well as facts. *Have you ever had an experience that felt like your current issue? Did you learn anything from that prior experience that feels useful to you now? How do you feel about the experience you just described?*
3. Stay with the person's language --use words the person is using not what you think they might or should be feeling. *You said this was an impossible situation -could you say more about what this means to you? What do you mean when you said you felt frustrated? as opposed to Don't you ever feel angry?*
4. Formulate questions that are brief and to the point rather than larding them with background considerations and rationale. *What are your expectations or hopes for your project?*
5. Trust your own intuition, even if your instincts seem off the wall. Listen deeply to the story and allow questions to come from your heart rather than your head.
6. Avoid long storytelling or speech making that may draw attention to yourself.
7. Consider waiting to ask a question if you're not sure what type of question it is. If it keeps coming back to you, see if you can re-frame it into an open-ended question.
8. The best questions are simple. *How does this work for you? What questions do you have? What is the hardest aspect of this situation? What is the easiest aspect of this situation?*
9. Avoid questions with right/wrong answers. Consider re-framing *Don't you think you should do this project instead?* to *What interests you about the other approach?*
10. Use images or metaphors that the person might relate to, to open things up in ways that more direct questions do not. *If you were writing a book about this experience, how would you name this chapter? If you were using a roadmap to navigate this issue, what would be on your map – the rest stops, the destinations, the detours?*
11. Know when to use Open & Honest Questions. These questions are not appropriate for all situations. There is a time to give information, to make a decision and to share your own opinion and experience.

## Ways to Listen

There's lonely listening, when sitting in a crowd. Open listening as one listens, eyes closed, to the wind in the cottonwood leaves.

Numb listening, as one listens to detergent commercials.

Baffled listening, as one tries to discern if the speaker could possibly believe what they say.

And full-body listening as the cello plays. Sometimes, I've felt my whole being break with delight in joyful listening to my daughter's laughter.

And break equally with the unbearable listening as the soil falls on the casket.

There's the holy listening when we listen for the dead, and greedy listening, in which every other utterance is merely a ladder rung for stepping into your own story.

Selfless listening knows only to receive.

There's the way you sometimes listen to me, as if my words are waves on the river, not something to interpret, but something familiar.

And the way you sometimes listen to my silence and know precisely what I mean. There's nervous listening, as one listens to the mouse in the wall.

And vast listening, like when on a clear night lit only by stars, I can almost sense how the universe not only sings through my body, but listens, too, listens to itself, and knows itself in the listening.



—Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

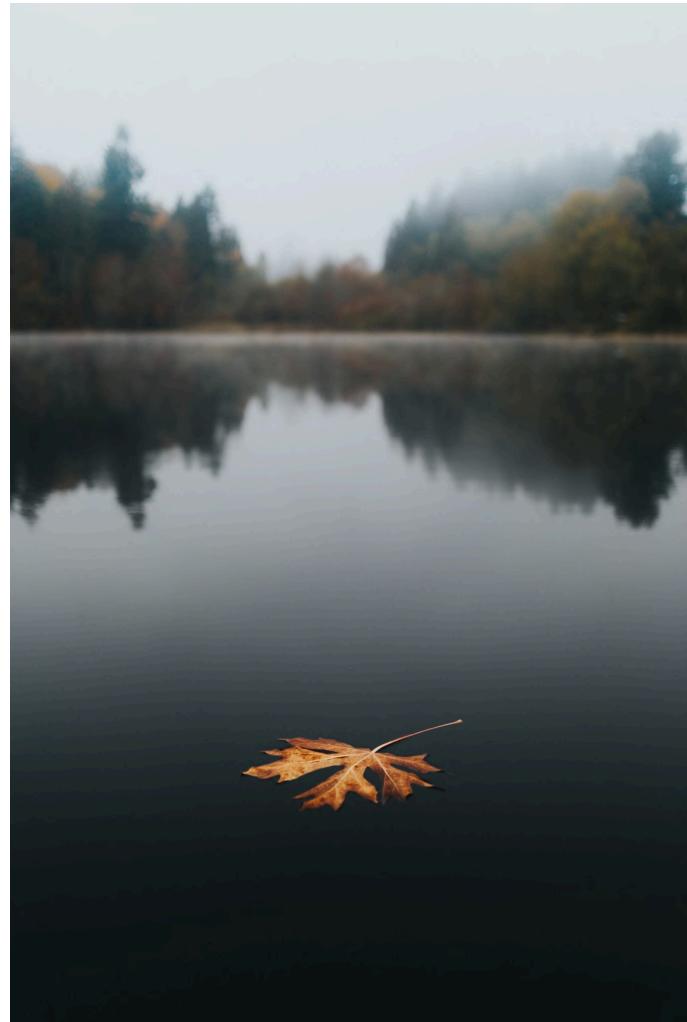
*"We must learn to tend each other's joy."*

-Ross Gay

### **The Wonder of Small Things**

Make much of something small—  
sunlight falling on your feet  
tucked beneath a fleece blanket  
as you sleep in, the heat  
seeping into cloth, into you.  
The sound of leaves snapping off  
and the slight rustle as they  
settle down in their soft,  
pre-ordained places on the ground.  
Purple and white asters too,  
those last flowers to bloom along  
the forest path, each cluster  
its own constellation glowing  
in the dusk that comes much  
sooner now. Make much of running  
a hand through the dew-tipped,  
ripe seed-heads of rye grass,  
or catching the flame of a single  
maple leaf as it drifts, making  
a wish. Open your hand and trust  
whatever lands there, however  
small it may seem at first.

-James Crews



Make a list of the smallest, slightest things that ignite wonder and joy. You might begin with the line, "Make much of something small," and see what images come. You might even go outside and open your hand. Follow the sensory details as they arrive without censoring or editing yourself.



## **The Clearing**

Do not try to save  
the whole world  
or do anything grandiose.  
Instead, create  
a clearing  
in the dense forest  
of your life  
and wait there  
patiently,  
until the song  
that is your life  
falls into your own cupped hands  
and you recognize and greet it.  
Only then will you know  
how to give yourself  
to this world  
so worthy of rescue.

~ Martha Postlethwaite

## ABOUT THE WRITERS



**Adrienne Maree Brown** is growing a garden of healing ideas. Informed by 27 years of movement, facilitation, somatics, science fiction scholarship and doula work, Adrienne has nurtured Emergent Strategy, Pleasure Activism, Radical Imagination and Loving Correction as ideas and practices for transformation. Adrienne is an author of several published texts, a ritual singer-songwriter, and co-host of How to Survive the End of the World podcast.



**Brene Brown** is a research professor at the University of Houston and holds the Huffington Foundation Endowed Chair. She is also a visiting professor in management at the University of Texas at Austin McCombs School of Business. She has spent the past two decades studying courage, vulnerability, shame, and empathy. She is the author of seven books and hosts two original podcasts.



**James Crews** is the editor of several bestselling anthologies, and is the author of four prize winning books of poetry and a book of short essays. James also speaks and leads workshops on kindness, mindfulness, and writing for self-compassion. He lives with his husband on forty rocky acres in the woods of southern Vermont.



**Ross Gay** is the author of four books of poetry: Against Which; Bringing the Shovel Down; Be Holding; and Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude. In addition to his poetry, Ross has released three collections of essays—The Book of Delights was released in 2019 and was a New York Times bestseller; Inciting Joy was released in 2022, and his newest collection, The Book of (More) Delights was released in September of 2023.



**Brigit Anna McNeill** is a wilderness and ecopsychotherapist, herbalist, foraging teacher, and wild plant medicine expert. She is the author of *Bloom and Thrive: Essential Healing Herbs and Flowers*,



**Octavia Raheem** is a wife, mother, and author of three books. She is a rest/restorative coach, yoga, and meditation educator, and former wellness studio owner. She is the creator of Devoted Rest, a transformational rest-focused experience for visionary women leaders making a high impact in their fields. Within her rest and work she threads time-tested practices, depth skill and knowledge about what supports rest and what doesn't, wisdom rooted in Black American Southern traditions, and intuition into a blanket of experience under which individuals can gather and rebuke stress, fatigue, and burnout.



**Richard Wagamese** was an Ojibwe Canadian author and journalist from the Wabaseemoong Independent Nations in Northwestern Ontario. He was best known for his novel *Indian Horse* which won the Burt Award for the First Nations, Metis and Inuit Literature in 2013. He was one of Canada's foremost writers and one of the leading indigenous writers in North America. Both individual works and his body of work have been celebrated with numerous awards.



**Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer** lives in Colorado with her husband and daughter, where she serves as the third Colorado Western Slope Poet Laureate and was a finalist for Colorado Poet Laureate. Her poetry has appeared in many publications, on stage at Carnegie Hall, in back alleys, and on river rocks. She teaches and performs poetry for mindfulness retreats, women's retreats, teachers, addiction recovery programs, scientists, hospice, literary burlesque and more.