



DEB  PALMER GEORGE

WHOLE LIFE THRIVING

YOUR THRIVING NATURE

CONNECTION

BONUS MATERIAL • PRACTICES & TOOLS

Connection is experiencing the life-force within us and around us. Connection means we acknowledge what arises within us as the very experience of our life itself. Through connection, as we receive sensory input from the world around us we can process it consciously allowing us to navigate the external environment healthfully.

- from *Your Thriving Nature, Connect with Your Innate Wisdom and Wholeness*

Overview

The mind-body-spirit connection is a staple in modern day wellness practices however this tenet has been recognized, explored, and taught for millennia in the traditional medicine systems of Indigenous Peoples from all continents. Attention to these elements is the source of appreciative connection within which guides the ability to connect with the world around:

We have a physical dimension of miraculously integrated systems that is comprised of and nourished by elements drawn from the external environment. Connection with the physical body—its systems, sensations, and needs—allows us to notice our experience in the moment and determine how to safely, healthfully, responsibly, and joyfully interact with our world.

We have a mind dimension with innate knowledge, capacities, and networks, with the ability to learn and grow. Being connected in awareness of the mind versus being captivated by the mind allows us to make sense of the input we receive from within us and around us. This is how we create and co-create solutions and find meaning in our individual and collective experience. Our minds, when connected with our hearts, allows us to access the wisdom of our highest selves.

We have an emotional dimension with a breadth of embodied sensations and feelings that arise from our internal and external experiences. Feelings are an internal guidance system that alerts our mind-body to whether our human needs are being met or unmet in the various aspects of our lived experience. Connection with our emotional dimension is the pathway to meeting our fundamental human needs for belonging, safety, and love.

We have an energetic dimension, a life force within and around that enlivens us and our engagement with all existence. We receive air and convert it to breath that animates our whole being, electrical signals flow through the body and brain animating every life process, and energy flows from and around us which powers our connection or disconnection with others. *(Just think of what happens inside of you when someone smiles vs. frowns at you.)* Connection with our energetic dimension allows us to choose mindfully how to engage with the people and navigate the elements of our environment.

Paying attention to our experience in each dimension, honoring that experience by allowing it without trying to change it, attach to it, or deny it helps cultivate connection.

Connection Practices

Whole body centering and scanning exercises

I recommend and personally practice techniques of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn. The website positivepsychology.com is a great resource on MBSR and has compiled a set of practices from body scanning to meditation, and specific tools such as dealing with anger or anxiety.

Mindful breathing

Your authentic voice rides on your breath. Connecting with your breath is essential in times of uncertainty, stress, or adversity. Your breath is also a resource for expressing your truth, speaking persuasively, asking compelling questions, and making requests for what you need or want.

Practice making observations

An observation is a sensory experience: what you see, hear, smell, taste, touch, or sense as a shift in the energy around you, such as the experience of changing altitudes. Observations connect us with the moment and our experience of reality.

Observations of an experience have a better chance of connecting us with the moment with others than personal judgments about an experience. For example, *"We've been on this whale watching cruise for 2 hours and have not seen a whale"* is something that everyone can observe.

Becoming judgmental about our observations is more common yet has a better chance of disconnecting us from others. For example, *"This cruise is a rip-off waste of time"* is not an observation rather it is our evaluation or judgment of an experience that may or may not be shared by others.

One source of disconnection is when we insist our evaluation is correct and we clench on being right instead of being open to other possibilities or to the perspective of others who are having a different experience of the same situation.

Practice making observations (cont.)

Choose one experience a day for at least a week in which you will consciously make observations. For example, *work meeting on Monday, appointment with new dentist on Tuesday, book club on Wednesday, dinner with friends on Thursday, work meeting on Friday, hike in the park on Saturday, church service on Sunday.*

Practice making observations about the environment, interactions, and activities that you experience. Whenever you notice yourself making an evaluation instead of an observation, pause and ask yourself, *“What did I just see, hear, etc. that added up to that evaluation.”* Do this for “negative” evaluations such as *“I don’t fit in at book club”* and for “positive” evaluations such as *“I love this group”*

Pause after each experience to reflect on what stands out to you from the practice of observation. Consider the following questions:

What was useful about making observations in this setting? How did the observations I made serve me or others? How did observations support me being present or engaged? What intentions do I have about making observations going forward?

What did I learn about making evaluations? When can making evaluations serve me and when does it not serve me? How can I use the ability to make evaluations effectively along with making observations going forward?

Highlight your senses

Often a source of disconnection is being wrapped up in our thoughts about the past or future so we miss the experience we are having in the moment. Tuning in to our senses which receive information only in the moment, can reconnect us with the present moment. Here’s an exercise to try:

Choose a sense that you will highlight each day for one week.

At the beginning of the day, list 3 ways you intend to highlight that sense during the day. As you move through the day, notice all of the expected and unexpected ways that sense is activated. Allow yourself to experience the sense without getting stuck on it.

At the end of the day, reflect on your experiences with that sense. *What was it like to highlight that sense? What did you notice happened in the moment as you became aware of using that particular sense? What do you appreciate about how that sense serves you?*

Intentions

Find a comfortable, quiet space to consider the following questions.

What does connecting with the fullness of my human being mean to me?

How has connection already served me, and how can I build on what has served me in going forward?

Why am I ready to practice connection differently or more deeply? What values or beliefs will this practice help me to embody?

What immediate favorable actions will I take to cultivate connection in my life?

How will I support myself in taking these actions? Who or what might support me?
