



Hope, Imagination, and Remaking the World

A Journal for Pondering and Practicing

O
B E I N G

Nothing new has ever entered this world without someone(s) who first imagined a possibility that others could not yet see or believe in — and then brought realities into being that most could not later imagine the world without.

The pages that follow are invitations to practice hope as an act of imagination with real-world consequences — a muscular hope that refuses to accept given realities and throws one's whole intelligence, creativity, and courage behind that insistence.

What we practice, we become.

Prepare Inwardly

with Krista Tippett

“We move back and forth in a life of depth and meaning between inner, spiritual work and outer presence to the world.”

Krista Tippett

Right now, today, what is filling you with despair? And what is giving you hope?

What is hope? Answer this question through the story of your life.

Who have been the “live human signposts” of muscular hope in your life across time? Hold their faces, and the qualities of their presence, in your heart and in your mind’s eye in the days to come.

Put Your Hands on the Future

with adrienne maree brown

“We’re living inside imaginations that other people told us were true, and told us were how the world is...We live in this abundant world, and we’ve been told it’s scarce. And then we’re given all these stories of scarcity. So, so much of the work of radical imagination is, what does it look like to imagine beyond the constructs? What does it look like to imagine a future where we all get to be there, not causing harm to each other, and experiencing abundance?”

adrienne maree brown

Examine your orientation to the idea that imagination has real-world consequences. Do you believe that? Trace its reality in the lives of people you admire and in your own.

Ponder emergence. Consider how this way of change has found expression across the years in your life, your work, your world — moments when what you did not plan or control became a catalyst for your growth.

“Emergence notices the way small actions and connections create complex systems, patterns that become ecosystems and societies.”

“Emergence emphasizes critical connections over critical mass.”

“The crisis we are in at scale is in part a response to control or overcome the emergent processes that are our own nature, the processes of the planet we live on and the universe we call home.”

“I always tell people that you’re always practicing things. So it’s not like you go from not practicing to practicing. It’s, Are you practicing things on purpose? Are you practicing things you would want to practice, or are you practicing what someone else has told you is the right way?”

adrienne maree brown

Write Things Down

with Naomi Shihab Nye

“One nice thing about writing is that you get to meet these other selves which continue on in you — your child self, your older self, your confused self, your self that makes a lot of mistakes — and find some gracious way to have a community in there, inside, that would help you survive.”

Naomi Shihab Nye

Exchange words with yourself — the many selves alive inside you — about what you're doing here. What has hope meant in your life and in your world(s)? Do the different selves inside you have different orientations to despair and to imagination with real-world consequences? How about your best self?

This week and in the following weeks, as it feels interesting, try this exercise proposed by Naomi. Land on a single word or phrase that you find animating in this Wisdom Practice, and “use it as as an oar that could get you through the days” — just by holding it in your mind (and heart) and seeing how it rubs against other words, how it meets experiences and other words. Remember Mary Oliver’s advice: keep your journal close by at all times.

“When you take a long, loving look anywhere, you feel more bonded with whatever you’ve looked at.”

Naomi Shihab Nye

Take Off the Shoes of Your Voice

with Ocean Vuong

“‘I went in there ‘guns blazing.’
Go ‘knock ‘em dead.’ ‘Drop
dead gorgeous.’ ‘Slay — I slayed
them.’ What happens to our
imagination when we can only
celebrate ourselves through
our very vanishing? And what
happens if we alter our language?
Where would our future be?
Where will we grow towards?”

Ocean Vuong

As you move through these days, get really attentive in every moment to this world's fluency in the language of violence — the vividness and omnipresence of words that engender fear and despair. Notice and write down the easy metaphors of death and war that are used everywhere from the news to casual conversations to social media, about everything from relationships to politics to the weather. Notice the death and violence metaphors that come naturally in the way you speak.

What happens when you alter your language?

What does it mean to take off the shoes of *your* voice?

“I want to take off the shoes of
my voice so that I can enter a
place with care — so that I can
do the work that I need to do.”

Ocean Vuong

Grieve and Love

with Joanna Macy

“Apathy and closed-down denial — our difficulty in looking at what we’re doing to our world — stems not from callous indifference or ignorance so much as it stems from fear of pain. But the other face of our pain for the world is our love for the world. Say you’re taking care of your mother, and she’s dying of cancer. You won’t say, ‘I can’t go in her house or in her room because I don’t want to look at her.’ But if you love her, you want to be with her ... It’s just the opposite.”

Joanna Macy

“To move from grief to mourning is to move from a place of sheer loss to a place of acknowledging the loss. And this creates a space in mourning for you to make sacred the pain so that the rest of your life is transformed by it, allowing the possibility of a future. You can move into a place where it is something that you can find a place for in your soul and in your heart — not in such a way that it immobilizes you, but actually propels you into the future, through love.”

Serene Jones

What is the love on the other side of your pain?

What is a loss you have perhaps not quite acknowledged?

The despair that you began to write about at the outset of this experience, the despair you may be feeling for the world today — what would it mean to stand reverently before your grief? Can you imagine what it would mean — sit with what it would mean — to turn it into a mourning that brings you more deeply into the love that lies just on the other side of your pain?

“You’re always asked to stretch a little bit more. And actually, we’re made for that. In any case, there’s absolutely no excuse for making our passionate love for the world dependent on what we think of its degree of health or whether we think it’s going to go on forever. This moment, you’re alive. You can just dial up the magic of that at any time.”

Joanna Macy

Live in the Whole of Time

with Joy Harjo

“Just like you wouldn’t use a certain kind of meter to measure electricity that doesn’t measure electricity, there’s another kind of perspective that you bring to understand or move within time.”

Joy Harjo

Summon Your 200-Year Present

Take your mind back to the youngest age you can remember and to the oldest person you remember holding you. Roughly calculate the year of their birth and the history that shaped their lifetime.

And who is the youngest person you have held in your arms most recently? Imagine a robust life for them — both the age and year to which they could live.

Try to inhabit this expanse of history that you have literally touched and been touched by. Can you feel in your body, in your imagination, a more spacious grasp of time itself and of possibility and agency? What difference might it make?

“There are many different realities. I think about all of these different realities ... I’ll be in a car or a bus or van or whatever, looking at the houses and the windows and all the storefronts and thinking about all the different realms, all the different story realms. Every place, every window, every doorway is an opening to a life, a whole different life, a whole series of stories, and it’s multiplied hundreds and thousands of times. Some don’t overlap at all, some are in their very private universes. Other universes are more expansive.”

Joy Harjo

Practice Delight

with Ross Gay

“I often think the gap in our speaking about and for justice, or working for justice, is that we forget to advocate for what we love, for what we find beautiful and necessary. We are good at fighting. But imagining and holding in one’s imagination what is wonderful and to be adored and preserved and exalted — that’s harder for us, it seems.”

Ross Gay

Give your curiosity and your journaling during this week over to a practice of delight.

As you move through your smallest interactions, look for moments/sightings/experiences that bring flashes of light into your day.

Do you notice “unambiguously pleasant public physical interactions”? What is pleasant and sweet and tender?

**Can you feel how attending to delight as seriously as hardship
nourishes a reality-bending imagination/passion for justice and
hope that is as joyful as it is fierce?**

“Adult joy knows that suffering and loss always live close by life and love. And that knowledge brings what is good and joyful all the more into relief.”

Ross Gay

Enough of us see that we
have a world to remake.

We want to meet what is
hard and hurting.

We want to rise to what is
beautiful and life-giving.

We want to do that where
we live, and we want to do it
walking alongside others.

Krista Tippett