



# Moving Forward: Connecting to What I Love

Note: [Click here to submit your work anonymously](#) for your mentors to read. This will help us improve our program for future students and track your volunteer hours, which will be added to your certificate at the end of the program.

## Purpose:

Consciously connect with all that you love about the world, as you find clarity around what makes taking action for change worth it to you. Explore the ways in which you will act from a place of love, rather than react from a place of fear.

*“There is no greater illusion than fear, no greater wrong than preparing to defend yourself, no greater misfortune than having an enemy. Whoever can see through all fear will always be safe.” -loc 710 (Lao Tzu)*

*“Compassion refers to the arising in the heart of the desire to relieve the suffering of all beings.” -Ram Dass (2011)*

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# 1. Introduction

As important as it is to consistently allow ourselves to process our negative emotions, it is equally important to empower ourselves to feel and lead our lives from positive emotions. In this exercise you will explore all that you love about the world, to find clarity around what taking action to transform yourself and the world actually means to you.

Often our actions in the world come from a place of reacting in the face of fear -- fear of the uncertain future, fear of violence, fear of environmental destruction and so on. This reaction, in our psychological workings, either expresses as fight, flight or freeze. When we freeze, we [disassociate](#) (Psych424, 2017) from the problem, ignore it or remain apathetic. When we are in flight, we run away, hide our feelings, or try to escape in some way, sometimes even through self-destructive habits. When we fight, we may either act productively or respond through aggression. All of these are meant to keep us feeling safe. In all reactions, we are experiencing stress in our bodies that helps us act to become safe again. While this is natural and healthy in the short-term, if we experience this stress as an ongoing reaction, our bodies can stay in this unregulated state, creating states of long-term stress we may feel as things like anxiety, anger or depression. We may also develop habits that do not serve us, to cope with this stress. Instead, we must learn how to process the emotions triggering our bodies to get our body back to a relaxed, unstressed state where we access greater creativity and can act from love, not fear. When we do this work, we become a beacon of light for others around us who may experience dis-ease too. Learning to overcome our stress and fear and rooting our actions in love-for, rather than in fear-of, will help others do the same as you show them it's possible for them to have that experience too.

One way we can build resilience in the area of our stressful experiences with regard to the crises of our planet, is to consistently connect to the things we love as our "why." This work is about explicitly naming those things you care deeply about, what you feel is worth fighting for, and stepping up to protect those things from a place of love and loving intention. This is how we act most powerfully, feel most fulfilled in life, feel our best and make the most profound changes in our lives.

Given our emotions are essentially a cascade of neurochemicals being released in our bodies, you can see how the long term release of stress related neurochemicals

resulting from negative feelings like fear, anger or despair would cause damage, as they put stress on our organs, veins, heart, and nervous system. This is the case because the body is trying to activate and feed energy to our survival centres, to make sure we can get to “safety.” Even if you are not in imminent physical danger, the body does not know the difference. For example, when talking about the climate crisis, you might feel anxious or angry, like you want to change the subject. This is because our survival response is triggered, and the mind expects “danger.” If we think about these things often with the same emotional reactions, as many of us changemakers do, our bodies will experience that stress response often. On the other hand, long-term release of neurochemicals related to positive emotions like love, gratitude, joy and happiness actually stimulate growth, repair and good health in our bodies, even at a genetic level (check out epigenetics in Deep Dive). Changemaking can heal us at the same time as the world! The more we can do to empower those positive feelings, the healthier our mind, body, and spirit become. The bonus is we have a good time doing the work we want to do in the world and find better overall happiness.

## 1.1 Activity Preparation

As you enter this activity, give yourself permission to listen to your heart and feel the deepest love you can for things you love about the world. Sometimes even as we begin to feel a strong sense of love, we may get in our own way of fully feeling it for one reason or another. Know that you deserve to feel amazing things. In this exercise, we want you to tap into your most loving self and step into your most loving, passionate and courageous warrior.

## 2. Practice

Take your time reflecting on the questions below. Feel free to make a list, draw pictures, paint, create music, whatever helps you connect most to the things you love in the world. If you choose a non-written medium be sure to write some answers down as you go, as you will be revisiting these later. Set aside at least 20 minutes so you can fully connect and complete the series of questions. You may choose to reflect longer though, and that is encouraged! Consider creating a peaceful space you can reflect in, surround yourself with plants, things that make you happy or enter a natural space you have access to such as a park, a garden, or go for a hike! As you consider the following questions, you might also try closing your eyes, breathing deeply and allowing the answers to come to you and the

feelings that come with them to emerge.

- **What do I love about the world?** This can be anything you want.
- **What do I love to experience in my life?** Consider experiences (instead of material items, or things) such as singing, eating with family, spending time with a loved one, anything you like to experience!
- **What experiences do I want to protect for others?** Other people enjoy their experiences too. What experiences do you want to protect for them?
- **What do I love most about the natural world?**
- **What would it mean to me to protect these things I love? How would it feel to know I am actively protecting those things?** Just as the sun is an energy that brings life on this planet, consider that your energy can bring life to change and be a healing and protective energy radiating in the world for all things.
- **What do I want to protect?** Consider the things you love about the world and experiences you love for yourself and others.
- **How do I want to feel, when I am doing work to protect these things?** What positive feelings do you want to feel most often, as you do the work of changemaking to protect the things you love?

## 2.1 Post-Activity Reflection

In looking at your responses, consider what it means that your consciousness, your mind, your emotions, are able to communicate to you what feels good, true, and important. This communication happens from an intelligence that seeks love, harmony and an energy of protecting what makes our lives, the lives of others and the natural world flourish. We have an innate sense for this, and that is important. This is the language of our being telling us what is good and the source of that language is our innate desire as life to continue and flourish. As changemakers, we must tap into this internal wisdom and to remind others they have it too.

**Meditation:** *Connect to what you love, cultivate gratitude and practice becoming loving emotion.*

Now that you have completed your reflection, take 5-10 minutes (or more!) to

meditate on your work. The purpose of this meditation is to disconnect from all other thoughts and feelings and focus only on the things you love, while allowing yourself to feel growing gratitude and positive emotion arising from within you. Even if you don't "feel it" initially, or it feels silly to "try and feel it," keep trying to generate that feeling in yourself. Eventually you will be able to generate it on command. With practice over time, you will help train your body and mind to produce those emotions as your natural default when thinking about change or doing the work, and replace negative emotions like fear, anxiety and grief that hold us back and are not sustainable long-term for our body or mind. Meditation is highly effective as [calming the nervous system](#) (Rutledge, 2019) when we feel stress and associated emotions like fear and anger. With practice we can train and retrain the neural pathways in our brains that are activated when we think and feel. This happens through [neuroplasticity](#) (Davis, 2019), and [practicing positivity will train our brains to think and feel more positive](#) (ERNearme, 2020), more often and with less effort.

Quickly glance over your answers to the questions above to keep them in your mind as you begin the meditation. Read the instructions first and begin when you are ready.

### **Meditation Instructions:**

*Close your eyes and take six slow, deep breaths.*

*Next, as you continue to breathe in, imagine those things, experiences, people and parts of the natural world you love and most wish to protect. In your mind, see all the ways in which you love those things, how special they are to you, how grateful you are they are part of life and your experience. Feel your heart open up to them, and feel as much love and gratitude for those things as you can. The key is to take your time here, and if you find yourself getting distracted, come back to a deep breath and focus on something you love again.*

*Lastly, when your heart feels most open, visualize yourself acting to protect them with your love as the main energy source. Visualize your inner courage, passion and gratitude grow in intensity from your chest, throughout every cell in your body, emanating in all directions around you.*

*You may stay in this meditation as long as you like and if you practice this meditation*

*even for a few minutes a day, while you walk, while you shower, while you eat, even with your eyes open you will be able to access more and more positive energy and emotion to fuel your work in the the world in a sustainable way.*

**Affirmation:**

*I contribute most to the world when I act from love.*

**Intention:**

*I will notice when I am acting from a place of fear and choose to act from love instead.*

### 3. Dive Deeper

The links below are complementary resources for you to explore topics of interest in greater depth.

Explore Epigenetics:

- [What is Epigenetics](#) (web)
- [Dawson Church talks about two studies](#) where participants were able to change between 500 and 1500 genes in their DNA through meditation, sensible diet and some physical activity, including those associated with prostate cancer.
- [Emotions and Epigenetics with Lori Earley](#) - Botanical Biohacking: Talks about the survival and rest states of our nervous system, their connection to healing in our body and the way modern society often keeps us in a survival oriented state, which negatively impacts our ability to heal. Talks about creating genetic changes in our bodies, just through changing our perspective.
- [Epigenetics Ted Talk](#) - Courtney Griffins
- [The Effects of Stress and Meditation on the Immune System, Human Microbiota, and Epigenetics](#)
- [In pursuit of resilience: stress, epigenetics, and brain plasticity](#)
- Study: [Epigenetic Genes and Emotional Reactivity to Daily Life Events: A Multi-Step Gene-Environment Interaction Study](#)

Meditation:

- Study on Meditation: [Biological mechanism study of meditation and its application in mental disorders](#)
- [How Meditation Improves Emotional and Physical Health](#): Looks at meditation and how it works with our nervous system to calm our fight/flight stress response.
- [Meditation for a More Positive Mind and Life](#): A look at mindfulness, meditation and harnessing neuroplasticity for a positive mind.
- [Mental Health and Our Changing Climate](#): Impacts, Implications and Guidance (2017): The ability to process information and make decisions without being disabled by extreme emotional responses is threatened by climate change. (p. 14)

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