

PRACTICE SHOWING UP



A PRACTICE GUIDE
FOR WHITE PEOPLE
WORKING FOR
RACIAL JUSTICE



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A RADICAL WELL PUBLICATION

Let's Practice Showing up Together

The summer of 2016, like so many summers in the U.S., has been marked by the blood of too many Black and Brown people. As Adrienne Maree Brown states, "Things are not getting worse, things are getting uncovered. We must hold each other tight and continue to pull back the veil."

In this time of intense state violence against Black bodies, our hearts are breaking, our communities are dividing and our children's lives are at stake. However, there is also incredible hope. Demonstrations, gatherings and actions for Black Lives are blossoming all over the world, calls to end policing and move towards restorative justice are stronger than ever, and more and more white people are coming into consciousness and breaking white silence to end this violence.

It is a time for us all to show up, our freedom depends on it.

In order for white people to show up, we need practices of wellness, healing and culture to ground us and support us. In July, I put out a call to white folks from a wide range of backgrounds and levels of political engagement and consciousness. I asked them to share stories and practices that support them in showing up for racial justice. In the pages that follow, you will find writing, meditation, embodied movement, prayer, reflection and other practices to help build our collective resilience.

You can also follow on Facebook and participate, at [#practiceshowingup](#). Consider sharing a practice you use in your life and work (a poem, a writing exercise, a meditation or something else) and share a story about being white. Post it to social media, using the hashtag [#practiceshowingup](#).

This practice manual, is a compilation of some of those practices shared on Facebook. Let's use it as a resource, to ground our actions, open our meetings and strengthen the resiliency of white people, so we may continue to step into our vulnerable leadership.

Please share this resource widely.

Let's practice, and show up to racial justice together.

Note on content

The essays, "Practice as Truth" and excerpts from "A Way Forward", originally appeared in *Heal Myself, Heal the World: Practices for Liberation*, an e-book I wrote in 2015.. "How White Folks can Show up for Racial Justice" was originally published in the Elephant Journal, July 17, 2016.

Love,



PRACTICE AS TRUTH

What is spiritual and wellness practice? In my practice, research and work with hundreds of change makers across the world—I have come to this definition: practice aligns you with yourself. It brings you to yourself. It brings you in communication with the truth. We spend most of our lives getting away from ourselves through overwork, overuse of drugs and alcohol and other stimulants, depressants or distractions that take us away from the mundane, the everyday pain and joy. Practice brings us instead in contact with ourselves so that we can be our best selves in the world.

Practice is repetitive; it is something that happens over and over again to change something. Practice is an action and also a process. Ng'ethe Mainia and Staci Haines in their document, [The Transformative Power of Practice](#), talk about the differences between default practices and intentional practices. They state that a default practice is a behavior; habit or a way of being that we have (perhaps) unintentionally enacted so many times it becomes a practice or a way of default being. Intentional practices are ones where people adopt ways of showing up in the world that are based in their values and ultimately transform their lives.

In yoga this is known as samskaras. Samskaras are seeds that are planted because of our karma (both inherited and created). Samskaras are ways of being that usually go unchecked through time. Yogic philosophy believes that negative samskaras can only be interrupted and healed through practice where new samskaras are planted, forming compassionate and intentional habits and behaviors.

This is also reiterated in Buddhist teachings. Thich Nhat Hanh states that the power of meditation is not for escape but to prepare the practitioner to show up more fully and present in the world. Meditation is for everyone not just for the person who meditates. Mindfulness practices are intended to change your life and if that isn't happening then the practice should be altered or a teacher should be sought out to help guide the practitioner.

Practice works because in it we come face-to-face with our own deep resistance to showing up over and over again to the inner truths that we hide. However, in order for transformation to occur, practice is essential. Mainia and Haines state, Practice offers this brutal but refreshing reality: practice only puts into practice what you practice.

Practice is hard to enact, not only initially but also through time to maintain. When we live a full and busy life, like most of us in this world, our emotional and mental capacity is hindered. What falls off first? Practices, right? Self-care. Nourishment. It has been the same for me.

I am by no means an expert on practice. Perhaps that is why I am writing this. I have struggled as you do to maintain practice, to hold steady faith in practice, to show up, and to surrender when times are hard.

What I have learned though is that practice is not for when life is good; it's for when we most doubt. When we face our darkest fears. When our entire faith is called into question. That is when practice becomes ground, air, love and inspiration, a rope to help us up from the bottom of the hole. We are always stronger than we think. Practices are necessary to sustain us so that we can show up in the world in the ways we were meant to: courageous, vulnerable and open.

The key is to approach practice with openness and dedication. Practice doesn't just happen on the mat, or when we are sitting in silence, practice happens in our everyday life. I have found Hanh's teaching especially relevant in explaining and offering up ways to practice everyday; presence is something to weave in and out of the spaces of work, family and life. The point of practice is not to replace habit with habit but to transcend behaviors and ways of being that are holding us back from being our full and authentic selves in the world.

Our practice happens in the world. It happens when life doesn't go as planned, when we suffer, when we are at our most vulnerable state. It is then that practice stabilizes our emotions and reactions so that we are riding the waves rather than being drowned by them.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

What does practice mean to you?

What do you practice in life?

What is coming up during your intentional practices?

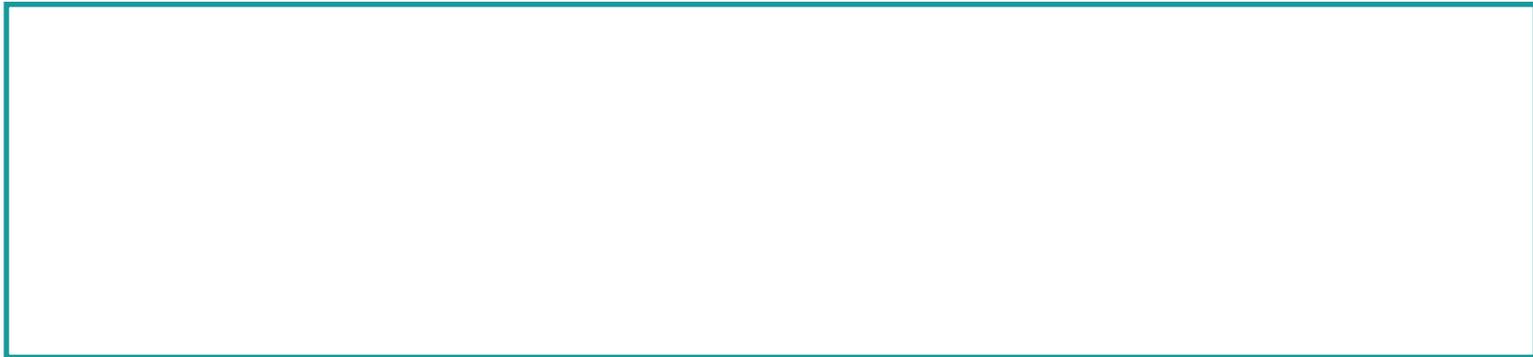
How are these practices showing up in your day-to-day life?



What are the narratives playing inside your head? Are these helpful or harmful, how so?



How will you integrate intentional practice more into your life? What is one promise you can make to yourself?



PRACTICES FROM WHITE PEOPLE SHOWING UP

Embodied Practices



Susannah Bartlow, Wisconsin

*This practice will get you out of your head and into your body in times of stress and overwhelm. [This technique](#) is passed down from, Rusia Mohiuddin and Revered angel Kyodo williams, from the *Oppression in the Soma* retreat.*

▲ [Practice Showing up for Racial Justice. Body Awareness](#)

Kate Werning, New York

Exercises to move through doubt and fear and strengthen resilience and courage.

▲ [Compassionate Care in times of injustice](#)

▲ [Shake-Up Strategies](#)

Chris Crass, Kentucky

A meditative cultural practice to connect to your ancestors.

▲ [Cultivating Courage for Black Lives Matter: a practice for white people who want to show up](#)

Teo Drake, Massachusetts

Tonglen is a fierce and tender practice that breaks the heart wide open. It intentionally melts the armor we have around our hearts. When we have a practice of nurturing heart break, it allows us to stay in the deep discomfort of the suffering we see. Science has shown that compassion practices build our natural resources to take on more. It's not about stress reduction at all, but about deepening our capacity to meet suffering with an open heart and become fully available for wise action.

▲ [Tonglen practice](#)

▲ [Brief tonglen practice revisited followed by conversation between angel Kyoto williams and Teo Drake, radical relationship/self-care](#)

▲ [Background on Tonglen practice from Joan Halifax](#)

Jardana Peacock, Kentucky

The ocean/fire meditation is a kriya, a visualization that works to open the energy of the spinal column. The spine is the foundation of the body, a column of nerves that connects your brain with the rest of your body. When we connect to the spinal column through breathing, movements and visualizations, we work towards balancing the energy of the body, mind and spirit. This meditation works to both ground you and open your heart towards greater vulnerability and presence.

▲ [Ocean/Fire meditation](#)



Will Brummett, Tennessee

In the face of increased violence, I have struggled recently around how to show up on social media. The practice I offer you is for when questions or blocks arise for you too. This is how I moved through the fear of posting to social media and how I got to the root of my block.

For me, developing and reflecting on a question I was struggling with was key towards uncovering my block.

“Why am I so hesitant to post on social media right now?” I then meditated on it for seven minutes and free-wrote for about ten minutes. It was raw and not pretty, but it forced me to come to terms with why I was struggling. The ugly truth is my privilege and fear have allowed me countless times to create Facebook statuses more than I ever created action in these times when I am called to do more. I offer the below reflection for any fellow white people who may be feeling the same and to challenge us to move from collective conversation on Facebook to actual collective liberation efforts.

White Status Symbol: My Inadequate, Repeated Response to Tragedy by Will Brummett

What should be the status I post?

Why is that almost always my first question

As part of this accepted, social ritual to reconcile others' demise

Without having to revolutionize my own lifestyle

My silence pleads the 5th

Unwilling to speak about my crime of continued inaction

Unable to claim anything else.

I've never known a status to save a soul

Or a conversation thread to weave people together

the words I post simply distract from the background behind it;

A landscape of whiteness

That keeps you scrolling down

But never standing up.

This is for white 'allies' like me

Who shift from disbelief to shame

From shame to guilt

From guilt to anger

From anger to analyzing

From analyzing to attributing the problem to

people and systems who we clarify 'are not like us.'

They are just our blood family.

But when you live comfortably in the towers of white supremacy

It does not matter if you did not intend to build it

It matters that you've stayed.

Do not only post statuses that free us from guilt

Post bail for those who sat in a street instead of their office chair

Do not simply like articles that you will never fully read

Instead, read the eyes of the community around you

See if there is something you can learn from them.

Do not share this post because it is easy

share your heart, your anger, your courage, your repentance

because it is hard.

And then listen.

Because words we post are not the true statuses of our lives

The lives we live show the real status of our collective humanity.

'Like it' or not.

Kate Cavanagh, New York

Yesterday I paused and asked myself, "Why do Black Lives Matter to me?" Immediately a lived experience that I only shared with a few close friends came to my mind so I wrote a poem about it to share publicly here with family and friends. White people can you do the same and post? This is one of my practices to process and heal. What are yours? Our collective healing and love, breaking the silence will change us and change this cycle of violence. Join me.

Why Black Lives Matter to Me by Kate Cavanagh

Walking down the street

Outside of the elementary school

I worked at

A scene I see all too often

Living in a neighborhood

That is Latino, Middle Eastern and Asian

White NYPD officer pushing a Latino boy

He was no more than 13 years old

I freeze

I walk closer

I work up my courage

The officer sees me watching.

"What do you want?" he barks at me.

"Hi officer, I work at the school right here.

Is there anything I can do?"

I use my best, friendly white lady voice.

"Do you know his name?" he glares

"No, but I am sure I have seen him before." I smile.

"You don't know him. Keep walking." his hatred is palpable.

"I think I will stand right here until he is free to go. Is he free to go?" I ask innocently.

"What the fuck is wrong with you?" he spits.

"Excuse me?" I stutter.

"You heard me... keep walking." He motions with his head.

"I'm a teacher here and I just want to make sure all of our students are safe. Is he in some kind of trouble?"

The officer yells, "GET THE FUCK OUT OF HERE! I WILL ARREST YOU RIGHT NOW. DO YOU WANT TO GET ARRESTED?"

GET THE FUCK OUT OF HERE!"

I breathe deep and ground.

I don't move.

He grabs the child by the shoulder and brings him across the street

Into moving traffic.

"DON'T FUCKING FOLLOW ME I WILL FUCKING ARREST YOU. I WILL ARREST YOU RIGHT NOW. KEEP FUCKING WALKING. THAT'S RIGHT.

KEEP FUCKING WALKING."

He puts his hand on his holster touching his gun making sure that I can see it.

I think about my child (because then it was only one).

I actually had time to think.

I actually got to choose.

My skin color afforded me that.

(continued on next page)

Kate Cavanagh, New York *(continued)*

*The young boy says, "It's OK Miss..."
Except it's not ok... what is happening is not ok
I am alone I think... no one is here to video tape...
I don't have a badge number I think....
I can't call 911 on a cop I panic....
I don't want to get shot today....
I don't want to get beat down to the ground today.
Headlines flash through my head.
Would they lie about me saying I assaulted the officer or something?
Would my family believe the lies?
My family loves police officers.
My family trusts police officers
My family might believe this cop over me
Because he has taken an oath to "serve and protect"
My family might just believe the police officer
Because I should have "minded my own business"
And kept silent like a good white person should.
My white silence is violence.
I cried. I don't know what happened to that boy.
I walked away.
I don't know what happened to that boy.
My white mind says, "Oh nothing... the cop let him go of course after roughing him up a little."
I don't know that.
That's actually not how it always goes.
I get off with a warning, a threat because I am white.
He might be dead.
He might have been beaten.
He might have been detained.
He might have been fined.
I am alive.
I got to walk away.
I think that's actually fucked up
Because my partner
My partner's family
My friends
My coworkers
My neighbors
Who are black and brown
Don't get to walk away
And I've seen it first hand
It's not a few bad apples
It is the whole damn system.
It is the whole damn system.
That is why Black Live Matter to me.*

Harley Meyer, Vermont

Below is a draft of a writing workshop specifically for white people to practice breaking silence around racism, process white supremacy and police brutality against Black people emotionally/poetically in a contained space, and make creative commitments to Black Lives Matter. With love and thanks to Favor Ellis and Beth Pecoraro.

Consider making the workshop available for a suggested donation of anywhere \$2-\$10 to be donated to Black Lives Matter.

Part 1:

- 1) Create the space that you feel will be most supportive for the workshop and participants. This could mean calling in sacred space, creating an altar, or simply lighting a candle. Describe the goal and intention of the workshop. All feelings are welcome, all levels of embodiment/disembodiment welcome.
- 2) Brief grounding exercise:
 - a. Invite everyone to plant their feet and/or feel their sit bones/another body part rooted into the earth through gravity. Imagine vibrant red roots reaching down from your body into the earth. Imagine the roots hugging you into the earth, reassuring, safe, and nurturing.
- 3) Free write (7 min)
- 4) Write a list of 5 things that brought you here today, and then write one clear intention for our time together.
- 5) When Alton Sterling was killed, I felt... (12 min)
- 6) When Philando Castile was killed, I felt... (12 min)
- 7) When Black lives are harmed or destroyed, I feel... (12 min)
- 8) Take a breath. Please notice a place in your body that is feeling a lot of intensity right now (you can put a hand on it, breath into it, or visualize it from a distance). Write what that place would like to say right now. Consider it may have a voice different than your own. (7 min)
- 9) Paint a mural of your grief, sadness and numbness. Tell me everything about it as you paint it, including where you are painting it. (7 min)
- 10) Tell me everything you know about anger.
- 11) Write a letter to Shame and Silence. This may be the first time you are speaking directly to them. Remind them when you first met. What would you like to say to them?

Take a quick break. Invite the group to breathe, reconnect with their big red roots, and do a quick body scan (upclose scan or far-away imaginary scan).

Part 2:

Resource Mapping

- 12) Make a list of your deep, true, human gifts and talents.
- 13) Make a list of the resources and communities you are connected to.
- 14) Pass around a list of things white people can do to support Black Lives Matter* (there are several good ones out there – check out SURJ for resources). Pick three that sing to you, challenge you, grab your eye or your heart.
- 15) Draw some connections, literally, with circles and lines on the paper. How can you connect what you already have with these action steps?
- 16) If you're comfortable, find a partner and share your lists. Make sure to discuss at least one connection that you feel is hot, exciting, scary, or seemingly impossible.

Part 3:

Closing

- 17) Write a love letter to yourself. Check in with the intention you set at the beginning, and let your love letter lean into it. (7 min)
- 18) Write one new intention for when you put down your pen and walk out of this room.
- 19) Breathe together, thank everyone for being here.
- 20) Provide information about next steps, invite folks to stay and talk in detail about their resource map, include upcoming events/actions in your area, and connect them to local Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) chapters and other organizations working to support Black Lives Matter.*

*Resources

- ▲ [How Writers Can Join the Fight Against Police Violence](#)
- ▲ [26 Ways to be in Struggle Beyond the Streets](#)
- ▲ [In Memoriam of Philando Castile](#)

Prayer Practices



Meredith Martin-Moats, Arkansas

How do I let myself be vulnerable to break white silence around racism?

I am not sure I have the best words for this, but I will try.

A lot of how I break silence begins in silence. I am a regular attender to my local Quaker meeting and my spiritual practice means that I spend time in silent prayer and meditation. To a large degree this kind of seeking is about sitting with the questions more so than rushing to find the answers. Of course I listen, and I read, and I ask, and I research, and I watch and I learn. But at some point I have to take all that in and actually DO something with it. And that doing actually starts in not doing.

It's hard to sometimes be silent and just be present in the messy swirl of our hurried brains. When I sit in that silence there is a deep tension, a neverending wrestling wherein I try to make sense of injustice; I try to understand why folks choose fear and hate. I wrestle with large order concepts like democracy and economy and who writes history. The silence is a place where I try to figure out how to take action in a way that is effective. I contemplate how a busy mom like myself can balance out making sense of a whole wide world of pain with my tiny, tiny place in it.

It's a place I work through my own fears and worries, some valid, others not so much.

In other words, silence is seldom fully serene or filled with peace---at least not at the onset. It is a place of tension and struggle. The peace sometimes comes. But it takes a while to get there.

Sometimes I come out of the silence with a realization, a plan to move forward, a kind of clarity I didn't have before. Those moments are clear, like a bell. Sometimes I come out of the silence much like I entered in: Confused, scared, angry, a general sense of agitation. Sometimes my bones hurt.

I guess I still sometimes think I'll find an answer in those moments. And sometimes I do! But sometimes there just isn't one. At least not at that moment. Sometimes the answer is just sitting in that tension, knowing that we still have to get up and start building better world for our kids within the confusion. Knowing how much is at stake. Knowing there are so many people who can not turn away.

There will never be a time when everything will make sense. There will never be a strategy written that will tie all the yarns together. When I learn to sit in the tension, I learn to not give up. I learn to accept my own messiness. I learn to get over myself and do real work. So, I guess my point here is that silence reminds me to not be silent. It reminds me to keep building, even as I stumble a billion times. It reminds me that the tension I feel within myself is not to be feared, but rather to be cultivated.

Allyn Steele, Tennessee

A practice that I use to show up for racial justice shows up in how I prepare for sermons on Sunday and in my ministry.

I drive a lot these days, back and forth between Nashville and the small church where I am humbled to serve as pastor, so I spend a lot of time singing the hymns I learned as a child. Or I sing songs that my partner and I make up and sing to each other. Or I'll call my people--my dear friends/family who need me or whom I need--or my parents--or others.

But mostly I just sit in silence and think about the sermon I'm asked to give on a weekly basis. I listen for where my body/mind/soul is at while driving past Confederate flags, past a landscape drenched in what is often the invisible blood and memories of people whom my ancestors have attempted to annihilate. And so my ministry, if I'm allowed to have it, is an effort to redeem my ancestors, my people; and my vulnerability in this season of history is the great gift I receive from those who are willing to acknowledge that the redemption of my people is possible.

To that end, the sermon I gave recently was on Luke 10:25-37, where Jesus talks about how the Samaritan saved the man whose ass was whooped by a bunch of thieves. I included an anecdote I heard over the weekend from Anthony Smith, whose powerful ministry in the county seat of my home county, Rowan County, is breaking open the possibility of redemption in ways I'd never experienced there before. Below is a selection from the sermon and my attempt at how to show up as a white person of faith.

"The black pastor looked at the six white men, and then looked at their guns ... and then he invited each of them to join their bible study ... He asked each man to join a different group, and so each of them joined a different circle of church members, and then together, they read stories about the nonviolence of Jesus.

The bible study lasted for a couple of hours, and each of the six men stayed until the end of the evening. As they came back together to walk out the door, the pastor approached them with a word of peace. And the six men thanked him, told him how much they were grateful for the church's hospitality, and apologized for their original goal, which was to intimidate the pastor with guns on their hips, to provoke him into fear and violence. They shook hands and left, and have never returned.

What we might take from the story of the black pastor and the six white men with guns is a spin on the story of the Good Samaritan. You see, I think the Good Samaritan is the pastor whom the six men have marginalized; and I think the six white men are lying in a ditch, robbed of their own human dignity and losing their bodies and memories and souls to the poisoned wells of white supremacy.. And if the Good Samaritan is the surprising example of the way that a compassionate God can move through those whom we have chosen to marginalize from our community, then the six men are among the consequences of white people's willingness to let that sin continue.

And in the midst of this last week's awful violence, the Samaritan is the 21st century black freedom struggle, which has once again invited people to proclaim that black people are human beings, that black people are children of God. And the man in the ditch is the white society in which most of us grew up, regardless of our generation, a society that taught us to feel disgust at the black person, a society that taught us to mock black culture and render black children unworthy of God's love. This is the society that has reduced the humanity of some, and therefore threatens the humanity of us all.

Yes, if we are concerned about the state of the world and the communities in which black people are dying at alarming rates at the hands of police officers; if we fear a world in which police officers are shot at the hands of an angry veteran; if we live in fear of the violence that this world is bringing down upon us ... the answer is not to turn our fear into a line in the sand and say "do not cross." The answer is to look up from the ditch at the Samaritan savior who crosses our path and say, "I will let you heal me."

Margaret Anne Ernst, Tennessee

This prayer practice is an adaptation of Ignatius of Loyola's Examen, a discipline of prayerful reflection on one's day.

Here are the questions I've been challenging myself to pray and reflect on before I go to bed in the last couple weeks. They are intended to help calibrate my emotions as I overlook the day especially so as to work against white fragility (which for me crops up particularly in the midnight hour):

**When did I make a conscious decision today to stand up against racism and for collective liberation?*

**Where was there grief or confusion in my heart today?*

**Where was there joy in my heart today?*

**How could I have been a better accomplice for people in situations of oppression different from my own today?*

**When did someone extend compassion and forgiveness to me today?*

**Where do I need to show compassion and forgiveness for others and for myself going forward into tomorrow?*

I explain more in the video about how this practice brings me balance and focus so I can bring my best, growing and learning self to the struggle instead of getting stuck in the "paralysis of (self-)analysis."

▲ [Reflective Prayer Practice](#)

Reflective Practices



Maria Borgoff, North Carolina

Sometimes, when we think we've figured it all out - that is precisely the moment to change our minds. In this video and blog, Maria explores how to keep our minds flexible and our hearts open.

▲ [Changing my Mind about Race](#)

Beth Howard, Kentucky

A practice that helps me show up when working to create a greater degree of justice in the world comes from my work in recovery.

A slogan in twelve step recovery programs is “Do the next right thing.” I’ve found myself using this as a guiding statement in my life over the past few years. The word “do” is a push to take action. When I’m dealing with fear, especially fear that surfaces around speaking out about injustice, I often spend most of my time thinking and planning, but don’t actually do anything. This statement takes the thinking out of the equation and instead pushes me to do something – to put one foot in front of the other, to say something, to show up, to write in solidarity – to do something.

The word “next” helps me remember that I just need to do the next thing, one step at a time. It’s a reminder that I do not have to have all the answers or the perfect answer. My action is not going to solve all of the injustices in the world and it doesn’t have to. It’s just one action I can take right now in the direction of justice.

Another element of this statement that works for me is not just doing any action, but doing what is right. It is my experience that I know what is right in my gut, but I often don’t act on it immediately and instead let fear and other negative voices dampen my intuition. Or, I take another action that is less impactful or safer instead of stepping into my vulnerability and doing what I should as a white, anti-racist organizer. This guiding statement reminds me to take right action – that action that my higher self tells me is important and right even if it’s scary and I’m unsure.

Perhaps a simple practice like this guiding statement can help us practice showing up. I’m going to try it. I hope you join me.

Melanie St. Ours, D.C.

To bring this idea of radical responsibility into embodied practice, try the following:

When reading an article or comment online that challenges us on our white privilege, pause before reacting? In that pause, connect to three things: the breath, the soles of our feet, and the heart.

Feel your breath and let it bring you calmness and nourishment.

Feel the soles of your feet connecting to the Earth.

Feel your heart, in all its pain, love, and tenderness.

Once your body has calmed down from the initial state of reaction, read the comment again. See if you can start to let it in. Allow yourself to become humble, vulnerable, and willing to learn and change.

After practicing this with online comments and articles, access this same technique of internal de-escalation whenever you find yourself in a conversation where you’re being called out (or in.)

▲ [*White “Healers” and Racism*](#)

HOW WHITE FOLKS CAN SHOW UP FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

I remember the first day of my Civil Rights class at Northern Kentucky University.

An older white woman with a white bob cut, large owl glasses and a soft presence greeted us. Her name was Anne Braden. I was prepared to crack open my book and start digging into the archives of history.

Anne asked us to push our books aside and take out a piece of paper instead. "Write down the first time you realized there is racism". I sat with my pen perched in pause. I kept trying to dig deeper and deeper into my life. There had to be an earlier time when I became aware of racism. However, there wasn't. I hadn't fully understood that racism existed until the age of seventeen. The realization shocked me.

Anne never did ask us to open that book. A long-time journalist and Southern organizer, Anne taught us that history is always happening and that we must choose which side of it to step into. Anne told stories about racial justice organizing in Louisville, Kentucky and all across the south. She shared personal stories about Martin Luther King, Jr. and people I'd never heard of, like Fannie Lou Hamer and Ella Baker. She lifted up student activism on campus and always made room to discuss current events and campus activism.

I soon joined the campus activist group, Students Together Against Racism (STAR). There I learned how to listen to people of color, the importance of building relationships with other white folks in order to hold each other accountable in our privilege, and how important it is for white folks to study and learn the real history of the United States, told by those most affected. Anne gave me a language for understanding what I could be: an antiracist white person.

One day, I shared with Anne that I planned to study sociology and focus on criminology in graduate school. She cocked her head and raised her eyebrows, and then she asked, "Why?" I talked with her about a youth center I had worked at and how the kids there were being criminalized because of their race.

"What are you going to do with a degree like that, though? What are you going to do?"

I paused and thought about it, and then I got it. She was asking me how I was planning to use my white body to interrupt racism. Anne advocated for students to embody justice and constantly question our motives. Were they based in dismantling white supremacy or upholding our own privileges?

I altered my path and moved to Louisville, Kentucky, where I joined a powerful community of white, black and Latino/a people, many of whom, like me, were Anne's mentees.

That was over a decade ago, yet the racism and state violence against black and brown bodies continues. Since the death of Trayvon Martin, I have seen an awakening occur for many white people, especially young folks and people of faith.

Lately, I've been reflecting on my journey as a white antiracist in an effort to understand how to better show up for racial justice and bring others along for the journey. Here are a few of the key cornerstones I've identified.

1. Mentorship.

Mentorship is a mirror that reflects back to us our divinity. So many young activists I've talked with and coached struggle with finding a mentor. Let's expand our definitions of mentorship. Mentorship can look like calling on our ancestors or heroines to guide us. Mentorship may be the connection we feel in the natural world, it can come from a peer or even a child. Our yoga, meditation and prayer practices can act as a mentor for us, mirroring back to us where we struggle, where we can go deeper and how vital we are to this world. We need this mirror to ground us and support us to show up, especially when it's hard. As white folks, as younger and older change-makers, we will make mistakes. Our mentors hold us and love us exactly as we are, helping us to show up to our imperfections with courage.

2. Be emotional.

In the Western world there is an often unspoken belief that to be emotional is to be weak. However, injustice is an affront to our hearts and our spirits, which desire and need connection. When we feel the pain and trauma of the world, we connect to the humanity of others. To feel allows us to go deeper than the intellectual exercise of browsing a Facebook post or skimming a news story. When we feel the weight of the loss of black and brown lives in the world, we interrupt racism's intention to divide and separate us from each other. When we feel, we move beyond the intellectual and into the body. Present in our body, we then can begin to integrate, heal and embody our values in the world.

3. Show up.

We don't have to yell into a megaphone, attend protests or even get arrested to be an activist. Showing up looks like people across race linking arms on the picket line, but it also looks like hard conversations with friends and family. Showing up looks like joining a [Showing up for Racial Justice](#)(SURJ) chapter meeting even when we don't know anyone in the group. Showing up looks like writing a post on Facebook, sharing a blog post and placing our bodies in public for racial justice. Showing up helps us determine how we can embody our values in the world. We create change when we show up.

When we show up in our fully broken states, then we heal, then we build, then we deepen our capacity to love each other and ourselves.

I know it's uncomfortable, my people, but this is our history. What will our legacy be? Will it be one of white silence, or imperfect but embodied action toward racial justice?

I have been working with other white folks to create practices to help us to step into our more courageous leadership.

We can do this.

A WAY FORWARD

We have a unique opportunity in this moment in time to alter the course of history. Our increased understanding of neuroscience and the mind and body connection, can inform how we move forward, if we tap into those lessons. Gloria E. Anzaldúa, a feminist writer and scholar wrote, "I change myself, I change the world." As we better integrate the connections between the mind and the body, it's evident that we must explore our own pain in the processes of working to change the pain of the world, in fact that is part of changing injustice.

The violence of injustice is painful and we must also find ways to take action to change that violence, whether that is through writing, participating in demonstrations, creating art for social change, education, organizing or healing—so many actions are needed to eradicate these injustices. Social change happens inside and outside and wellness and spirituality are both vital to ground and inform that internal and external process.

These days, I am overcome with love. Love for my people taking to the streets and saying loud with their voices and bodies that Black Lives Matter. And although I have not physically been in the crowds in St. Louis, New York and Baltimore, I have been supporting many of those activists leading that organizing work. I honor and stand in solidarity with this pulsing movement outside on the streets and inside our hearts. We can change the world together.

In the protests and organizing work of Black Lives Matter, healers have been front and center. The language and conversation has been focused around generational trauma from white supremacy, racism and oppression and the need to heal from it. Although activists are still burning out and becoming overwhelmed-- this is a start towards bringing the conversation more central in our movements and organizing work. Wellness and spirituality can no longer be at the margins.

People of Color and Indigenous leaders have long held the importance of healing, love and spirituality as foundational for movements of social change. There is a long tradition at the Allied Media Conference of healing justice practitioners offering holistic healing services and analysis to that conference and in their communities at home. There is much to learn from groups and organizations such as [*Betty's Daughter Arts Collaborative*](#), [*Black Lives Matter*](#), [*Sage Community Health Collective*](#), [*Harriet's Apothecary*](#), [*Octavia's Brood*](#), [*Soul Force*](#), [*Southerners on New Ground \(SONG\)*](#), [*Third Root Community Health Center*](#), [*Spirit House*](#), [*Movement Generation*](#), [*Movement Strategy Center*](#), [*Rockwood Leadership Institute*](#) and the best practices of organizations that are no longer operating such as [*Stone Circles at the Stone House*](#) and [*Kindred Southern Healing Justice Collective*](#).

Social movements are vital for us to create the larger systemic changes we need so that we can have healthy communities; institutions, families, and lives based in liberation, feminist, and anti-racist values. That's why it's so important that change makers are engaged in a journey of healing, so that we can both be present in our lives and also more effective in bringing about visionary change. In order for our social justice movements to be well; activists, organizers, educators, artists and leaders must also be well. This is a different kind of leadership.

Showing up to practice on an almost daily basis takes effort and dedication that is only possible with trial and failure, with fear and light and with isolation and support. When we go into the pain we find the most brilliant light. This is the power of practice.

Below I provide seven offerings for bringing practice into your work, communities and organizations. I created this document for a workshop I created with Ebony Noelle Golden of Betty's Daughter Arts Collaborative for the Highlander Research and Education Center's Zilphia Horton Cultural Organizing Institute directed by Tufara Waller Muhammad.

7 Offerings for Creating Wellness and Spiritual Space*

Create ritual every day. Open with a symbolic gesture. Light a candle, ring a bell, share a poem—mark a space sacred. This calls people into shared space together, it is sacred space, space we cherish and cherish those that help create it.

Gratitude circle. At the end of the day come into a circle, one person begins and turns to their right or left and gives gratitude for something the person next to them did that day. It can be something the person shared, a way that they reached out to another person in kindness, and a way they contributed to the space. It should be specific. This is about deep listening and witnessing; a way to see each other.

Give appreciation. At the beginning of your time together everyone picks a name of someone else in the group. Everyone holds this person in their hearts and sends good and encouraging energy to this person. At the end of a specific time period, each person writes a letter (creates something) of gratitude and hope for the person and their journey ahead and shares it with them.

Create an optional space for meditation and yoga in the morning/night. This can be seated or walking meditation. Walking meditation is about being intentional of every step you take. Focusing on one-pointedness, one step after another. Breathe and let the mind relax. When we quiet the chatter inside we gain space to think with more clarity. Meditative practices are great anytime but are also restorative ways to open or close a day or a space. Yoga Nidra is a deep relaxation practice that doesn't require much movement at all and is restorative and healing. Yoga Nidra and other meditative practices help with sleep. Yoga and meditation is about release and breath so that more space can be created internally.

Land is spiritual. Each season, breeze, landscape is an invitation to appreciate the natural world around you. Creating art through an interaction with the land is a meditative practice. Find objects on land, what are the ways they inspire you? Listen to the sounds of the natural world and create a dance, a monologue of the voices of people who have helped create the space you occupy, or create a visual compilation of found objects.

Create meditative space where you are; identify touchstones that can remind you of meditative practice and breath. There is a beautiful book by Thich Nhat Hanh called *Creating Space, Creating a Home Meditation Practice*. This is a small but powerful book that can guide you.

Build space together. Art making and organizing encourage us to create space together. How can we also integrate wellness, spiritual practice and transformation into these spaces? What are symbolic representations of the spaces we want to create where wellness and transformation is possible; integrate these into the space. Create a labyrinth, paint a canvas together, or build something beautiful.

*Compiled from the principles and practices of the Kentucky Remembers! Youth Human Rights Project, Yoga, Rockwood Leadership Institute, Women Building Power in Kentucky, Stone Circles at the Stone House, The Highlander Center, The Kentucky Foundation for Women's Special Project, Friends, Family and Community.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jardana Peacock is a leadership consultant, author and trainer working at the intersection of healing, leadership and social justice. Her research has uncovered that when we center wellness as foundational for how we live and work, change work becomes more effective and sustainable.

She is based in the Southeast and has been featured in the Huffington Post, Feminist Wire and other online publications. She helped found SURJ (Showing up for Racial Justice) and served on the founding leadership team. She has studied traditional yoga and holistic healing for over fifteen years and worked with hundreds of change makers and organizations around the world. Stay connected to receive more resources like this one, at <http://www.jardanapeacock.com>

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Maria Borgoff is a coach, teacher, and artist. She helps people enhance their relationships and experience more joy on a daily basis. By using ancient and modern technologies that teach us how to love, her methods integrate empathy exercises, Buddhism and Tantra Yoga philosophy, modern neuroscience, positive psychology, meditation and somatic expression. She can be reached at: <http://www.mariaborghoff.com>

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Chris Crass is the author of the new book *Towards the "Other America": Anti-Racist Resources for White People Taking Action for Black Lives Matter*. He was a founder of the anti-racist movement building center, the Catalyst Project, and helped launch the national white anti-racist network, SURJ (Showing Up For Racial Justice). Rooted in his Unitarian Universalist faith he works with congregations, seminaries, and religious and spiritual leaders to build up the Spiritual Left. He is also the author of *Towards Collective Liberation: anti-racist organizing, feminist praxis, and movement building strategy*. He lives in Louisville, KY with his partner and their two sons. You can learn more about his work at www.chriscrass.org.

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Allyn Maxfield-Steele was raised in Texas, Germany and North Carolina, and credits the radical educator-organizers and movement communities of Northeast Thailand for setting him on a path he has followed since 2002. Before understanding his vocation as Christian ministry, Allyn served as an educator in Upstate South Carolina, where his pedagogy focused on connecting students and community members to movements in the South/Appalachia and the Global South. Allyn is a pastor in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) tradition. He also serves as an educator with the Scarritt Bennett Center in Nashville, TN, and currently serves the Highlander Research & Education Center as the chair of its Board of Directors.

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