



Tranquilologie

A DIY GUIDE TO
EVERYDAY TRANQUILITY



BY KIMBERLY WILSON

FOREWORD BY CHRISTINE MASON MILLER

More Tranquilologie Love

“Kimberly Wilson has done it again. This new book gives you exciting adventures for each month that will soothe your body, mind, and spirit, whether it is a yoga pose, a recipe, or a delightful self-indulgence. Reading it makes you feel joyful and inspired to get out of your rut, and experiment with delights. Kimberly also has a practical side and helps you to de-clutter your mind and your nest, as well as overhaul your wardrobe, for example. Each page is full of surprises and her warmth and *joie de vivre* shines through every word. Kimberly is a creativity trailblazer of our time! You will love this book!”

~ **GAIL MCMEEKIN**, author of *The 12 Secrets of Highly Creative Women*, *The 12 Secrets of Highly Successful Women*, and the *Creativity Courage Cards*

“I love this book! *Tranquilologie* is chock-full of ideas that inspire, and small, simple actions you can take every day to make your life more beautiful and more creative. Don't wait until January! Pick your favorite month of the year and start right now.”

~ **LISA SONORA BEAM**, artist and author of *The Creative Entrepreneur* and *A Cartography of Higher Purpose*

“*Tranquilologie: A DIY Guide to Everyday Tranquility* is filled with accessible practices that will connect you with this moment while also giving you beautiful invitations to practice deep self-care. Though the book is created to be read monthly, beginning in January, you could turn to any section at any time of year and be deeply inspired to live your more creative, tranquil life. Kimberly's sense of humor, wisdom, and *joie de vivre* are your companion on every page. So excited to have this book as part of my creative self-care toolbox!”

~ **LIZ LAMOREUX**, author of *Inner Excavation*

“Kimberly's book is packed with tips for recharging and getting more done. If you try even half of her ideas, next year will be your best—and most relaxed—year yet.”

~ **LAURA VANDERKAM**, author of *168 Hours* and *What the Most Successful People Do* ebook series

“What a tranquil reminder of how to create a beautiful life that is true to your soul. Kimberly covers it all with panache and deep love.”

~ **JENNIFER LOUDEN**, author of *The Woman's Comfort Book* and *The Life Organizer*

“*Tranquilologie* is full of tips and tools that will inspire and motivate you. It's a practical guide and a wonderful read. I loved every word!”

~ **TAMMY STROBEL**, author of *You Can Buy Happiness (and It's Cheap)*

"*Tranquilologie* is full of inspiration for so many areas of our lives. There was not a month that went by where I was not inspired in some way to be more mindful, creative and in tune with what I wanted in my life. Kimberly always has a way to keep it fresh, inspiring and full of sparkle month after month. These are not just one-time tools they are things you can use for life! It's full of doable, wonderful and tranquil tips, food for thought and beautiful artwork. In fact I loved it so much a group of us are starting over from the beginning of the year and going on this journey together again. I simply adored it and can't wait to soak it in over and over."

~ HEATHER SHAFER, life coach

"*Tranquilologie* captures Kimberly Wilson's have fun, do-good spirit. Even though the book is meant to be used over the course of a year, after reading it, you'll come away with many years of creative and inspiring ideas to take care of yourself, and give back to the world."

~ BRITT BRAVO, Have Fun * Do Good & Big Vision Consulting

"I looked forward to each month of *Tranquilologie* as much as a phone date with my best friend. Kimberly writes as a dear friend that wants nothing more than for you to reach your highest potential: from sewing to visual journaling, from blogging to public speaking, from eating mindfully to volunteering, there were delicious morsels of information to savor at every turn of the page. 2012 was my best year yet, in no small part thanks to *Tranquilologie*! I was inspired to launch a skin care blog for my business, complete my most massive closet clean out EVER, create a mindful budget, commit to a more regular yoga and meditation practice, and experience an incredible journey to France with my mom. I am so excited to review *Tranquilologie* again this year, who knows, this year may be even better than the last. There is no bow left untied and delicious morsels for everyone to savor. Thank you Kimberly!"

~ KRISTIN AKINS, skin therapist, owner of Pelle Sana Salon

"At the beginning of each month I waited in anticipation for Kimberly's insight. It was like opening a present . . . a gift each month for me to create, connect with my self and regroup around the things that really matter to me. As I look back on my experience, I find that I have incorporated a lot of our OMwork into my daily life and I've become much more mindful of how to find the sparkle in each day. I'd encourage everyone to make the investment in those precious moments of 'you' time and Kimberly is the perfect guide."

~ REBECCA NICELY

"The original Tranquilista, Kimberly Wilson, provides a monthly toolkit to inspire in key life areas such as home, work, do-gooding and style. Bursting with inspiration, Kimberly taps into the busy gals' world and offers fun play, mini projects and a kick-start to morning and evening rituals. OMWork and Savvy Sources provide the nudge for further exploration, alongside motivating watercolor images, that enhance the *Tranquilologie* journey. As a metaphorical juggler, this process has equipped me to pause, review, plan and implement tranquil changes to enhance my day-to-day life. Kimberly . . . thank you!"

~ ALISON DAY



Second Edition

BY KIMBERLY WILSON
ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARY CATHERINE STARR

Copyright 2013 by Kimberly Wilson

All rights reserved. This book may not be reproduced in whole or in part, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means — electronic, mechanical, or other — without written permission from the publisher, except by a reviewer, who may quote brief passages in a review.

Tranquilista, Tranquilologie, Tranquil Space, Hip Tranquil Chick, TranquilT, and Tranquil Space Foundation are registered trademarks.

DISCLAIMER: This publication contains the opinions and ideas of its author. The advice contained herein is for informational purposes only. Please consult a medical professional before beginning any diet or exercise program. The author disclaims all responsibility for any liability, loss, risk, injury, or damage resulting from the use, proper or improper, of any of the contents contained in this book. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this book is complete and accurate.

Text design and typography by Christy Jenkins • holeyheart.com

Illustrations by Mary Catherine Starr • marycatherinestarr.com

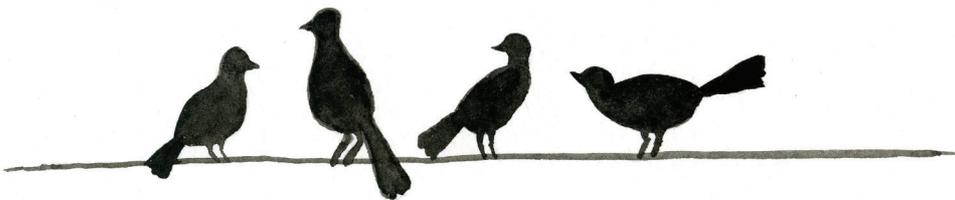
Foreward by Christine Mason Miller • christinemasonmiller.com

Second printing 2015

ISBN: 978-0-692-35807-8

Printed in the United States of America

This book is dedicated to my Tranquilologie e-course subscribers who supported this work, cheered on the release of each issue, and created a generous online community.





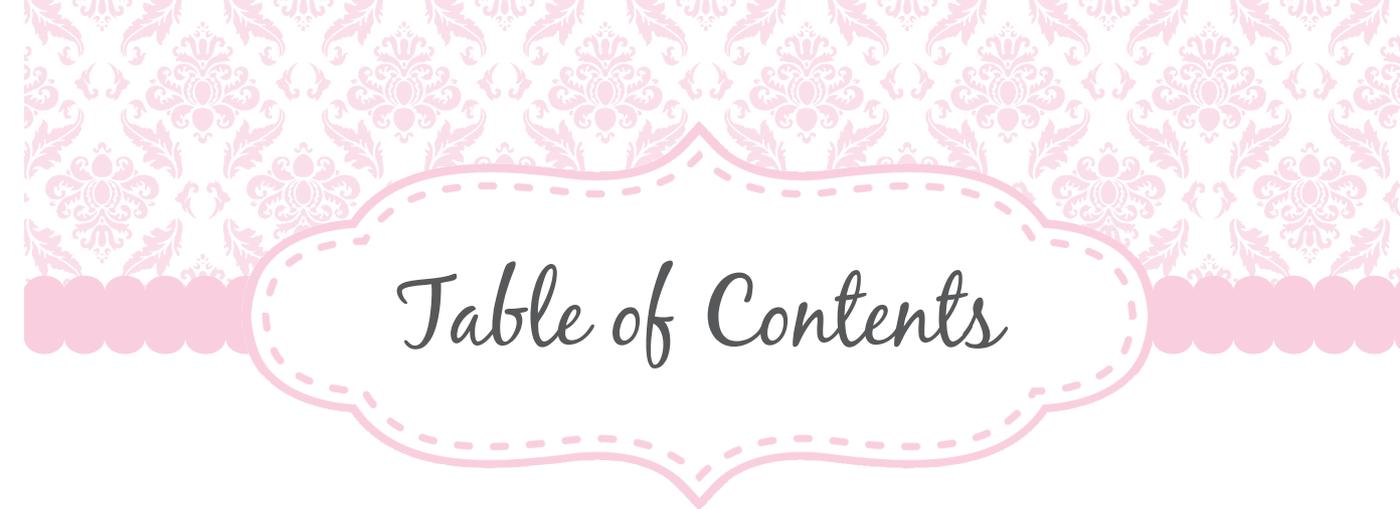


Table of Contents

FOREWARD	10
BONJOUR	11
TRANQUILITY TOOLS	13
JANUARY.....	17
FEBRUARY	34
MARCH	50
APRIL.....	66
MAY	80
JUNE	95
JULY	109
AUGUST	129
SEPTEMBER	147
OCTOBER	163
NOVEMBER	181
DECEMBER	201
MERCI, AU REVOIR	216
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	217
APPENDIX: CHECKLISTS.....	218
ABOUT THE AUTHOR.....	220



Foreward

As a writer, I'm often asked questions about my daily routines—What are they? What are my rituals? How do I maintain a steady, creative rhythm? I usually stumble a bit as I try to formulate a concise answer, because my routines are sprinkled throughout my day more like a spontaneous scattering of seeds rather than a neatly organized row of plantings. I make my bed daily, but it might not happen until late afternoon; acts of creative self-expression could involve writing, or could just as easily be setting our table for dinner guests. The habits I cherish the most—which provide opportunities for grounding, inspiration and contemplation—are less about exacting practices and more about letting myself slide gently down the roots of each moment to savor all the beauty they have to offer.

In this regard, Kimberly Wilson has been magnificent muse and guide, and *Tranquilologie: A DIY Guide to Everyday Tranquility* an extraordinary expression of her wisdom, joy and style. With tips, tricks, tools and checklists (not to mention lovely illustrations), she celebrates all the ways tranquility can be found, created and nurtured in my day-to-day life. In a sea of How To and Top Ten lists that promise quick fixes and perfect, glittering lives, Kimberly offers a refreshing guide on how to take care of myself in small yet potent ways, wisdom gleaned from all her years as a creative entrepreneur, writer and visionary.

Kimberly Wilson is just about the loveliest, sparkliest woman you'll ever meet—kind, gracious, insanely charming and, as if that weren't enough to make you want to snip a strand of her hair and put it in a locket around your neck to try to absorb some of that goodness by osmosis, she's also genuine. I know the encouragement she offers here is the real deal, because she is the real deal. I follow her advice and look to her as a model because I see the beauty she creates in the world and I want to tap into that flow. If I could whip up this book in my VitaMix and drink it like a smoothie I would. It's that good, it's that delicious.

Christine Mason Miller
Santa Barbara, California
April 2015

Bonjour

T*ranquilologie* is the study of living a tranquil life with a splash of *joie de vivre*. This do-it-yourself field guide takes you from January through December with doses of inspiration covering eight topics—Mindfulness, Self-Care, Nesting, Do-Gooding, Work, Style, Creativity, and Dreams—in a *nouveau* way each month. Inside this gem you’ll learn to create handmade gifts, get grounded in an instant, practice yoga, accessorize, craft your bucket list, start a women’s group, share your voice, art journal, clear clutter, shop mindfully, make a difference, and more.

Each month’s eight insightful essays are filled with how-tos, “Savvy Sources” to inspire further exploration, signature “OMwork” to tie a bow around the month’s journey, and checklists to help you stay on the tranquility track. Oh, and inspiring quotes peppered throughout, of course! To enhance your visual journey, savor sprinkles of watercolors by artist and friend Mary Catherine Starr. You’ll also find a newly added notes section at the end of each month to capture your takeaways.

Place this book on a bedside table next to a scented candle and flute of bubbly. Use it in collaboration with your personalized *Tranquility du Jour Daybook*. Read each chapter as the month begins or pick it up as the need for inspiration hits anywhere in between, ideally with a little Ella Fitzgerald serenading you in the background.

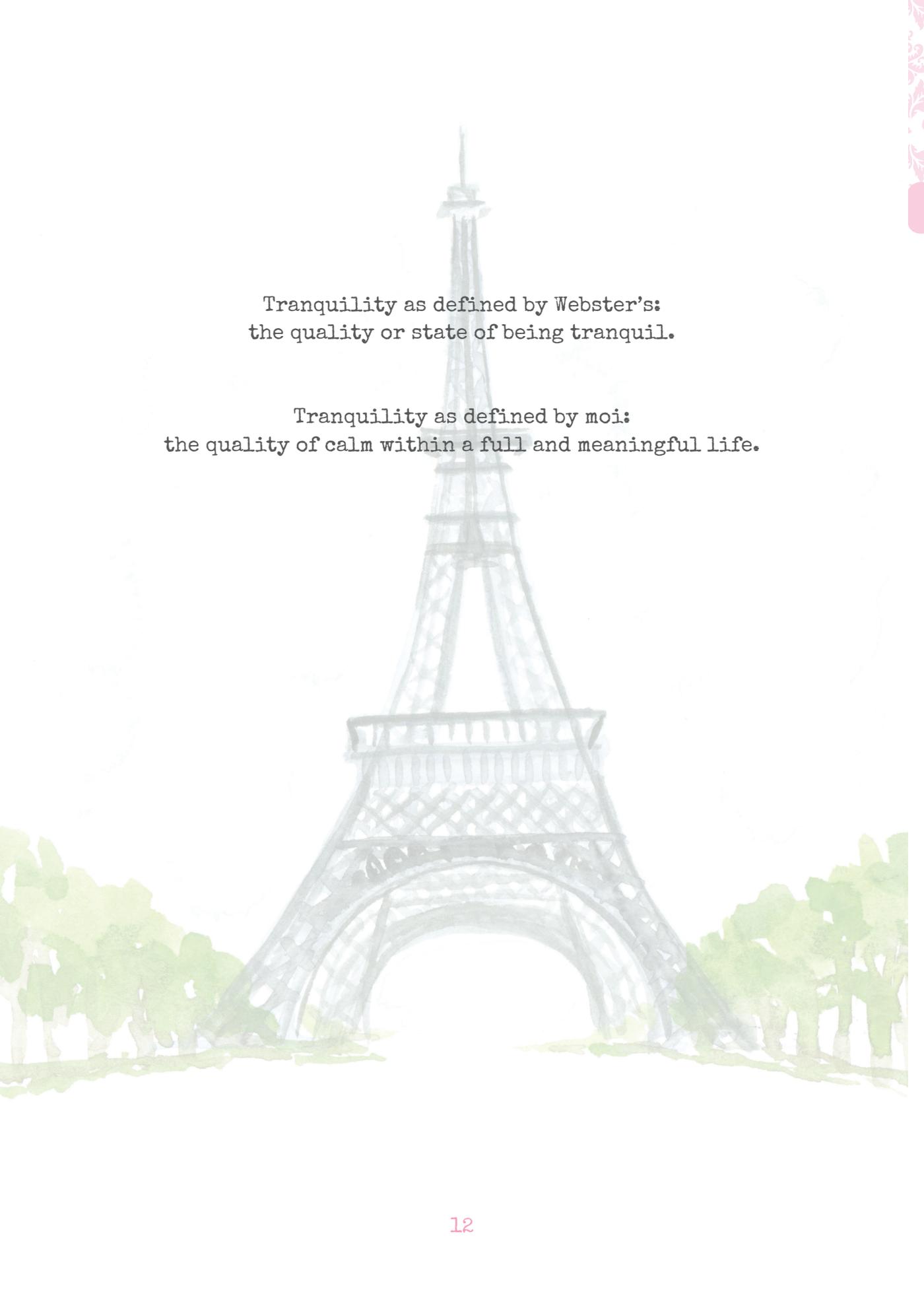
Tranquilologie involves being mindful in the moment, relishing simple pleasures, and creating extraordinary everyday experiences. Let’s create a life of meaning filled with exuberance and tranquility—every day of the year!

 facebook.com/tranquilitydujour
 twitter.com/kimberlywilson
 instagram.com/tranquilitydujour
 youtube.com/tranquilitydujour
 tranquilitydujour.com
 pinterest.com/kimberlywilson

Bisous,
Kimberly



kimberlywilson.com



Tranquility as defined by Webster's:
the quality or state of being tranquil.

Tranquility as defined by moi:
the quality of calm within a full and meaningful life.

Tranquility Tools

Tranquility Tools are your daily, weekly, and monthly go-tos to help everyday activities align with your deepest aspirations. I'll define each of them below to serve as anchors for a meaningful day, week, and month sprinkled with tranquility.

Refer to the Appendix and kimberlywilson.com/tranquilologie for the checklists to duplicate and use for years to come.

YOUR EIGHT DAILY TRANQUILITY TOOLS:

- 1. Morning routine:** Greet your day with a yoga sun salutation, cuppa tea, or brisk walk with your beloved four-legged friend. Begin each morning with an intentional, tranquil tone.
- 2. Daily dress-up:** Let your daily dress reflect your personality, lifestyle, and signature style. Always add a dose of flair and don't forget your smile, good attitude, and vintage accessory.
- 3. Mindful movement:** Take a moment each day to move your body through dance, walking, sun salutations, or any other activity that makes your skin glisten. Bookend the experience with a dose of meditation by sitting still and connecting to your breath. In-hale, exhale, *ommmmm*.
- 4. Eat your veggies:** Reduce animal product and processed foods. Increase plant-based consumption to have a joyful effect on your health, the planet, and animals.
- 5. Journal:** Spend a few moments penning your thoughts, noting highlights from your day, recurring





dreams, what you consumed, how you're feeling, or anything else on your mind.

6. Goal review: Read over your month's dreams each day. This will help daily decisions stay in alignment with the direction of your dreams.

7. Gratitude: According to studies conducted over the past decade, adults who frequently feel grateful have more energy, more optimism, more social connections, and more happiness. At the end of each day, note at least one thing for which you are grateful. It may be as simple as a warm bed or fresh water.

8. Evening routine: End your day with reflection. Write in your journal, shut down your computer and smartphone, soak in the tub, or read in bed for thirty minutes before lights out.

YOUR EIGHT WEEKLY TRANQUILITY TOOLS:

- 1. Plan week's MITs:** These are your Most Important Tasks. Choose three to five projects to focus on each week and align your daily actions with bringing them to fruition. They are your week's road map.
- 2. Soak in the tub:** This grounding practice is most therapeutic and helps clear your mind after a long day. Light candles, play music, and bring in a flute of your favorite libation. Allow yourself to melt into this sensual renewal practice.
- 3. Take a digital day off:** Grant yourself a sabbatical from being glued to technology. Get your hands dirty in the garden, bake a pie, read a book, connect with a loved one, or collage in your art journal. Our connection to technology needs the "off" switch from time to time.
- 4. Clear clutter:** Piles of paperwork become mountains when not handled regularly. Take time each week to reduce the clutter around you. Watch yourself breathe easier and feel lighter.
- 5. Pen a love note:** Reach out to a friend, family member, pen pal, or even yourself (a letter to your past or future self) with a thoughtful note letting someone know you



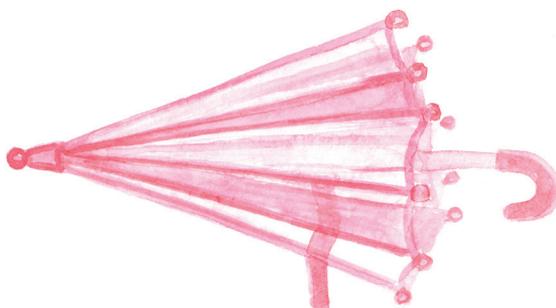
are thinking of them and sending good thoughts. Insert a bag of tea, article of interest, or token of love. This sweet gesture goes a long way in our fast-paced society.

- 6. Buy or pick fresh flowers:** Surround yourself with a pop of living color through potted plants, cut flowers, herbs, and bamboo stalks. If you have a garden, pick flowers and bring them into your living space to spruce up a barren bedside table.
- 7. Take an Artist Date:** Julia Cameron, author of *The Artist's Way*, encourages a solo excursion to nurture your inner artist for one hour each week. Try a trip to a flower market, café, museum, bookstore, or art gallery and watch your ideas flourish.
- 8. Savor a green juice:** Infuse your body with healing nutrients found in a green juice. Watch your energy and vitality soar as you get a “direct shot of vitamins, minerals, enzymes, protein, and oxygen” per Kris Carr, author of *Crazy Sexy Diet*.



YOUR EIGHT MONTHLY TRANQUILITY TOOLS:

- 1. Craft month's dreams:** At the start of each month, pull out your journal and write your big dreams for the month. At the end of the month, review your list to give yourself a pat on the back for the items you accomplished, and carry over the ones that remain and still feel close to your heart.
- 2. Mani/pedi:** Nurture your nails by adding color, trimming your cuticles, and savoring an exfoliating footbath. Or, indulge in another form of well-deserved self-care.
- 3. Volunteer:** Give a sampling of your resources—time, money, or energy—to a favorite cause and watch how you can have a powerful effect on others and your own well-being.





4. **Entertain:** Invite a friend over for tea or host an intimate dinner *fête*. Don an apron, set the table, light candles, and channel your inner Martha Stewart.
5. **Review your budget:** Make sure you aren't spending more than you are bringing in and set up a system for regular review. This doesn't have to be fancy; pencil and paper with a pile of receipts will do the trick! Or, go high tech with mint.com.
6. **Read two books:** To continually learn, grow, and expand your horizons, read and finish two books monthly. Watch your consciousness grow.
7. **Create:** The act of creating elicits a sense of completion and pride for bringing something new into the world. Knit a scarf, make a banner, craft a meal, write blog posts, sew a dress, or paint a watercolor postcard.
8. **Massage:** Massage has many benefits and is the perfect antidote to stressed, achy muscles. If a spa isn't in the cards, consider a neck or foot rub at your neighborhood nail salon, or check out the local massage school for good deals from therapists-in-training. Or, ask your beloved for a complimentary rub down.

Track your tranquility progress using these 24 tools as your guide. Reward yourself for infusing your days, weeks, and months with this simple, life-enhancing DIY handbook.



Bonjour, January.



*Tomorrow is the first blank page of a 365-page book.
Write a good one. ~ Brad Paisley*

Baby, it's cold outside. Ah, the launch of a new year and a chance to start again. You may be feeling a bit exhausted after the hustle and bustle of the holidays, so now is the perfect time to bask in self-reflection with a dollop of self-care. By starting the *Tranquilologie* journey, you're setting yourself up for a tranquil launch into the year. Take small steps each day that connect to your big dreams, sprinkle joy, and make a difference. May this be your field guide to a brilliantly shiny and meaningful life.

Winter beckons us to turn within, hibernate, and curl up in front of a fire with hot cocoa (topped with vegan marshmallows, of course!). This month is the beginning of our yearlong exploration of everyday tranquility where you'll start your day with sun salutations, go on retreat, get organized post-holiday, identify a philanthropic passion, make micromovements, find your signature style, create a vision board, and set your goals for the year. Pour yourself a hot libation, kick up your wedge boots and, without further ado, let's dive into this juicy month filled with possibility.

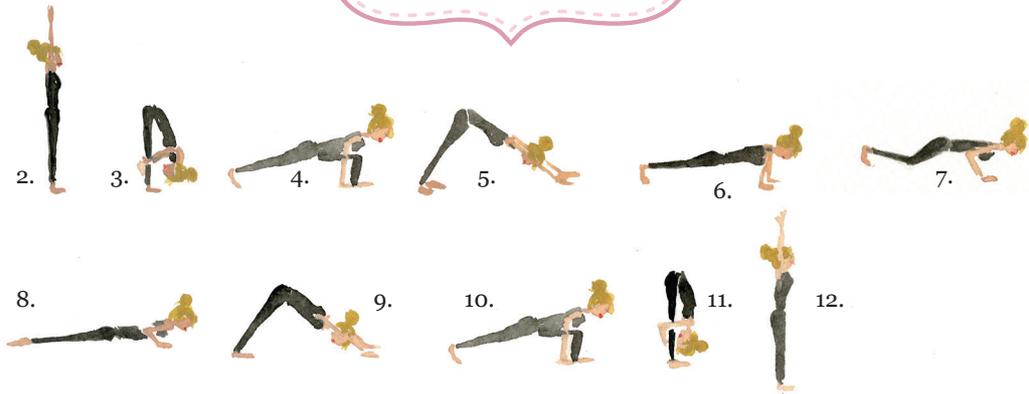
Mindfulness

Without the ability to be present we are missing much of what the adventure has to offer. ~ Allan Lokos

Start each day by greeting the sun and opening your heart. Even though the days are short, this month's sequence is sure to infuse a dash of sunshine. Carve out a tranquil space for your practice by setting the stage. Turn off your cell phone. Grab any necessary props such as blankets, straps, and blocks. Light candles and incense. Don your most comfy stretchy togs. Add a touch of lavender aromatherapy oil to your temples or wrists. Tune out the outside world while you turn inward. Roll out your yoga mat and get your OM on by following these 12 simple steps. Your body (and mind) will thank you.

TRANQUILITY TIP: Avoid heavy meals two to three hours before your practice. Remember, yoga should never feel bad. If something hurts, stop doing the pose and work with the modification offered, or simply rest in child's pose for a few breaths. Focus on your breath throughout your practice. When you find your mind wandering, as it always will, gently bring it back to your breath and this very moment. Tune into kimberlywilson.com/tranquilologie for an audio sun salutation journey.

SUN SALUTATION



1. Come to mountain pose at the top of the mat. Feel your feet firmly planted into the earth. Press into all four corners of your feet, reach the crown of your head toward the sky, and exhale your hands to prayer position in front of your heart. Set an intention.
2. Inhale, reach your arms up to the sky.
3. Exhale, trace your midline into a forward fold.
4. Inhale, step back with your right leg to a lunge. Wiggle your right foot all the way back so that your heel is directly over the ball of your foot.
5. Exhale, step back with your left leg to downward-facing dog (an inverted “V”) and press the floor away from you.
6. Inhale, float forward to plank pose. Align your shoulders over the wrists with your heels directly above the balls of the feet.
7. Exhale, drop your knees, bend your arms to a 90-degree angle, hug your elbows into your body, and lower down so that your shoulders and hips are in a straight line for half-chaturanga. (Variation: keep your knees lifted, bend your arms to a 90-degree angle, slide your shoulder blades down your back for chaturanga).
8. Inhale, uncurl your toes, drop your belly, lift your heart center, and slide into cobra (Variation: roll over your toes and straighten your arms as you lift your chest, belly, and thighs into upward-facing dog). Relax your shoulders from your ears.
9. Exhale, curl your toes under, and lift your hips up and back to downward-facing dog.
10. Inhale, step forward with your right foot.
11. Exhale, step your left foot in between both hands to a forward fold.
12. Inhale, trace your midline up to the sky.

TRANQUILITY TIP:

In addition to practicing sun salutations at the start of each day, let's also craft an intention for the New Year. What one word comes to mind when you think of the fresh slate that lies ahead? Are you seeking a more creative year? Does the word spaciousness or transformation come to mind? Take a moment to pen a word that you can infuse into your every day—starting now. Got it? Good.

Now let's ponder how to make your chosen word a launching pad for each day this month. Incorporate it into your morning routine—one of your eight Tranquility Tools. Consider how you will infuse your one-word intention into your day and make it a habit. For example, if you chose spaciousness (my word for the past many years), determine how you will insert a dose of it into your packed day. Maybe it's through a yoga class, moment of meditation between appointments, or cancellation of a meeting that can be easily postponed so you can get home to loved ones an hour earlier. Weave your chosen word into your daily goal review so it remains an anchor this year.

13. Exhale, place your hands to prayer in front of your heart. Stand in mountain pose. Rinse, repeat on the opposite side.

Continue this sequence for at least ten minutes (ideally 12 rounds) and feel your body come alive. Sun salutations offer many benefits including massaging the body's organs, providing a cardiovascular workout, expressing gratitude to a new day, cleansing the digestive system, engaging muscles, and calming the central nervous system. Whew, that's all!

Self-Care

There are days I drop words of comfort on myself like falling leaves and remember that it is enough to be taken care of by myself. ~ Brian Andreas

Considering the energy output over the past month, begin your year with carefully chosen down time. If you skip deep self-care now, you may have a hard time catching up later this year. Think of January as your opportunity to hit the reset button and reconnect



to a self-care plan. Yes, you may have blown it physically, emotionally, and energetically (even financially) over the holidays and be feeling effects of said blow-out. However, there's no time like the present to reconnect with your spirit. Ready, set, go.

A few favorite ways to bask in self-care is to schedule it in. I know, sounds a bit trite, but it's the best way to keep self-care a priority throughout the year. One big dose of self-care I schedule is a retreat just for me—not one I'm leading, but one where I don my student cap. Oddly enough it was a client that had to jump-start this for me. While leading a retreat in New York in 2008, a woman asked if I, too, went on retreats. Oops! It had been a few years and it was my wake-up call—time for me to take part in this restorative experience. I've taken myself on annual creativity retreats to Paris, Mexico, and Squam Lake in New Hampshire since then and carefully scheduled them well in advance. They serve as little carrots to get through numerous deadlines and to-dos that can dampen a creative spark when not properly managed.

If a week long retreat is not in the cards, carve out space for a one-day retreat. One of my favorite day long escapes is to New York City via bus. It offers heaps of creative inspiration. I'll dash up on an early morning bus and spend twelve hours thrifting, noshing on vegan delights, doing yoga, and hitting museums. Then I head back on the late bus, fueled by creativity. *Voilà!* I return rejuvenated and ready to share newfound inspirations with memories and photos in tow. All for less than \$50 round-trip.

Another option for those who need to stay close to home is to schedule Bed Days or three-hour solo jaunts nearby. Maybe the third Saturday of each month is your scheduled Bed Day (a day of donning lounge wear and relaxing in bed—more on this in April) or your afternoon at a café, and nothing else should be scheduled during this sacred time. Whatever will work best for your lifestyle and provide a regular respite is a must. Consider how you, too, can sprinkle week long, day long, or a simple three-hour retreat into your schedule. Pull out your planner and get your first few scheduled. Make self-care a habit.

Considering that I live with *Beau*, two furry felines, and one perky pug in a tiny condo, plus spend time working at my yoga studio, which can have more than a hundred yogis buzzing about, I treasure my solo time. With people always around—coworkers, spouses, offspring,



TRANQUILITY TIP:

Still not convinced? Here is a list of what to do this month to bask in self-care commingled with solitude:

Sleep	Play with your pet	Bead a necklace
Knit a beret	Organize your closets	Tidy your lingerie drawer
Sew a skirt	Nap	Paint your toenails
Dance to jazz music	Daydream	Listen to a Thoreau book on tape
Read	Doodle	Download a podcast
Start your novel	Make a collage	Mix your own green cleaning products
Cook a fancy feast for one	Reflect	Don a rose face mask
Draw your ideal life	Play an instrument	Dabble with charcoal or pastels
Write a business plan	Practice yoga	Plan a party
Meditate	Blog	Indulge in an Audrey Hepburn film fest
Soak in the tub	Rearrange furniture	
Garden	Be an armchair traveler	
	Listen to Bach	

pets, and/or others—it's a wonder most women aren't running for the hills, seeking solitude. Alas, this may simply be my introversion talking. However, Anne Morrow Lindbergh wrote an amazing book about the need for solitude called *Gift from the Sea*, a true gem for women everywhere and an upcoming Savvy Source. Alone time offers the perfect opportunity to explore your spiritual side.

Nesting

Organizing is the process of identifying what's important to you and giving yourself access to it. True organizing is a about designing systems of storage and retrieval. ~ Julie Morgenstern

As you put the house back together after the festivities, it's fun to also set up your nest for the new year. For *moi* that means placing like with like, unpacking gifts, and saving the



bows and boxes to reuse next year. Focus on order to start the new year.

Take a look around your home and work environments. Are they longing for a dose of simplicity? A few minutes of organizing can help your fresh start feel more inviting. For example, rather than leaving holiday décor up until mid-January and gifts in their boxes, carefully put it all away, spruce up your space, and buy fresh flowers. Plant pansies or cabbage in small terra cotta pots and create a cottage-like feel in your home. Pull out your bright-colored linens. Keep twinkle lights up to sparkle year round. The gray weather and lack of sunshine may dampen your spirits, so it is important to bring the outside in this time of the year.

One way to enforce order into *chez moi* is to host an event. Now that gets me in gear better than anything else on my to-do list. Consider throwing a small *fête* to reconnect with friends post-holiday frenzy. Have everyone bring a gift to swap, an intention to reveal, or a dish to share. Keep it simple: bake yummy frozen *hors d'oeuvres*, heat mulled cider or wine on the stove, light tons of candles, set a festive table, and dim the lighting. Make personalized glasses for everyone by adhering chalkboard contact paper to a mason jar and writing their name with white chalk. Insert a retro pink-and-white striped straw. *Now* you are party ready.

If an intimate gathering isn't possible, another way to get your nest cozy at the start of the year is to do a healthy dose of decluttering. Once you've put your home back together post-holidays, assess what you have, what you need, and what is ready to be surrendered. Living in a tiny home with many other beings, I've found that I need to assess the multiplying piles on a regular basis. My typical purchases are consumables such as food, stationery, or toiletries, along with books and vintage clothing. I don't feel guilty bringing in items I'll be consuming, but I do have to question most purchases (like my recent vintage milk glass obsession), considering space is an issue. And, truth be told, I don't want to be a tranquil hoarder.

I recently picked up *The Joy of Less: A Minimalist Living Guide* and love sharing tips from the simplicity and small living movement that you'll hear heaps about throughout our journey. There are few things that we really need to survive, and I encourage you to start the year with a minimalist mindset. Clear clutter. Reduce waste. Curb your purchasing. Focus on creating experiences versus acquiring things and nurturing relationships versus accumulating. It frees up energy, time, space, and money. In the meantime, turn your living space into an oasis by infusing it with love, laughter, and a splash of your oh-so-special touches.

Do-Gooding

*Everyone thinks of changing the world,
but no one thinks of changing himself.*
~ Leo Tolstoy

While browsing a secondhand bookstore recently I came across an amazing book called *365 Ways to Change the World* by Michael Norton. Wow, there are literally countless ways to do good this year and it begins with you and me.



ADOPT ME AT
REDAPES.ORG

To start, connect with a charity and commit for the year. What cause is close to your heart? Can you weave the cause into your year in a way that feels right to you? If you want to give financially, one simple way is to sign up for a monthly deduction that automatically charges a credit card. You'll know that each month you are making a difference. If you want to give time, find ways to volunteer with the organization. Sometimes simply showing up regularly and contributing can lead to bigger roles within your favorite organization. If you have a specialty to contribute, offer to assist with legal work, social media, envelope stuffing, grant writing, or garden planting. Whatever it is, the organization will be grateful and you get to use your strengths to benefit a cause close to your heart. Win-win!

Getting in touch with your values and clarifying your ethical stance on issues will assist you in making a difference. As you launch into this new year, in addition to getting involved with a cause that pulls on your heartstrings, resolve to make a difference each day. For example, as I got further into my social work studies and more connected with all the injustice going on around me locally, nationally, and globally, my heart ached for peace for all beings. My biggest passion at this moment is for the farm animals that make up 99 percent of animals killed in the United States. By attending conferences, sharing my knowledge of factory farming atrocities, hosting fund raising and awareness raising events, donating money and time, and spreading my love for Farm Sanctuary during the Tranquility Tour, I feel deeply connected to a cause.

Small things change the world. Picture a glassy rock in a creek that becomes smooth due to the continuous flow of water over its ridges. That's how I like to think of our small everyday decisions that contribute to the happiness of others, our planet, animals, and ourselves.

TRANQUILITY TIP:

Here are a few simple ways to get started:

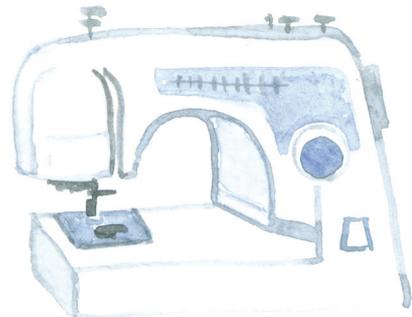
- | | |
|--|--|
| Smile at a stranger | Speak up |
| Make eye contact with your barista | Assist someone in need (for example, hold a door open) |
| Learn people's names | Sprinkle wildflower seeds on barren soil |
| Send "thinking of you" e-mails or love notes | Pick up litter |
| Carry a reusable bag | Host a swap-shop party (how-to in February) |
| Shop local and secondhand | Donate your car and buy a bicycle |
| Support fair trade | |
| Praise and encourage others | |

Work

When love and skill works together, expect a masterpiece.
~ John Ruskin

Whether you're a student, stay-at-home mum, corporate executive, or anywhere in between, doing meaningful work adds a welcome dose of joy to your day-to-day. This month let's focus on turning your passion into your work. My hope is that this will play out for you over the next 12 months in a 100 percent authentically you way. Let's get started.

Begin by envisioning your ideal work life. What do you do? What time do you get up? Where do you work? What do you wear? How does this differ from your current work situation? What small steps can you take to bridge the two? For example, maybe you currently work at a retail store and long to start a fashion line. To bridge the gap between dream and reality, pick up a copy of *The Fashion Designer's Survival Guide: Start and Run Your Own Fashion Business* by Mary Gehlhar, start sketching a few designs to turn into samples, find your favorite fabric, locate a local seamstress (hello, Craigslist!), or try your hand at sewing them. Begin selling your designs at craft fairs, boutiques, flea markets, or Etsy.com.



Sure, you may support yourself as a high school teacher by day, but when asked what you do, you promptly reply, “I’m a stylist!” And you’re right because that is what you do in your evenings and weekends, what you write about on your blog, and what you’re dreaming of becoming.

How do you define yourself when asked the standard, “What do you do?” Rather than replying with how you spend your 40 hours, consider sharing what you’re passionate about and how you spend your free time (unless, of course, you are a lucky one who has them one and the same). Transition from defining yourself by your degree or nine-to-five, and instead explore ways to answer how you love to spend your time. “I’m a blogger and am working on my first book” versus “I sell computer software. It pays the bills.”

I recall being in my mid-twenties, working at a law firm, dreaming of retirement in 40 years (yes, 40 years!), and asking my father if this was it—my lot in life. It was an “aha” moment: I could work 40 more years doing passionless work to save for my golden years (insert big sigh) or I could begin creating a lifestyle for myself now. So, I signed up for yoga teacher training, read *The Artist’s Way*, put fliers in my neighborhood inviting strangers into my home for yoga, and the rest, as they say, is “herstory.”

This month, ponder ways to blend your passion and your work while starting to bridge the gap between ideal and current reality. Life is too short to spend the majority of your waking hours doing something that doesn’t feed your soul. When I returned to work after a two-week teacher training in June 2000, I cried. I just couldn’t take the double life anymore and gave my notice later that week. What will be *your* tipping point?

If you are doing work you love, congrats! Use the time this month to review how you’re spending your time and how you’d like to be spending your time within your work. There are usually discrepancies and I’m constantly reevaluating mine. Delegate or shed tasks and projects that don’t resonate or utilize your strengths. For example, I’m no longer the bookkeeper or webmaster for my organizations—not my forte nor strength.

Also, notice how you describe yourself. Try, “I’m a creative entrepreneur” versus, “I sew clothes.” Spend time cultivating your career dreams with Lisa Sonora Beam’s *The Creative Entrepreneur: A DIY Visual Guidebook for Making Business Ideas Real*. This month is about evaluating your work to leave a legacy through the hours you put in each and every day.

Style

Style is knowing who you are, what you want to say, and not giving a damn. ~ Gore Vidal



Choose a signature piece that represents who you want to be this year. Maybe it's a special necklace your Grandma made in the 1970s (I have a macramé owl from mine that *j'adore*) or a leopard-print hat procured at a vintage store. What does it say about you? How does it make you feel?

Not sure about your fashion favorites? Create a style inspiration board. Pull images of looks you love from magazines and post them where you get ready each day, or pull together an online style board through Pinterest. Over the years I've taped them inside closet doors as examples to put similar looks together. How can you recreate the looks you like with what you already own? Or can you pick up a few staples or statement pieces that would allow you to tie it all together with a pretty bow?

Peruse your wardrobe. What staple or signature piece is missing? Begin searching for these items at secondhand shops, thrift stores, on [Etsy.com](https://www.etsy.com), or make your own. Don't know how to sew? Sewing lounges and private sewing classes are popping up around the globe, along with heaps of hip how-to books and YouTube videos. Some creations involve only scissors and hand sewing. Embrace your inner seamstress.

Incorporate your word of the year into this exercise and ask yourself, "How does 'transformation' dress?" (Insert your word, of course). This may help you to break through style barriers that are currently holding you back. For example, did you choose "freedom" or "expression" for your word of the year, yet find yourself

TRANQUILITY TIP: Peruse [TranquiliT.com](https://www.tranquility.com) for a peek at my locally-sewn collection. Launched in 2002 with tees and yoga pants, it evolved into a lifestyle line for mix-and-match capsule (staples that do not go out of style) dressing. For example, I searched high and low for the perfect pant that would allow me to dress up or down and feel super chic and comfy. Thus, TranquiliT's palazzo pant came to life. In addition to a basic pant, I don it under dresses for a layered look, on the yoga mat, and with a sequins top to fancy fêtes. Now, that is a staple for me.

pulling out the same navy suit every day? Consider switching it up and begin to express who you see yourself becoming through your personal style. Start by adding a colorful scarf, polka dot tights, ankle boots, or cat-eye glasses.

I recently fell in love with all things vintage and have a delightful time incorporating these into my TranquiliT-filled wardrobe. More than a decade ago, I picked up a vintage faux leopard coat at a flea market and it continues to be my seasonal signature statement. Over the years I've added more statement pieces such as leopard-print sunglasses, a sparkly 1970s caftan, TOMS silver sequined wedges, vintage crinolines that make me feel like the belle of the ball, and my black rose ring purchased on a New York City street for \$10. My style continues to evolve and I find myself drawn to one-of-a-kind pieces to incorporate with favorite comfy, eco-friendly TranquiliT staples.

Also, I've found myself adding one thing too many and actually loving it. I know, I know, Coco Chanel encouraged us to remove one thing before leaving the house, but I'm rebelling. Sure, it can be a bit over the top for conservative Washington, D.C., but it feels right to *moi*. And I've been coined around the studio as "Ms. One Thing Too Many." I've embraced it with pride.

How about you? Can your signature piece, word of the year, and future dreams come together to create a look uniquely you? You don't need a stylist, fashion blog, or style books—simply a desire to express your creativity through what you wear every day. Sometimes it can be as simple as adding sparkly earrings, layers of pearl necklaces, wedge clogs, a fresh haircut, or an over-the-top cocktail ring to feel authentically you. Rock it, sunshine!



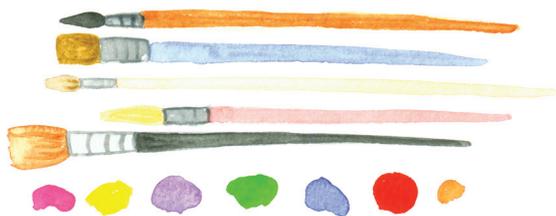
Creativity

There is only one of you in all time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and it will be lost. ~ Martha Graham

Let's get crafty. This will be an ongoing theme for our Creativity section: connecting to our DIY side. This month's must-do is the creation of a New Year vision board. Carve out a few hours of open space, grab your tools, and let's bring your vision for this year to life in a colorful collage format.

The intent is to capture your dreams on paper via magazine images, pictures, and words. A visual road map to dream fulfillment. Sound grandiose? Well, it is! At a recent Art Journal Playshop, a lawyer-cum-business

owner participant held up her vision board and shared how everything on it had come true, including a picturesque wedding in Paris, new business launch, and a *bebé* on the way. Fellow workshopers were in awe. Then everyone wanted to make one. This process, combined with an action plan, helps make things happen.



Set aside two to four hours for this project. Step away from your phone. Light candles. Turn up your favorite music (try the Pink Martini Pandora station). Surround yourself with a pile of glossies. Gather scissors, glue sticks, double-sided tape, and glitter. Have blank manila file folders, construction paper, or scrapbooking paper handy for when you're ready to attach the images.

Begin tearing pictures and quotes that appeal to you from magazines. Find images that bring your vision to life and capture your dreams. Let this time be playful and totally self-indulgent. You are, after all, creating your future. Might as well have fun with it! Collect any photos, postcards, or notes that you find inspirational to include. This hunting-and-gathering phase is the most time-consuming process of the project. But the results are well worth it, promise.

Once you have a stack of images, place them on top of the heavier paper you've set aside as the backing. Arrange them in a way that pleases the eye. Keep in mind the trusty rule of thirds: imagine your overall image divided into nine equal parts by two equally spaced horizontal and vertical lines. Place important elements along these lines or their intersections. You can group by category: style, home, garden, food, and so on, or have one big hodgepodge for the year. When using a

file folder as your backing, use the back and inside of it, too. If using a large sheet of card stock, don't forget the back. Sometimes we have too many images and too little space. Get creative. You can think (and glue) completely outside the board with this project.

Another option is to create a virtual design board. Pull images and quotes from the internet, paste them into a document, and make it your computer, phone, or tablet screen saver. Use digital photos you've snapped along the way; images from Flickr, Instagram, or Pinterest; online quotes that inspire you; and insert a photo of yourself into the fun. Or make this your desktop background, and you can't help but be reminded of your vision every time you power up your laptop. If you prefer the arts-and-crafts approach, but would like to use the image electronically, photograph or scan your masterpiece into a PDF or JPG file. Share the vision board on your blog or pass it along to loved ones who can help support you in bringing these dreams to life.

Images that align with your goals—such as a cabin in the woods, a woman working in an Indian orphanage, or a tiny art studio filled with tubes of paint and fabric scraps—are important to have prominently displayed. Let them be regular reminders about what you are working toward this year. Indulge in an ornate frame for a smaller vision board or for displaying images of certain must-haves on your desk. What better way to keep yourself focused than this beautiful reminder you see daily? Now, wasn't that fun?

Dreams

Life is full of beauty. Notice it. Notice the bumblebee, the small child, and the smiling faces. Smell the rain, and feel the wind. Live your life to the fullest potential, and fight for your dreams.

~ Ashley Smith

If you want to make something happen, it takes more than simply wishing it so. Begin planting seeds this month to move toward your tranquility-filled dream year. Studies show that those who pen their dreams are much more likely to make them a reality. It's important to get clear on goals so you can take daily action to achieve them. *Daily* is the operative word. The key is to break your goals down into action steps so the goal itself doesn't feel overwhelming.

This New Year is full of opportunity. Three hundred and sixty-five days and starry evenings. Fifty-two fresh weeks. A clean slate to begin anew. Remember that you have this chance each and every day, so start over if you fall short at any time.

You may be filled with ideas focused on big change, so please be gentle with yourself and remember it takes at least 21 days to create a habit. Let's take a moment to capture and clarify your dreams.

Begin by listing everything you hope for this year. Yes, *everything!* We'll be returning to this list each month, so take time with it. Make it an experience. Set the stage. Light candles, close your eyes, and visualize what you want to see unfold in great detail. Struggling? Review your vision board and note what came up through the images. Our unconscious has a sneaky way of bringing things to the surface.

Next, categorize the dreams. For example, I break them down into my four organizations (Tranquil Space, Tranquil Space Foundation, Tranquility du Jour, TranquilIT) plus personal. Consider breaking them into the *Tranquilologie* headings for the year: Mindfulness, Self-Care, Nesting, Do-Gooding, Work, Style, Creativity, Dreams; or simply Work and Play—whatever makes the most sense to you. Now circle the ones you would like to focus on this month.



Once you've got your goals, let's figure out how to get you to the final destination. It starts with breaking big goals down into manageable, bite-sized action steps. If you don't break them into these little nuggets, goals can seem too far away or (gasp!) unattainable. I believe you can accomplish most of what you set out to do if you follow these steps. Truly, the world is your oyster. As *Simple Abundance* author Sarah Ban Breathnach reminds us, "The world needs dreamers and the world needs doers, but above all the world needs dreamers who do." Be a dreamer who does.

Begin by looking at your circled dreams for the month and choose a few of your favorites to break into action steps here. Pen at least three action steps to help you accomplish this goal. For example, take the big-picture goal and lay out the action steps and associated timelines necessary to make it happen. Ask yourself, "What daily steps will help me achieve this goal this month?" Maybe you wrote "start a blog." Your action steps may include (1) research blog platforms and choose favorite, (2) determine blog name and focus, and (3) pen first post. Sound doable? Let's keep going.

The key with goals is to take the big picture and break it down into reasonable chunks. Then during the day-to-day hustle, you are reminded of big-picture

dreams. Otherwise you may come to a point in your life where you wonder what you've done with your time. Here's a favorite quote by Henry David Thoreau, "I went into the woods to live deliberately and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived." Wow! Let's choose deliberately.

Place your list of action steps in a prominent spot, such as on your closet door, refrigerator, mirror, or planner. Keeping it tucked away in a journal may prevent you from receiving the continual tap on the shoulder it's meant to provide. Remember what Eleanor Roosevelt said: "Do one thing every day that scares you." What's yours today?



OMWORK

1. Craft a vision board
2. Pen your dreams
3. Commit to a cause

SAVVY SOURCES

*The Art of Non-Conformity: Set Your Own Rules,
Live the Life You Want, and Change the World*
by Chris Guillebeau

The Vision Board: The Secret to an Extraordinary Life
by Joyce Schwarz

The 12 Secrets of Highly Creative Women: A Portable Mentor
by Gail McMeekin

*Main Street Vegan: Everything You Need to Know to Eat
Healthfully and Live Compassionately in the Real World*
by Victoria Moran

*How to Be an Everyday Philanthropist: 330 Ways to Make a
Difference in Your Home, Community, and World—at No Cost!*
by Nicole Bouchard Boles

Bonjour, February.



*To love oneself is the beginning of a lifelong romance.
~ Oscar Wilde*

So how is this year feeling so far? We're one-twelfth of the way through it already! Time flies when you're having fun, exploring new dreams, and switching old habits. Sure, a few of your resolutions may be long forgotten, but our expedition remains strong.

This month let's explore a favorite yoga flow, ways to connect to your senses, clear clutter, make a difference, clarify your personal brand, play daily dress-up, go on Artist Dates, and design a dream booklet. Pour yourself a warm libation, curl up in a comfy chair, and let's dive into this month's study of tranquility.

Oh, and take a cue from nature: it doesn't bloom year round. We need time to till the soil and plant the seeds for all that is to come. That's what we're doing right now. Let's begin.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is simply being aware of what is happening right now without wishing it were different. ~ James Baraz

How's your daily sun salutation practice going? My hope is that you're able to start your day with this joyful dose of tranquility. This month's dose of mindfulness includes a favorite yoga sequence to open your heart in alignment with February's heartfelt theme.

Yoga is a tool that brings tranquility to your body, mind, and spirit. The word yoga comes from the Sanskrit word *yuj* often translated to mean "union" and the practice incorporates poses, breathing, and meditation to open energy channels of your body. According to Patanjali, author of the *Yoga Sutras*, "Yoga is the cessation of the fluctuations of the mind." Thus, we practice to still these fluctuations and be fully in each moment.

To begin, honor yourself for showing up on the yoga mat each time. Observe your body's energy level and limitations as they vary with each practice. Have fun with it. Breathe in self-compassion; breathe out negativity. Soften. Your practice is a gift to yourself and those who cross your path (as you're destined to be more tranquil post-practice). Remain centered and filled with self-compassion throughout your practice. Okay, enough logistics; let's yoga.

1. Start in mountain pose at the top of your mat. Bring your hands to your heart center and create an intention or dedication for your practice today.

2. Inhale, reach your arms overhead and exhale, fold forward. Open your feet hip-width apart, rest your hands into the crook of your arms and hang here for one to five minutes. Gently sway from side to side and savor the sensations in the back of your legs. If you feel any discomfort in your back or hammies, bend your knees slightly.
3. When ready, release your arms and rest your hands on the floor or your shins. Inhale, lengthen the spine. Exhale, fold. Repeat five to 10 times.
4. Inhale, step back with your right leg into a lunge. Exhale, step back with your left leg into downward-facing dog. Pedal your feet, shimmy your hips back and forth, and work out tension in the body.
5. Inhale, lift your right leg up and back into down dog split. Exhale, draw your knee to your nose and place your right foot in between your hands. Drop your back knee, hook your thumbs, and sweep your arms to the sky. Slide your shoulder blades down your back, lift your heart, and exhale as you sink deeper into your hips. Stay here for five to 20 breaths. Release your hands back in line with your toes, curl your back toes under, and step back to downward-facing dog. Vinyasa.

TRANQUILITY TIP: When I offer up the option to “vinyasa,” I’m referencing “inhale to plank pose, exhale to chaturanga, inhale to upward-facing dog, exhale downward-facing dog.” However, feel free to skip the vinyasa by resting in downward-facing dog or child’s pose. Tune into kimberlywilson.com/tranquilologie for an audio experience.

6. Inhale, lift your left leg up and back into down dog split, exhale, draw your knee to your nose and place your left foot in between your hands. Drop your back knee, hook your thumbs, and sweep your arms along your ears. Savor the sensation of heart- and hip-opening. Vinyasa. Rinse and repeat as many times as feels good.
7. From downward-facing dog, step or float forward into a forward fold. Hang here, evenly distribute your weight onto all four corners of your feet. Interlace your hands behind your back to open your heart as you fold forward. Release your arms, bend your knees, and slowly roll up one vertebra at a time. Bring your hands to your heart center. Take five to 10 deep breaths. Rinse and repeat steps one through seven, three to 10 times.

Finally, let's return to your word for the year. Have you been able to incorporate it into your morning routine in some way? It deserves daily recognition and use as a tool to review all you hope to embody this year.



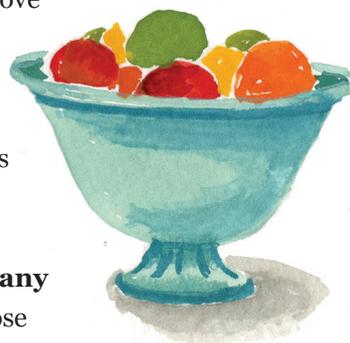
Self-Care

The delights of self-discovery are always available. ~ Gail Sheehy

Taking care of yourself ties in perfectly with the heart theme that is oh-so-very February. Although this month appears catered to relationships and loved ones, I like to think of it as a chance to focus inward and nurture yourself, too. What brings you a connection to your spirit? How can you take time out of everyday life to reconnect to who you are? This is where self-care comes in handy. You must take care of yourself before you can be the spokesperson for your cause, the mother to your children or furry friends, or the partner to your beloved.

This month, indulge in ongoing practices of self-care through these simple sensory pleasures: touch, sound, smell, taste, and sight.

- 1. Focus on ways to nurture through touch.** Greet friends with a hug, touch someone on the arm as you're speaking to them, get a massage, walk barefoot in the grass, and put on clothes that feel good on your skin. Touch is a powerful tool for creating connections and feeling good on multiple levels.
- 2. Surround yourself with soothing sounds.** I love Pandora's French-themed stations; they never disappoint. Also, never be sans earplugs. They come in handy at cafés when you want to write, in bed to escape the sounds of the city, or on planes to block out the roaring engine.
- 3. Your nose offers a yummy enhancement to any everyday experience.** As I write this, I have a rose candle burning in my living room to help permeate the early morning air. I love nag champa incense, relish LUSH bath bombs, and enjoy spritzing fragrant rose water or lavender onto my



skin. Infuse relaxing scents into your daily routine. Simmer cider on the stove, plug in an aromatherapy diffuser and sprinkle lemongrass oil on top, or pick up a bouquet of fragrant flowers such as stargazer lilies.



4. **I start each day with the taste of green tea** sprinkled (okay, soaked) with agave nectar or raw sugar. There is something grounding about sipping a hot beverage in the morning and I know Ayurveda (the sister science of yoga) backs me up on this one. Surround yourself with nourishing foods and libations that nurture your palate. The joy of taste is a sacred exchange and it's helpful to have a variety of offerings to nurture your mood. My latest obsession is dark chocolate infused with

TRANQUILITY TIP:

Let us not forget the power of a green juice, especially since it is on your weekly checklist! I received a compact Breville juicer (\$99) as a gift and love the infusion of living enzymes, vitamins, oxygen, and phytonutrients into my daily diet.

Green juice is a tasty, unbelievably nutritious superfood, filled with heaps of veggie goodness. It feeds your cells necessary nutrients and boosts your body's ability to fight disease. The juicer eliminates the fiber that keeps you from being able to eat three pounds of green veggies in one sitting (hint, that's a LOT), so green juice allows you to consume more veggies while your digestive tract rests. Since your body doesn't have to break down the vegetables to absorb the nutrition, the juice allows the

body to focus on repair, healing, detoxification, and renewal. Now, that's a win-win!

Oh, and carrots, beets, red or orange bell peppers, apples, or pears add a nice amount of sweetness to the juice. Keep in mind that it's ideal to consume three veggies to one piece of fruit in your juices.

Here's the skinny on the green juice featured in the film *Fat, Sick, and Nearly Dead*:

- 4 stalks of celery
- 1 cucumber (peel off skin)
- 1 ginger root (thumb size, peel off skin)
- 1/2 lemon (skin cut off)
- 2 green apples
- 6 kale leaves

Add all these goodies into your juicer, pour over ice, and savor.

chili; a little square does me good. Also, keep your favorite staples such as nuts and in-season fruits and veggies on hand at home and the office to help avoid trips to the vending machine or corner deli when energy gets low (just say no to Honey Buns).

5. **Finally, last but not least, there's the joy of sight.** There are many ways to make daily life feel like a walk through a museum. En route to work or while walking your dog, notice the bathing bird or sunning feline. Observe street art, people's outfits, and the colors surrounding you. Create expressions of happiness throughout your own environment. Frame photos or postcards that make you smile, hang vintage dresses from curtain rods, display fresh flowers on your table, clear clutter, and let your eyes enjoy an organized, nurturing setting.

Nesting

Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.
~ Leonardo DaVinci

This month's nesting exploration includes one of the items on your weekly checklist: clear clutter. Too many baubles detract from the focal point and function of a room. Even if you live in a tiny studio, take time to put miscellaneous materials into their proper places. The ancient art of feng shui encourages you to let energy flow freely through your home, and it is hard for it to do so when piles of clutter blocks its movement.

In Oklahoma I grew up in a home that contained enough stuff to fill a small-town museum and enough books to start a local library. As I've gotten older, I continually strive to simplify despite my passion for thrifting. With a penchant for books and vintage clothing, allocating these items to their designated spots ensures order in my tiny abode.

Here are a few tricks I've learned along the way and strive to incorporate regularly:

1. **Create an organization system:** If you aren't blessed with a spacious home full of nooks and crannies, consider yourself lucky; you won't store things away and forget you have them. I find it reassuring to have everything



within reach. One way I've dealt with lack of storage space at home and studio is by paring down regularly and investing in a cubicle system (thank you, IKEA) to hold my supplies in labeled boxes or baskets. In the past I've used an armoire as storage for stationery, packaged gifts, computer paraphernalia (where do all those cords come from?), and memory-laden boxes of letters and photos. If guests were coming over, I quickly transported my kitchen table "desk" items into the armoire and no one knew.

- 2. Seasonal deep cleanings:** Four thorough cleanings each year can work wonders to keep clutter at bay and get organized after large projects, holidays, or neglect. These cleanings offer insight into how little you need to get through your day-to-day and can help you see patterns such as hanging clothes on hooks outside the closet rather than back where they belong. Work with these habits to make your routine more conducive to organized living. If necessary, bring in a friend to help with your deep cleaning. Some people really like this process and can be a dose of reality with the torn dish towels or chipped china you just can't let go.
- 3. Cluster like with like:** I have a basket for lip glosses and a bin for all other makeup must-haves, such as eye shadows, powders, sharpeners, mascara, and so on. My loo has five built-in shelves, where I group moisturizers, body lotions, dental care, night creams, leave-in conditioners, and *parfums* for easy access. My closet starts with labeled boxes of tights, legwarmers, and arm warmers, and moves into tops, bottoms, dresses, and coats—all color coordinated. This sort of clustering offers easy access to your goods and helps alleviate frustration over misplaced items.
- 4. Curb the paper trail:** If you subscribe to magazines, go through issues monthly to pull out articles of interest so that you don't accumulate stacks of unread material. Drop off gently used issues at a nursing home, doctor's office, or hospital. Keep your paperwork in pretty labeled files. Gone are the days of only vanilla manila folders. Now you can get aviary-themed, damask, or polka dot files. Seriously, it helps keep filing of tax documents fun. Ok, *almost!* Switch to electronic copies of bills and bank statements, when possible. All these items take their toll on the environment and your home environment, so limit their intrusion.
- 5. Keep flat surfaces empty:** Bookshelves, mantels, bedside tables, kitchen tables, and counters don't have to be stuffed and stacked to the brim. Revel in empty space. This, I must confess, is my hardest one to do regularly. It's

amazing how little available flat surface there is in tiny space, especially when my dining room table is also my desk. My trick: I try to keep the piles on it to one (even if it is super-duper tall, it will seem more manageable than papers strewn over the entire surface). Clear some space and notice how inviting and open it appears. This empty space can help you breathe a little deeper and evoke a feeling of spaciousness.

- 6. Oh, and make your bed:** *Beau* and I created “the great bed-making contract” which translates to the last one out of bed is responsible for making it. We playfully call out violations when it doesn’t happen and, sadly, sometimes poor Louis the pug is the scapegoat. A made bed is a gracious invitation to slumber.

Do-Gooding

The best way to cheer yourself up is to try to cheer somebody else up. ~ Mark Twain



Let’s tie a pink bow around last month’s do-gooding suggestion. Did you connect with a charity close to your heart? Hope so! This month I want to share a story that ties in Mark Twain’s quote as a reminder of how simple smiles can make a big difference.

While leading a recent teacher training on the *yamas* and *niyamas* of yoga (the foundational philosophical tenets), I encouraged the trainees to consider the practice of yoga as they pass homeless people on the streets. Months later a teacher shared how this discussion helped her practice basic courtesies and kindness when passing strangers. In D.C. we have homeless vendors selling a paper called *Street Sense*. She shared how she looked the vendor in the eye and simply stated, “Sorry, not today, but have a great day.” He responded with gratitude for her recognition and acknowledgement of him. This stuck with me and I do my best to look people in the eye and smile.

There is a elderly homeless man that I pass many nights walking home from the studio. He stands outside 7-Eleven and occasionally meekly requests change from passersby. I prefer to give money to organizations that assist various causes versus giving to individuals on the street, but there is something about this man that resonates. Now when I pass him I give a big smile, express how good it is to see him, and often offer to buy him a treat inside. He likes Pepsi. Yep, in a bottle. No can.

We are given the opportunity each day to make a difference in someone else's life through a compliment, a smile, or a gentle touch. A favorite quote by Maya Angelou sums this up nicely, "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

One of my favorite ways to practice this as of late (and it ties in nicely with mindfulness) includes being fully present with the person in front of me. Whether it is my pug, a family member, a yogi asking a question, or a barista making a drink, I work on paying full attention to them in that moment, versus tapping away on my iPhone or planning my next activity. Try it; you (and those you come into contact with) will like it. Now, *that* is basic daily do-gooding.

Work

All that we are is the result of what we have thought. ~ Buddha

This month we're going to explore ways to enhance your personal brand. Last month we explored ways to bridge the gap between your current work reality and your ideal work life. One of my favorite ways to explore this further is to create a personal brand that speaks to who you are and who you hope to become. Recently on Facebook I saw a link to "like" a tattooed, blue-haired woman with a title about being a "rock star mom." I giggled and thought, what a niche that woman is filling. Clearly she wouldn't fit in with the bobs and pearl chokers of the Junior League, but instead has carved out a place of her own. That's what we'll do with the review of your own brand.

Begin by thinking about how you want to present yourself to the world. Personal branding expert Robin Fisher Roffer (tune into *Tranquility du Jour* Podcast #244) lists eight steps to building a personal brand in her book, *Make a Name for Yourself*. She begins the book by encouraging a connection to your authentic self. That's why I loved the example of a mum who didn't align with society's expectations of what a mother should look like. Project your values blended with personal style.

Do you find yourself wearing the same boring navy blue suit when you long for something fuchsia and floral? Or do you find yourself using a smartphone when you prefer paper and pen to keep track of your schedule? There are numerous decisions you make daily that offer the opportunity to express your authentic self. One of the important questions Roffer poses in her book is, "You are a product:

What are you and why?" Turning yourself into a product allows you to see what you feel aligned with. Think about the ways in which you are different. For example, I have a childlike curiosity and ask questions similar to a third-grader: "What makes popcorn pop?" or "What is the consistency of clouds?" You know; random things. What are some eccentricities of your own? Connect with these and let them be part of who you are. Think of personal brands that really stand out such as those of Madonna (always innovating), Martha Stewart (queen of homemaking), and Betsey Johnson (wild and playful).

Identify your passion, values, and strengths (considered the branding trifecta) and pay close attention to the intersection of these categories. *That* is where you will shine. Similar to how companies monitor their competition to ensure they stand out in their own special way, it is important for you, too, to observe people in your industry. Use your branding trifecta to carve out a niche even in a saturated market. Maybe you're a food blogger and know there are tons of them out there. However, rather than posting only photos of your works of art, you include a video and weekly recipe that you send out in a newsletter format. Try these simple ways to let your branding trifecta showcase how you offer something uniquely you to the world.

Style

*Always be a first-rate version of yourself,
instead of a second-rate version of somebody else.*
~ Judy Garland

When you read the word style, you may think Madison Avenue, snooty fashion weeks, and *haute couture*. However, style is so much more. It is the books you read, the tea you drink, the sunnies you wear, and the words you choose. Style is a mode of living. This month, let's explore the style that you present through your daily dress.



One of my goals for the year was to indulge in "daily dress-up." Rather than pulling on my standard "uniform" of TranquilIT flare leggings with a 2in1 top, I wanted to choose additional items from my closet. Even if I'm teaching and taking yoga that day, I can dress in layers, choose a tube top or dress versus my standard uniform, and shake it up a bit. Let's explore what daily dress-up would look like for you.

Observe which staple pieces you are drawn to when you approach your closet every day. I'll bet that you're like me and find yourself donning your favorite pieces day in, day out while neglecting the majority of your wardrobe. Or maybe you have a full closet and feel like you have nothing to wear. The key is to have a connection with all your pieces and know how to mix and match them for easy dressing.

Now take an inventory of your clothing. Maybe not an actual count of everything (geez, earrings and all?), but a visual assessment. Do you see a sea of black (*oui, oui!*), many more tops than bottoms, suits you haven't worn in a decade, rows of structured dresses when you now don comfy clothes in jersey fabrics? No judgment, simply observation and note taking.

Once you have your data (think of yourself as a researcher taking closet field notes), determine next steps. Do you need to narrow down the items in your closet? Sometimes taking a few pieces out to allow for easier morning browsing can make a big difference. Also, something as simple as aligning like with like helps make daily dress-up possible. Put your tops, bottoms, and dresses all together and pair colors together, light to dark.

Notice if there are missing staples that you'd like to add to your collection. A long strand of faux pearls, a boyfriend blazer, or a nicely shaped basic white tee? Add these to your thrifting wish list and let's keep going.

Pull out pieces you haven't worn in more than a year and don't feel particularly aligned with your current or desired image. On very rare occasions do I miss what I have surrendered to another home, so trust me, it's good to let go. Host a swap shop with girlfriends or donate to a local charity. Recognize that by letting go of items taking up space in your closet, you are making daily expression of your creative spark more possible and making someone else very happy. Go through the same purging and categorizing process with shoes and accessories.

Now let's create outfits. If it helps, invite a style-minded girlfriend over and make an event out of it. Have her snap photos of your fave looks and post them inside your closet door as a road map for daily dress-up (or use them on your blog for your outfit of the day). If that feels overwhelming, pull images from magazines that speak to the style you'd like to showcase and post them on your bathroom mirror. Sure, you may not



have the exact piece featured in a magazine, but you probably have items that could work to create a similarly aligned look within your budget.

I get a lot of inspiration from magazines and style blogs that showcase multiple looks created from a few pieces. By getting out of a rut with your standard go-to, you can present your most fabulous self to the world. If you find yourself wedded to that certain outfit day in, day out, or donning an actual uniform for work, spice it up. In my first book, *Hip Tranquil Chick* (pp. 134-135), I give an example of transforming a basic yoga cami and leggings into many looks by adding wraps, ballet flats, pearls, and skirts. Note ways that you, too, can infuse your personality into your everyday basics. Taking the time to do the fieldwork will definitely pay off in the end as you walk into a room feeling like an *ooh la la* representation of you.



TRANQUILITY TIP: 7 STEPS TO HOST A SWAP SHOP

1. Find the perfect space such as a living room or backyard garden setting.
2. Set the date and time.
3. Reach out to girlfriends with similar style, ask them to clean their closets, and gather clean items in good condition for the swap. Encourage everyone to bring at least 10 items and a reusable bag to tote their newly swapped goodies home. You may want to encourage swappers to drop their items in advance for you and a helper to sort.
4. Have the items separated by type (tops, bottoms, dresses, accessories) to assist swappers in finding gems among the piles.
5. On the day of the event, have a full-length mirror or two handy and hangers for showcasing special items from curtain rods, banisters, bookshelves, or a clothesline.
6. Don't forget tasty treats, libations, and extra reusable bags for anyone who forgets theirs or needs extra.
7. After the swap is over, donate what is left to a favorite local women's charity.

Creativity

“The world is but a canvas to the imagination. ~ Henry David Thoreau

Let’s get crafty. This month we’re going to focus on the importance of Artist Dates. There are many little things we can do this month to kindle a spark of passion within. One of the biggest opportunities lies in the Artist Date coined by Julia Cameron and mentioned in your weekly checklist. It’s basically an one-hour weekly solo excursion to nurture your creative spark. It’s solo so that you can connect within, and avoid external distractions. The key is to be fully and completely with yourself and your inner artist. This can be quite scary for many women who are used to playing caretaker or rarely find themselves without a dependent or companion nearby.

Albert Einstein once said he had his best ideas when stepping out of the shower. Steve Jobs loved long walks to think and process. Steven Spielberg is said to get inspiration while he’s driving. That is what you’re doing with weekly Artist Dates: you’re giving your mind the opportunity to rest, play, and uncover ideas that you may not be able to hear clearly during daily life.

Here are a few favorite Artist Date ideas:

- Sit at a café and pen your thoughts
- Visit a favorite museum during your lunch hour
- Take a restorative yoga or dance class
- Stroll the aisles at your favorite indie bookstore
- Pick up art supplies at a craft store
- Browse thrift stores for a discarded gem
- Go to an art or craft fair
- Take a walk around many blocks during an afternoon office break
- Explore an exhibit on a topic *nouveau* to you
- Browse garage sales or flea markets
- Take a trip to a local animal sanctuary, winery, or apple orchard
- Stroll through a new neighborhood
- Hang glass hearts from your trees
- Plant herbs in colorful pots
- Sit under a tree or on a park bench and watch people pass by
- Meander through an antique or vintage store
- Bike ride through a scenic park



The key is to take one hour each week to spend time alone and nurture your creative spark. I enjoy sitting at a table surrounded by magazines, my art journal, paint, and ephemera. I'll light candles and allow myself to retreat into a space of creative play. Business ideas come to me. I even get display ideas (for example, hanging vintage clipboards onto walls and adding promo or inspiring materials) and the creative art journaling process allows my cluttered mind to become spacious. I'll discuss art journaling further in future months; however, this small mention is to whet your palate for the ways regular doses of creative play can reap big rewards.

Creativity expert Alex Osborn wrote in 1942, "Relax. Forget it. Listen to music, go to the theater or go to church." By making an Artist Date a critical component in your weekly routine, you open yourself up for ongoing creative exploration, relaxation, and expression. Make a list of ways in which you will indulge in an Artist Date this year. What exhibits, shows, stores, parks, or classes have you wanted to try? Now you are highly encouraged to insert it into your calendar.

TRANQUILITY TIP: Tune into *Tranquility du Jour* Podcast #201 to hear ideas on creative expression with Creative Living Coach Jamie Ridler.

Dreams

All our dreams can come true, if we have the courage to pursue them.
~ Walt Disney

This month we're going to create a dreams booklet. I've found no lack of energy and enthusiasm for dreams at the start of a new year, but a struggle often ensues to keep them flowing as the days turn to weeks and weeks turn to months. So let's pull your dreams out of a journal and place them into a handmade booklet that helps narrow down and categorize them further. Last month you may have broken them down into your *Tranquilologie* headings for the year: Mindfulness, Self-Care, Nesting, Do-Gooding, Work, Style, Creativity, Dreams; or simply work and play—whatever made the most sense to you.

Now let's look back over these categories and put the heading at the top of colorful index cards, note cards, postcards, or any other tool you choose. List your top three goals for each of the categories this quarter. Yes, this quarter so you'll review and

adjust as needed in April. Limiting it to top three helps soften the sense of overwhelm that may come from reviewing a long list of goals. It doesn't mean you can't have more; however, hone in on your top three for now. Once you have the top three goals for each category, create action steps for each goal. For example, here's one of mine under my KW heading: "Goal: Health. Action Steps: Daily yoga, gym three to five times/week, morning green juices, weekly Artist Dates, mostly vegan diet, mindfulness practice, dance classes, time in nature."

Once you've written your first-quarter goals and action steps onto pretty paper, punch a hole into the top corner of the cards and thread a ribbon or baker's twine through it. *Voilà*, you now have the cutest, personalized dream booklet. Place this inside something you tote daily: your *Tranquility du Jour Daybook*, your favorite book, or handbag. Refer to this daily and let it be a deciding factor when making basic decisions like, "Should I sign up for this retreat or training?" "Should I watch this TV show or go to the gym?" or "Should I get takeout or make a black bean burrito at home?" When it comes down to it, these basic everyday decisions make up the totality of our life experience. No pressure!



OMWORK

1. Host a swap shop
2. Craft your dreams booklet
3. Go on four Artist Dates

SAVVY SOURCES

*The Woman's Comfort Book:
A Self-Nurturing Guide for Restoring Balance in Your Life*
by Jennifer Louden

*Imagine a Woman in Love with Herself:
Embracing Your Wisdom and Wholeness*
by Patricia Lynn Reilly

*Crazy Sexy Diet: Eat Your Veggies,
Ignite Your Spark, and Live Like You Mean It!*
by Kris Carr

*Make a Name for Yourself: Eight Steps Every Woman Needs
to Create a Personal Brand Strategy for Success*
by Robin Fischer Roffer

Desire to Inspire: Using Creative Passion to Transform the World
by Christine Mason Miller

Bonjour, March.



*Spring has returned. The Earth is like a child
that knows poems. ~ Rainer Maria Rilke*

What are you observing as the year unfolds? Tune in to what wants attention. We're already one-sixth of the way through it. This month's adventure takes us on a journey into mindful connection, journal writing, turning your home into a haven, hosting a chariTea event, finding efficiency at work, practicing compassionate communication, art journaling, and creating SMART goals. As the saying goes, "In like a lion, out like a lamb." Let's bloom, grow, and explore.

Mindfulness

Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible. ~ Dalai Lama

Let's start the month with a favorite breathing technique to bring balance to daily drama. Come to a comfortable seated position, close your eyes, and connect to your breath. Inhale. Exhale. Repeat multiple times. Once you feel a connection to your breath, start to lengthen it by counting to two, three, or four between each inhale and exhale. Stay with this for a few minutes and allow your breath to feel long, luxurious, and silky. Once you have the rhythm down, start to count your breath as a way to focus your mind. Inhale, exhale, one. Inhale, exhale, two. Continue this practice for a few minutes. As you lose count thanks to the monkey mind (leaping from thought to thought like a monkey in a forest), start back at one. Use this simple technique to focus the mind and breath daily, if possible. A few minutes of mindfulness practice each day can assist you with balancing the many hats you wear.

I recently read an article about people engaging in social media while eating. Hmmm, that could either be viewed as genius multitasking or massive disconnect. While I, too, am guilty of iPhone addiction at times, I also know when it is not necessary to have it peek out of my purse. Nothing makes me feel more invisible than having dinner with a friend or hosting a gathering where someone's online connection is more of a priority. I've heard that the greatest gift we can give someone is our attention and I have to agree, especially in this day and age of technology obsession.

This month, pay attention to your ability to be present and bask in the experience of being in the moment. Yes, even in a disagreement with your partner, a not-so-tantalizing meeting at work, or on the bus traveling to and fro. Observe what is happening in your body during these moments. Does your heart rate increase? Do you feel a shortening of breath? Is your body warm or cool? Tight or loose? While the moment may not always be pleasant, it is fleeting, so stay with it. And

give the person or situation in front of you your full attention. Think about the barista trying to understand your order while you're gabbing on your mobile, or your loved one wanting your attention while you check Facebook one more time. It's easy to run on autopilot and check e-mail in lines, at stop lights, or in the elevator, but is it *really* necessary? I recall a time when *Beau* was going through a tough time. I came home late from working long hours at the studio, sat at the kitchen table (my home "office"), and opened my computer while he was talking to me about his challenging day. He said, "I hope what you're doing is really important because what I'm talking to you about is really important to me." It was a wake-up call. I hadn't even realized I was being rude and not paying attention. I now try to be more cognizant of this nasty habit.

Challenge yourself to be fully engaged with what is going on internally and externally. Observe how you feel after eating certain foods. Notice how you feel when interacting with various acquaintances. Connect with the feelings that arise when you receive an up-setting e-mail. Really listen to your children, partner, colleagues, and friends. This simple tool can bring you back into a state of mindful connection with the everyday experiences that make up your existence.

Oh, and don't forget your mindful connection toward your theme of this year. May it, and this moment, be a focusing tool to keep you on your path of tranquility.

Self-Care

We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are. ~ Anaïs Nin

Let's explore journal writing as a mode of self-care and self-expression. Journal writing is an inexpensive form of therapy and a great confidant to your shadow side—and we all have one. *Beau* calls mine "Lil' Becky." Sometimes she gets a bit snippy and doesn't present her most fabulous self. *Et toi?* Do you have a Lil' Becky? Well, the great thing about journal writing is that it allows you to express your uncensored self and to pour out all the emotions that bubble up inside. And on any given day, there can be dozens of them. Sometimes all at once.

Let me start by sharing some of the proven benefits of journaling so it doesn't feel like some silly chore added to your already overflowing to-dos, but rather a terrific Tranquility Tool you can't wait to embrace. Studies show that journal writing helps lower stress, reduce pent-up emotions, enhance breakthroughs, and stimulate mental development. All you have to do is begin. Staring at a blank page or screen is often the scariest part. Never fear; I'll give you prompts to help

the process flow. I've met many who confess they write one or two entries at the beginning of each year only to promptly put their journals back on the shelf until next year's round of resolutions. The key is to make it a habit. Make being alone with your thoughts a regular priority.



I've written in a journal since grade school and tend to tote one everywhere I go. Over the years I've found my writing waxes and wanes based on what is going on in my life. Also, writing for my blog, *Tranquility du Jour*, serves as an expressive outlet that sometimes leaves me lacking fodder for my personal journal because I've already shared it with my online community. Know that not every entry will flow and it's okay. That's where simple prompts come in—to give you that little kick in the journal-writing pants.

To begin, find a journal that fits your lifestyle and isn't unduly burdensome to tote. My current journal is an artistic 3x5 hardcover book that I write in with Sharpies, colored markers, and a felt-tip pen. It's easy to tote, filled with decorative unlined paper, and makes me happy to open. In the past I've used a lot of lined spiral notebooks and decided to change things up with this one. Choose something that feels right for your lifestyle and is purse-portable.

TRANQUILITY TIP— JOURNAL WRITING PROMPTS:

Describe your ideal day from start to finish in great detail.

When was the last time you cried?

What scares you?

Write a list of 50 things that bring you joy.

What grand change would you like to make in the world?

Where do your strengths and passions overlap?

Describe what you're feeling emotionally, physically, and spiritually right now.

What's your legacy?

What do you want to do more of each day?

Does your schedule reflect your priorities?

Are you happy?

If you had all the time and money in the world, how would you spend it?

What's next?

Next, begin by penning your thoughts free form. What themes are arising? What are you feeling in your body? What are you longing for? What is hard for you to get out of your mind? Date your entries or pick up a library date stamp at your local office supply store and stamp them instead. The key is to simply let your thoughts flow, explore recurring themes, and have a safe space to vent and process.

There are other ways to use your journal, such as logging food or money. By tracking what you eat and how you feel before and after eating or how much you spend coupled with associated emotions, you can identify triggers. Triggers are instigators to action. For example, a trigger for overeating may be getting a negative review at work, and a trigger for overindulging in retail therapy may be a breakup or boredom.

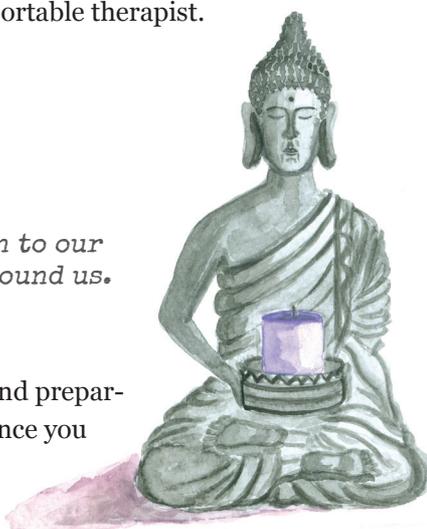
Journal writing in all forms offers a wonderful window into what makes you tick and, ultimately, is a tremendous, reasonably priced form of therapeutic self-care. Personally, I consider it a cheap and portable therapist.

Nesting

In solitude we give passionate attention to our lives, to our memories, to the details around us.
~ Virginia Woolf

March is well known for spring cleaning and preparing for blooms in nature and beyond. Since you cleared clutter last month, let's explore turning your home into a haven. Setting up your space in a way that nurtures your spirit can have profound effects on your ability to find tranquility among life's chaos. Let's explore six small touches that make up a home.

- 1. Set up an altar.** Make it your sacred space to worship, pray, meditate, or practice yoga. Set out candles, pictures, statues, and accoutrements such as a yoga mat or meditation cushion to ensure you have just what you need to get into the zone. Mine is in front of my fireplace. Yours may be on a small side table by your couch or on a window sill. Get creative, especially if you live in a small space.



- 2. Make bathing an art.** Did you know that bathing used to be considered a remedy for mental illness? These days I use it for sacred solitude nearly nightly. Despite a tiny loo, my bathing ritual evokes pure opulence when I pour in bubble bath, sip cool water with a slice of lemon, and sink into the tub. Surrounded by candlelight, my eyes close and my mind begins to still.
- 3. Carve out a creativity nook.** Keep creative work accessible for when the mood strikes. I like to keep my art journal handy, along with stamps, acrylic paint, Sharpies, cute tags, and Washi tape. These few products ensure I've got what I need to indulge in a dose of creative play even during the busiest of days.

- 4. Accessorize your accessories.**
Display your earrings, necklaces, hats, and scarves in a visible location that invites them out to play. I have a corkboard covered with pink velvet fabric where I display my baubles using vintage pearl stickpins.



- 5. Make your bedroom a sanctuary.** This ideally means sans TV and work. Keep it as simple as possible with fresh linens, candles, clothes, and flowers. My bedroom is in the back of my condo so it gets very little light and is cave-like—perfect for slumber. I have a small pink damask box by my bed with hand lotion, lip balm, a pad of paper and pen for capturing late-night ideas, earplugs, and an eye mask. Otherwise, the room is fairly sparse to encourage letting go when the sleep fairy comes for a visit.
- 6. Kitchens are for nourishing.** Keep your pantry stocked with basic nutritious staples such as green tea, nuts, seeds, veggie soups, agave nectar, dried cranberries, brown rice, and black beans. If you've missed a week at the grocery store to pick up perishables like fruits and veggies, a stocked pantry means you have healthy alternatives in the interim.

We'll continue to explore ways to make your home a haven as the months go on. Begin with these few steps and watch your passion for nesting grow, along with your connection to your inner homebody.



TRANQUILITY TIP- MAKE A FABRIC CHANDELIER:

Grab an embroidery hoop in the size of your choice, scraps of fabric and trim, a glue gun, and fishing wire or ribbon. Gather your fabric and trim. Include things like pompom trim, burlap, lace, satin ribbon, and fabrics of your choice from your project scraps or store remnants. Cut (or tear, if cotton) an assortment of two- to three-foot by one- to two-inch fabric strips. Attach them to your embroidery hoop by tying them or wrapping them around and gluing them for a variety. Add as many as you'd like and trim to ensure the preferred length. Use your fishing wire or ribbon on three different areas of the hoop and knot them together at the top. Tie a bow and hang your new chandelier from a tree for an outdoor gathering, or the ceiling if inside.

Do-Gooding

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

~ Margaret Mead

So much good to do, so little time. I hope you've enjoyed a new or rekindled connection to a special cause. This month let's explore ways to host events to spread the word about a charity close to your heart. Considering volunteering and entertaining are on your monthly checklist, this is a win-win.

In *Hip Tranquil Chick* and *Tranquilista*, I shared ways to raise awareness (and funds or goods) for your favorite cause by throwing a flair-filled *fête* coined a ChariTea. Good old-fashioned tea parties combined with activism can be a glamorous tool for change. A ChariTea builds community and is a great networking experience. It's perfect for getting your name out there as the do-gooding hostess connected with a special cause. And, as discussed in January, this encourages a thorough housecleaning, too. Below are my expanded to-dos based on recent ChariTea hosting to set the wheels in motion and take you from concept to completion:

Four Weeks Before:

- Determine your charity or cause to highlight
- Send invites to your like-minded pals and invite 20 percent more than you can fit (typically only 70 percent to 80 percent of invitees make it)

- Establish your theme and note decorations needed
- Plan the menu
- Reach out to the charity, request promotional materials, and invite a guest speaker
- Set up an event on Facebook and share the link with the charity to help promote it



One Week Before:

- Send a reminder to attendees and guest speaker
- Buy dry goods: drinks, treats, nuts, candles, striped straws, chalkboards
- Pick up assorted teacups, saucers, and cloth cocktail napkins from your local thrift store or borrow extras from a friend
- Make a cute DIY fabric banner (how-to in September) or chandelier (how-to above) to set a festive handmade tone

A Few Days Before:

- Buy fresh food
- Create a playlist to set the mood (May I suggest *The Great Gatsby* soundtrack or a little Mazzy Star?)
- Buy fragrant flowers or pussy willows (Added flair: tie fabric strips around them)
- Stuff goody bags
- Deep clean *maison*

TASTY CHARITEA SAMPLE MENU

Finger sandwiches such as vegan cream cheese-cucumber-arugula and vegan goat cheese-pecan-cilantro, cut into squares or triangles

Various scones, breads, and cakes • Jams and spreads

Tea biscuits, cookies, and macarons

Fresh fruit selection (assorted berries, green apples, pears)

Black, green, white, and herbal tea selection

Wine, bubbly, water with mint leaves

Raw sugar, lemon wedges, and dairy-free cream

Day Of:

- Prepare, display, and label food with chalkboard signs
- Set mood: light candles, play music, display decorations such as Mason jars with fabric strips wrapped around to hold flowers or cocktails
- Make goody bags: a box of organic fair trade tea and chocolates, homemade tea biscuits, promotional materials from your chosen charity
- If chilly outside, specify a place for coats—tossed on bed is easy and acceptable for small spaces
- Set up a libation station of water with mint sprigs, wine or bubbly, an assortment of teas, hot water, raw sugar, spoons, and cloth napkins
- Indulge in a restorative yoga pose prior to guests' arrival
- Don your most fabulous and comfy ensemble
- Be the hostess with the mostess: greet and introduce guests warmly, keep drinks and laughter flowing, ensure an abundant food table throughout the event, give guests a goody bag on their way out
- Have someone designated to collect canned goods, clothing, or charity donations from guests as they arrive
- Introduce the guest speaker from your chosen charity
- Take oodles of photos to share with attendees and the charity

Follow Up:

- Send thank-you notes to guests, speakers, and helpers via snail mail
- Post photos from ChariTea through your social media channels to continue awareness-raising
- Celebrate your success and share the outcome of the event: X amount raised, X new supporters of the cause, X number of canned goods, et cetera.

You have all the accoutrements for throwing a spectacular *soirée* with a socially conscious twist. See kimberlywilson.com/resources for a complete toolkit.

Work

*Your work is to discover your work and then
with all your heart give yourself to it.
~ Buddha*



This month, let's explore ways to become more efficient and effective in our work at home, at the office, and in the community. One recurring complaint is how busy people are and it's a by-product of our fast-paced lifestyles. However, what if you were given a tiny key to help alleviate some of this rush and were, in turn, able to experi-

ence more tranquility amidst the deadlines? You'd welcome it, right? Well, that's where we're focusing this month.

To start, track your time for an entire week. I know, I know, trust me. A favorite resource can be found at my168hours.com. Print out the time-capturing PDF provided and note what you're doing each hour of the week. Review your print-out at the end of the week to note how much time is spent on priorities such as health, family, spirituality, creativity, et cetera. Observe how much time is spent on tasks that aren't priorities, such as watching TV, mindlessly browsing the Internet, or working in a job that doesn't excite you. No judgment, simply observation. Track the data for seven days (even if it doesn't feel typical, as we rarely ever have a "typical week") to shed light on why you feel oh-so-busy and where your time is really going.

Now that you have this data, let's determine what steps to take so when asked, "How are you?" your response extends beyond, "Aw, very busy!" If your days are filled with projects that don't align with your values, what can you do to alter this? For example, maybe you're working on a project that drains you and you long to be doing something else within your department (or a whole different career). What can you do now to shift the amount of time and energy on this particular project to something that better fits your passion? Ask your boss for a new placement, check in with a supervisor in another department to see if they could use your skills, or begin exploring positions outside your organization that feel like a better fit. Considering work takes up the majority of our waking hours, it's critical that you find something that aligns with your spirit and strengths.

Another idea is to get clear on your strengths and strive to find work that nurtures these strengths. We'll explore strengths further in November. In the interim, note if are you an introvert. (Refer to thepowerofintroverts.com.) If so, presentations, small talk, and networking probably won't be your cuppa tea for a large chunk of your working hours. However, you may find that crunching numbers or teaching a small group of students works best. The key to being efficient and effective is to stop trying to be something you're not.

Also, let deadlines guide your to-dos. Juggling various businesses and schooling over the past decade plus, my week's MITs stem from what is due that week—a writing deadline, an event to host, a collection to launch, et cetera. Again, this will help you to be effective with time management so daily tasks are moving you toward bigger picture goals and deadlines.

Knowledge is power. By knowing how time is spent, where your interests lie, and what your MITs are for the week, month, and year, you'll be better equipped to make strategic decisions that contribute to feelings of joy, tranquility, and accomplishment.

Style

Style is a simple way of saying complicated things. ~ Jean Cocteau

Personal style is evident not only in your clothing, accessories, and décor, but also in the way you connect with the world at large. We even have our own leadership, tea sipping, and gift-giving styles. Style is a means of expression. Let's explore ways to present yourselves in a thoughtful, compassionate, and clear manner.

You communicate constantly through body language and facial expressions, e-mails, and written memos, as well as verbally. Take time to be sure your communications accurately reflect what you want to convey. It will help avoid misinterpretations or hurt feelings. Establish a signature communication style and determine how you make others feel when they interact with you. For example, a signature touch to my snail mail is the inclusion of a tea bag secured with decorative washi tape.

Here are six conscious communication tips:

- 1. Be clear and concise.** Observe yourself speaking. Are “um” and “like” a regular part of your lingo? Save your syllables and let go of stammering, which dilute your meaning. As a teacher of yoga teachers, I encourage clear and concise cues when instructing a class. The same is necessary in everyday life. Get to the point. Avoid excessive use of just, a bit, sort of, kind of—remove them from your written communications and notice how much more confident the sentence sounds. As a favorite yoga teacher, Sharon Gannon, instructs, “Say what you mean, mean what you say.” If an e-mail is longer than five or so lines, pick up the phone instead of pounding away on your keyboard. Use appropriate means of communication, and know your audience. For example, older family members or friends may much prefer a phone call to an e-mail, whereas your tween niece may prefer a text or Facebook message.
- 2. Express gratitude.** Consider doing so via snail mail. Invest in personalized stationery made of recycled paper, sparkly pens, and a signature closer, such as a wax seal, sticker, or stamp. Take the time to pen a letter and bring joy to the recipient whose mail may typically consist of bills or unwanted promotional mate-



rials. Ideally a thank-you note should be sent within one to two weeks upon receipt of gifts or after events. This tiny courtesy says so much and definitely determines whom I hire, commingle with, and admire. Likewise, consistently acknowledge others for a job well done and let “thank you” roll off your tongue on a regular basis.

- 3. Remember names.** We love the sound of our own name. Using it shows you care enough to remember someone and can help you stand out in the crowd. If you’re not good with names, try coming up with a mnemonic such as “Tangerine Tiffany” if Tiffany is wearing an orange top. This simple strategy makes others feel special and acknowledged.
- 4. Share expectations.** Many upsets stem from unfulfilled expectations or assumptions. Often the person who you are upset with may have been completely in the dark. One way to avoid this is to clarify expectations in writing whenever possible to help alleviate miscommunication. Restate something as simple as an arrival time when confirming a meeting (and also share your phone number in case anyone is caught in traffic and running late). Note the time zone when setting up phone calls. If you’re more of a kick-back-and-relax vacationer while your partner longs to see every sight within a 10-mile radius, you’re in for a very long vacation unless expectations are established. Everyday transactions between you and those who share your life can be greatly enhanced through clearly communicating expectations.
- 5. Be kind.** Without overdoing emoticons, make sure your written communication comes across as loving and compassionate. Use an exclamation point after “Thanks!” Start your correspondence by thanking the recipient for reaching out. End on a positive note. Answer the phone with a pleasant tone even if you’re balancing a toddler on one hip and a box of veggies from your CSA (community-supported agriculture) on the other. If you’re steaming, take time to respond and choose your words wisely as they have the capacity to spread love—or not.
- 6. Go gossip free.** This silly banter can produce karmic demerits. When I worked at a law firm in my 20s, I was shocked at how much interest people took in others’ misfortunes. Since I know what goes around comes around, I did my best to avoid such indulgences and to say something positive about the person in the hot seat. Luckily, as the owner of yoga-related organizations, I don’t come across this negativity too often. When I hear others complaining about another style or teacher of yoga, I do my best to find something uplifting to say, and then move on. You don’t want to be *that* girl: the one you can’t trust to honestly express how she feels, but who does so behind your back. When in doubt, ask yourself if you would tell the person you are speaking about what you are saying or if you’d be okay with it printed on the front page of a major newspaper.

No matter how lovely you present yourself, if you communicate in a manner not aligned with compassion, you will create unnecessary suffering along the way. By following these six tips, you can alleviate drama and promote peace.

Creativity

Without images, thinking is impossible. ~ Aristotle

Let's cross another item off our monthly checklist: create something. For March let's make an art journal spread and incorporate your journal writing from this month's Self-Care. As you'll recall, journal writing includes putting words and data (such as numbers for the money journal) down on paper. With creativity, take it a step further and incorporate images. Think of it as blending the vision board you created in January's Creativity with this month's Self-Care.

To get started, don your apron and open your journal to any page. Yes, any page—it doesn't have to be the beginning, fellow Type As. Sprinkle a few dots of acrylic craft paint and smear it across the page with your card. Since the paint is out and your apron is on, go ahead and paint a few more pages. Mix various colors or keep a consistent one-color theme—the choice is yours. To keep the pages from sticking together, insert wax paper between them while drying.

Once a page is dry (usually a few minutes if the application was light), pen whatever is on your mind onto the painted page. Note how you are feeling, what the process of painting the page felt like, what's currently taking up lots of mental space—anything. It feels oh-so-retro using pencil for this process and works perfectly over paint. It glides smoothly, brings back feelings of elementary school, and feels less permanent. If you don't like what you write or want to keep it forever private, paint over it after you get it out of your system.

Since you have your paint and journal handy, tear out a page from your journal, paint it, cut it into any size, and write a love note to a friend. Nothing like a homemade card to warm someone's heart while also nurturing your own creative spark.

TRANQUILITY TIP: Gather your supplies: journal, apron to protect clothing, acrylic paint (\$2 per bottle at craft stores), expired gift card or credit card, wax paper.

Dreams

One of the most dangerous forms of human error is forgetting what one is trying to achieve.~ Paul Nitze

Let's explore a favorite monthly process that I go through to record my dreams while reflecting in an artsy way. To start, tear out an image from a magazine that speaks to you. I find Anthropologie catalogs full of eye candy and perfect for this process. Next, grab a Sharpie pen and list the various goals you hope to accomplish during this month. I like to doodle a box next to each dream to review and, ideally, check off at the end of the month.

Here's the key when choosing what to put down on your monthly dreams tear sheet: SMART. You've probably heard the SMART acronym before, so I'll tweak it to fit this specific exercise that I've found to be so helpful (and fun!) over the years.

S: *specific, significant, stretching, savvy*

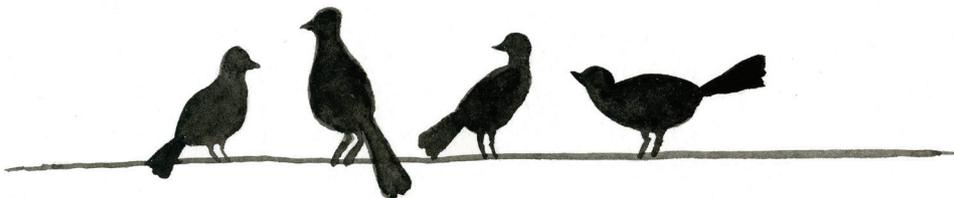
M: *measurable, meaningful, motivational, mindful*

A: *agreed upon, attainable, achievable, acceptable, action-oriented*

R: *realistic, relevant, reasonable, rewarding, results-oriented*

T: *time-based, timely, tangible, trackable, tranquil*

My favorite part is that these dreams are very time-based. You have one month to focus on them so it helps keep the possibilities in check. While going back to school and getting a new degree wouldn't be listed on this monthly dreams page, noting something along the lines of "research social work programs in the area" would be perfect. Upon completion, tape it inside your planner or journal (preferably with decorative washi tape) and review it at month's end to give kudos for all you accomplished. If it still feels relevant, transfer over what didn't happen to the following month or decide to surrender it and craft new dreams. Rinse and repeat.





NOTES:



OMWORK

1. Practice being fully in the moment
2. Observe and enhance your communication style
3. Make a date to host a chariTea

SAVVY SOURCES

Voice of Her Own: Women and the Journal Writing Journey
by Marlene Schiwy

*Non-Violent Communication: A Language of Life: Create Your Life,
Your Relationships, and Your World in Harmony with Your Values*
by Marshall Rosenberg

Gift of a Letter: Giving the Gift of Ourselves
by Alexandra Stoddard

Real Happiness: The Power of Meditation
by Sharon Salzberg

168 Hours: You Have More Time Than You Think
by Laura Vanderkam

Bonjour, April.



*Live a balanced life: learn some and think some and draw and
paint and sing and dance and play and work every day some.*

~ Robert Fulghum

A fresh quarter, a new month, and the chance to start again. Actually, each and every day offers this opportunity and today is no exception. This month is all about balance through yin yoga, Bed Days, home-steady by whipping up homemade jam, a terrarium and urban garden, guerrilla gardening, writing, home style, adding special touches, and seasonal reflection. Let each day be an opportunity to express yourself and live fully with an infusion of mindful work and play. You deserve it. Let's begin, *tout suite*.

Mindfulness

Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance you must keep moving.

~ Albert Einstein



This month's mindfulness adventure is an introduction to two of my fave yin yoga poses: a hip-opening forward fold and a backbend. Yin yoga is a perfect counter to a traditional flow yoga practice and is based in Chinese medicine. It is said to have a similar effect to acupuncture—sans needles. Meridians are invisible pathways through which energy flows. An acupuncturist inserts needles into meridians to open blocked energy and allow it to flow more freely. Yin poses stimulate certain meridians and stretch the connective tissue of the body—rather than muscle in a standard hatha yoga class. Yoga is a journey and yin yoga is a yummy, slow, quiet practice.

We'll start with butterfly, my go-to pose for a daily dose of tranquility. It works wonders on stretching the lower back and stimulates the kidney meridian of the body, considered critical to fluid energy flow. Butterfly also helps to calm the mind and ground the spirit.

1. To begin, sit on the floor with your legs extended in front of you. Bend your knees and bring the soles of your feet together to form a diamond shape. Your knees will resemble butterfly wings—hence the pose name. Bend forward from your hips and round your spine. Let your head rest on the soles of your feet (or a blanket or pillow that you place between your head and feet). Take deep full breaths and stay here one to five minutes.

As you know, we never want pain in yoga. Instead, find that sweet spot of sensation located between stagnation and pain. In yoga—and life—it's referred to as "finding your edge." Ah, a beautiful reminder for everyday living. If you feel any discomfort beyond yummy sensation, back out of the pose and add a pillow under your hips or your knees, or lessen the time you hold the pose.

2. Our next yin yoga pose, seal, is one to enliven your spirit. Back pain issues are a common phenomenon these days, so caring for your spine is a beneficial daily activity. Begin by coming onto your belly and extend your arms out into a “V” at a 45-degree angle. Open your feet the width of your yoga mat and point your toes. Walk your hands in toward your body a few inches as you lift your torso and belly. Adjust your hands to shift the intensity of the pose. Bring your hands closer to your body to deepen the pose and walk them away to lessen the intensity.

To stretch the back of your neck, lower your chin to your chest. Breathe here 30 seconds to three minutes, depending on how flexible your spine is feeling today. Remember, we only want sensation, not pain. For a variation, bring your elbows directly under your shoulders and extend your forearms straight ahead into sphinx pose. Many find this pose to be less intense while offering a similar lower back stretch.

After you’ve indulged in these yummy yin poses, press back into a wide-kneed child’s pose. Bring your big toes together, open your knees as wide as comfortable, and drop your hips to your heels. Relax your belly and chest between your knees and soften your head to the earth. If you need additional support, rest over a bolster or place a blanket between your hips and heels.

These two poses help counter your on-the-go pace with an infusion of intense, deep stretching that nurtures the body while slowing the mind. Play with each of these this month and notice how the poses affect you in the moment and over time. Mindfulness is the act of fully paying attention. How will you pay attention deeply and lovingly this month?

Self-Care

*Being extremely honest with oneself is a good exercise.
~ Sigmund Freud*

You’ve probably heard me rave about Bed Days before. They began a few years into self-employment when I would stay in bed for an entire day and declare it my sacred space. Bed Days would happen when I was on the verge of burnout or exhaustion and needed a dose of recharge. The point is to nest and relish in having no plans. For a Type A planner this is a huge accomplishment. And, yes, sometimes I do have to schedule these special days well in advance.

Overall, there are no rules for Bed Day, only the intention to stay in bed and avoid having to be “on.” To set up a successful Bed Day extravaganza I begin by donning comfy lounge wear that makes me feel *très chic* despite being in bed. Typically I wear a concoction of my clothing line, TranquiliT—something fitted, stretchy, and layered. I’ll brew a pot of tea and place it bedside, along with a carafe of mint-infused water. I light scented soy candles when the day begins to signify the start of my mini-retreat and love lighting incense in addition to my aromatherapy burner, too. The more scents, the merrier.

Set the stage with inspiring background music. To make it easy, try classical. You’ll find *moi* surrounded by a big pile of books, Kindle, *Daybook*, journal, and pens. If I don’t have all of these things, I feel like something’s missing and need to gather them before settling in for Bed Day. I also like to have simple snacks on hand such as a bowl of plain almonds mixed with dried cranberries for a dose of vitamin E and vitamin C, wasabi peas for a spicy kick, and a bit of dark chocolate with chili in the name of antioxidants, of course.

Declare the bed a makeup-free zone, but moisturizer, a dab of *Tranquillè* (my *parfum* created in Paris) behind the ears, and lip balm are encouraged. They’ll keep you comfy and feeling fresh. Let yourself lose track of time. Declare Bed Day only when you have no other obligations. Time is irrelevant. Don’t forget to invite your furry companions, as every day is Bed Day for them. Follow in their paw prints. Surround yourself with piles of pillows and cozy blankets to curl up and nap in between reading, writing, and daydreaming.

Some people ask me, “Do you really stay in bed all day?” And my answer is a glorious, “*Oui!*” Nothing makes me happier. The days are few and far between, but are the most sacred form of self-care I know. Try it; you’ll like it.

Nesting

Life is really simple, but we insist on making it complicated. ~ Confucius



There is a sweet DIY movement of returning to simpler times and basking in a bit of old-fashioned homemaking. Although I currently use my oven for storage (I promise I remove items for baking beloved kale chips), there is a deep-seated desire to turn *chez moi* into a homemaking haven. Here are a few favorites to help you connect to your inner Martha Stewart: make strawberry rhubarb jam, create a terrarium, and start an urban garden.



STRAWBERRY RHUBARB JAM

courtesy of Mama Wilson

2 bags of frozen rhubarb
4 cups of sugar
1 cup fresh or frozen strawberries
1 3 oz. package of strawberry gelatin-free dessert

Combine rhubarb, sugar, and strawberries in a heavy sauce pan and stir to blend well. Put on low heat and bring to boil, stirring occasionally. When it reaches a full boil in approximately 15 minutes, remove from heat and stir in the strawberry gelatin-free dessert. Put in processed jars and seal (which have been patiently waiting to be filled in low boiling water).

Canning how-to in September.

MAKE A TERRARIUM

(Tune into Tranquility du Jour Podcast #255 with Kacy Paide to hear more on creating these works of art.)

After falling in love with terrarium art, I planted ten succulent plants into tiny terra cotta pots and a glass bell jar. I was smitten. Here's how you, too, can join the obsession: Choose plants with the same environmental needs. If you want sun-loving plants, an open container will work perfectly for cacti and succulents. Plants that thrive in low light and high levels of humidity should be placed in a closed container, such as ferns, mosses, and baby's tears.

Supplies:

Find a glass container with an opening large enough to insert plants (although I have seen them created in a light bulb, too). In the States you can pick up reasonably priced, unique glassware at discount stores such as T.J. Maxx and HomeGoods. Gather small stones for drainage (for example gravel, pebbles, broken pottery, or river rocks), crushed charcoal, sand, soil, and plants.

Instructions:

Clean and dry your container thoroughly to prevent bacteria from growing. Create drainage at the bottom using pebbles or by adding a hole in the container. Add a thin layer of crushed charcoal to help keep the soil fresh. Add soil and create a

hole large enough for the roots of each plant. Place plants into the soil, largest to smallest, and lightly pack the soil. Consider the negative space for other landscaping opportunities like dried flowers, ground cover, moss, or small figurines. Be the designer of your own landscape—a great metaphor for life.

To maintain your terrarium, water your plants one to two times per week. For an open terrarium, the soil should always remain barely moist, never bone dry. Closed terrariums rarely need watering. Prune dead foliage or overgrown plants to help prevent rotting. Terrariums thrive in natural, indirect light so avoid placing it in direct sunlight. Mist your terrarium daily to provide ample humidity.

URBAN GARDENING

Despite my tiny digs, I long to harvest my own veggies. Ah, the joy of picking your own tomato fresh from the vine. According to *Organic Gardening*, vegetables have only three basic requirements: light, soil, and water. And the best part is they don't have to be planted in the ground and grow great in containers. Think outside the container: fire escape, roof, doorways, sidewalks, balcony, or windowsill.

Find a spot for your pots that gets six to eight hours of sunlight a day and has access to water. In general, shallow-rooted plants, such as lettuce, spinach, radishes, and most herbs, need only six to eight inches of soil depth to grow well. Deeper-rooted plants, such as tomatoes and squash, need 12 inches of soil. Terra cotta pots, wooden boxes, and even five-gallon buckets make great containers. Make sure your containers have drainage holes and are big enough to support the plants growing in them. Fill your containers with a well-draining potting mix (topsoil will compact in containers) that has some compost or an organic granulated fertilizer mixed in. Add your plants. Water and sprinkle with love. Enjoy your harvest.



These three projects will allow you the opportunity to play happy homemaker in an empowering “look what I made” way.

Do-Gooding

Gardens, scholars say, are the first sign of commitment to a community. When people plant corn they are saying, let's stay here. And by their connection to the land, they are connected to one another.
~Anne Raver

This month's do-gooding adventure is focused on guerrilla gardening. This translates to prettying up not-so-pretty space around you. Similar to recent months' mentions of ways to make a difference through small acts of kindness, gardening is a lovely way to get your hands dirty, beautify your community, and connect to the environment.

To begin, find an orphaned plot of land—neglected flower bed, overgrown patches, planters sprouting litter or weeds, bare muddy patches. Picture it sans trash, covered in colorful native plants and flowers planted by you. One guerrilla gardener in London uses lots of herbs such as lavender and thyme, tulip bulbs, and shrubs. Determine your gardening date. Consider either a secretive midnight mission (imagine waking up to beauty after your “attack”) or openly during the daytime as a way to encourage neighborhood engagement.

Gather your supplies: plants, tools such as rakes, shovels, gloves, water, trash bags. Create a sweet homemade sign to leave at the scene of your gardening that encourages people to be mindful of the space. Choose hardy, native, inexpensive plants that will work year round in your climate. Consider plants that will help create a habitat for butterflies and birds.

Now, make the magic happen. Clear the land of trash and weeds to prepare the soil for planting. Plant and water your new babies, post your sign, and clean the area thoroughly before leaving. Return to the space regularly to water, weed, and sprinkle love on your new garden patch.

There are also seed bombs (also known as “seed balls” and “green grenades”), which are a fistful of compacted compost stuffed full of differing seeds. When carefully tossed into its new home, the hope is that it will trigger a lovelier habitat. See the following Tranquility Tip for the recipe.

TRANQUILITY TIP- MAKE YOUR OWN SEED BALLS:

Combine 2 parts mixed seeds with 3 parts compost or potting soil. Stir in 5 parts powdered red or brown clay and moisten with water until mixture is damp enough to mold into balls. Pinch off a penny-sized piece of the mixture and roll it between the palms of your hands into a tight ball (maybe one inch in diameter). Set the balls on newspaper and allow to dry for 48 hours. Store in a cool, dry place until you're ready to throw them. Finally, toss 'em over a fence and watch love bloom. Of course, be mindful of other people's property and ensure that the site is abandoned and will benefit from your dose of flair.

Work

There is time for departure even when there's no certain place to go. ~ Tennessee Williams

This month let's explore ways to stay relevant and practice professional self-growth. An acquaintance recently mentioned he loves his job, but goes on information-gathering interviews a few times a year to stay *au courant* on what's going on within his industry. He emphasized the importance of keeping résumés up-to-date to jump at seemingly too-good-to-be-missed opportunities. I've heard the résumé advice before, but going on interviews to see what's new in the industry was a fresh idea. Also, it's a great way to explore how your role would be different at another organization or get inspiring ideas for incorporating into your current position.



In addition to occasional interviews and keeping your résumé updated, there are other ways to push your comfort zone, learn new skills, and establish yourself as an expert such as writing. While leading yoga teacher trainings, I encourage aspiring teachers to begin writing about their yoga journey in their journals, on a blog, or through their thesis. Writing is a skill that needs to be honed and getting comfortable with expressing yourself through this medium can only benefit you in the long run. We write e-mails, memos, letters, and to-do lists. Why not do them clearly, concisely, and compassionately?

I began writing my blog, *Tranquility du Jour*, in October 2004, and before then I was an avid journal writer and article submitter. Over the past few years I've added books, *Hip Tranquil Chick*, *Tranquilista*, *Tranquility du Jour Anthology*, and now *Tranquilologie* Second Edition, to my portfolio and had a weekly column in a newspaper for a couple of years. My father is a writer and I feel as if the practice is in my DNA, although I know there's always room for growth. In order to enhance my skills, I've taken most writing opportunities that came my way; signed up for writing classes, workshops, and retreats; requested advice from editors; and sought out writers whose style I admire.

I've written the website, newsletter, and promotional copy for my businesses over the years and have recently handed over pieces to team members who can convey a similar tone. There is always an opportunity to bring your brand to life in living color. Think of your note cards, business cards, e-mail signature, and overall branding message—it is often conveyed in the written word. As a professional, you probably do oodles of daily writing, so explore ways to make it more colorful, inviting, and inspirational.

Seek opportunities to write for your company intranet, industry newsletter, guest post on a beloved blog, or start a new column on your own blog. Writing is a tool that can continually be sharpened, offers an opportunity for self-expression, and helps establish you as an expert in a world inundated with messaging. Make your written word sparkle and shine. Bird by bird (see Savvy Sources to decipher).

Style

Beauty is how you feel inside, and it reflects in your eyes. It is not something physical. ~ Sophia Loren

Let's explore expression of style through your physical surroundings. When creating the latest iteration of my studio, Tranquil Space, I coined the term "Zen Princess" to describe the decorating style. You'll find lots of greenery, muted paint colors, eco-flooring, recycled wood, damask print, and chandeliers. The look is a melding of two different worlds and it works well for me. *Chez moi* began with the decorating style "Rock and Roll Princess" (leopard-print accents, raspberry walls, chandeliers), but has evolved more into "Granny Chic Princess" (vintage dresses hanging from bookshelves, art supplies strewn about, damask ottomans, plus my staple raspberry walls and chandeliers). Ah, the evolution of a lived-in space.

When people see your work and living spaces, what style do you project? Shabby chic? Cosmopolitan? Eccentric? What do you *want* to project? That may be very different than what you're exhibiting. Explore ways to bridge the gap so that your home and office become a reflection of who you are at this very moment. Let's explore a few ways to make your living space authentically you.

A favorite simple touch for home and office is the use of lamp lighting. Interior designer Albert Hadley says it perfectly, "I personally try to avoid all ceiling lights because I think that overhead light is a tragedy." I have to agree. Table lamps, floor lamps, sconces, and hanging lights are a wonderful addition to a room. Pick up a few lamps at a discount store, turn off your florescent overhead lights, and watch your office or living room shine with an amber glow.

I have a friend with a beautifully decorated home where you can't sit down to enjoy the space for fear of leaving a crumb or moving a perfectly positioned vase out of place. Create a comfortably chic space where guests feel like they are in a nurturing, welcoming environment. I used to have my desk set up to face people as they walked in or sat for our meetings. Now my desk is along a wall and I turn my body to meet and greet guests. Simply turning a piece of furniture 90 degrees can have a big effect on the room as a whole and the message you're sending. Have spare chairs set aside for impromptu meetings or dinner guests to accommodate on the fly.

Make your space as cozy as possible. When I worked at a law firm I had a bright pansy throw on my office's spare chair for spontaneous picnics in the park across the street. Now I keep throws tossed over my chaise and settee at home. Throws are perfect for cuddling on the couch or staying warm during chilly nights. They also look cozy hanging over the arm of a sofa or the foot of my chaise (and cover kitty claw marks).

Fluffy pillows are homey at home and office, too. I have a favorite embellished velvet pillow that I received as a gift and have used in my office and at home. In addition you'll find lavender-filled Battenberg lace pillows from a trip to Savannah and a damask meditation cushion for getting my sit on.

Mirrors help expand space and are great for reflecting light, especially from hanging lights. I have a mirror on my fireplace mantel reflecting a sparkly chandelier and seasonal cut flowers. It's a beautiful, warm, inviting sight in my tiny 600-square-foot sanctuary. Decorative mirrors look great above a sofa, in an office, near the entry (to check lip gloss as you come and go), and in a dining room, too.

Nurture your five senses through your space style. Burn scented soy candles, display photos from your travels in gem-encrusted frames, and enjoy an indoor garden with your terrarium, succulents, or other favorite plant.

Creativity

Creativity is inventing, experimenting, growing, taking risks, breaking rules, making mistakes, and having fun. ~ Mary Lou Cook

While pulling together special touches for hosting a retreat, I found a variety of small touches to add creative spark. Incorporating small doses of flair into your everyday makes living creatively a special part of daily life. Recently, I've been playing with five staples that I want to share. My hope is that it will help you, too, feel a bit more creative.

1. One favorite toy is baker's twine. I have spools of it in black and white and pink and white. I've been wrapping TranquiliT orders with it and adding a stamped manila tag with our "Leave a Legacy" motto. It's cute wrapped around cards, letters, tags, glassware, and gifts. It comes in many colors and appears to be a staple in the crafting community at the moment.

2. Another favorite small touch is glassine envelopes.

It was love at first sight when introduced to them at Squam Art Retreat. They are similar to vellum but a bit lighter. I recently purchased 5x7s on Etsy.com and use them for ephemera goody bags, love notes, and gift cards.

They are also food-safe so you can put a peanut butter and jelly sandwich inside and it will look darling. You can also add the envelopes into your art journal for layering to insert ideas or dreams. They are super sweet when sealed with colorful Washi tape in stripes or polka dots.



3. I love tags in all sizes. They are perfect for makeshift note tabs for your planner, books, or art journal. I also stamp them and use them on gifts. They add a special touch to ephemera packets, gifts, art journals, sales, homemade jams, clothing, labeling supplies, and can also be used as a sign. You can find these at office stores, craft stores, and online in assorted shapes and sizes.

4. There is something so girly about doilies. I buy them in bulk and use them when entertaining, in my art journal, and on gift packages. During a *Tranquility du Jour* blog meet up in New York City, we went to a fancy lounge where we were served drinks on a doily. I immediately knew I was at home. It was such a simple touch, but much more lovely than the standard logo-infused bar napkin. Incorporate doilies into your everyday. Make every day an experience by drinking water from a wine glass and setting it on your French lace doily. Oh, and go one step further by tying a bow around the stem of the wine glass. I promise it makes a difference.
5. Finally, I want to share one more creative suggestion for savoring your libations: old-fashioned striped straws. At a gathering of lovely ladies recently, the host set out various colored striped straws for a festive touch. I went online and found how easy they were to locate, so I ordered pink ones for retreats, décor, and everyday sipping. When I'm entertaining you'll find these cute straws inserted into Mason jars with guests' names written on the outside over pink and white striped Washi tape. *Très magnifique.*

These sweet touches add elegance to our daily dining and living experiences. This is the epitome of creativity—enhancing daily life with details that bring a moment of delight.

Dreams

I find the great thing in this world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving. ~Oliver Wendell Holmes

Think of yourself as a butterfly unfurling this season. Spring offers a lovely chance to shine and unfold what has been lying dormant within all winter. Over the past few months we've been exploring dreams and making review of them a regular part of your daily routine. This month let's review the first quarter of the year and pen your dreams for the next quarter.

Look back over what you wrote in February. What were your big dreams? How have they unfolded? Do some need to be carried over to spring? Pull out a colored marker and an inspiring image from a glossy, calendar, or catalog. List ten things you would like to see happen this spring. This list may include a few items that you didn't get to during the winter months and larger dreams that will take more time than spring offers. Be realistic with your spring dreams, use the SMART tool from last month, and focus on what you'd like to see unfold by the end of June.

For many of us this time of the year offers an opportunity to reconnect with nature, get our hands dirty, and slowly come out of hibernation. Contemplate what is ready to bloom within you right now. Is there a longing to embrace more creative play, return to dance, or plant a vegetable garden?

Once you get your seasonal dreams down on paper, outline a few action steps to take this month to move toward your dreams. For example, maybe making a quilt is one of your spring dreams. Action steps may include learning how to quilt (hello, YouTube), picking up basic supplies, and setting aside time to quilt.

All of our daily decisions allow us to move closer to or away from our dreams. Choose wisely and let this continual reflection be a part of making sure you are always taking micro-movements toward your dreams. This is one way to leave a legacy of love, inspiration, and joy.



OMWORK

1. Try a daily dose of yin yoga
2. Make your physical space a reflection of your style
3. Schedule a Bed Day

SAVVY SOURCES

The BUST DIY Guide to Life: Making Your Way Through Every Day
by Laurie Henzel and Debbie Stoller

*The Hip Girl's Guide to Homemaking: Decorating, Dining
and the Gratifying Pleasures of Self-Sufficiency on a Budget*
by Kate Payne

Yin Yoga: Outline of a Quiet Practice
by Paul Grilley

Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life
by Anne Lamott

The Perfectly Imperfect Home: How to Decorate and Live Well
by Deborah Needleman

Bonjour, May.



*Go confidently in the direction of your dreams.
Live the life you have imagined. ~ Henry David Thoreau*

There is something special about the start of each month. A blank slate and a reminder to hit the pause button for a moment of reflection.

The month of May is a celebration of the flowers that are beginning to bloom, thanks to April showers and all the seed planting you've been doing. Are you feeling the effects? Hope so.

This month we'll cover mindful yoga, the sacred art of napping balanced with moving, carving out a nook, coordinating a volunteer day, speaking, cultivating style on a budget, more art journaling, and penning a to-be list. Before we dive into our first section this month, pull out your art journal and write your May dreams. What do you want to see unfold by the time you read June's musings? Are there projects you want to complete? People you want to see? Books you want to read? Trails you want to hike? Weight you want to shed? Creations you want to bring to the world? Give yourself a few moments to ponder and then put them down in ink.

Now, let's dive into this month's musings and see if we can emerge a little more tranquil, grateful, and inspired.

Mindfulness

In the end, just three things matter: How well we have lived, how well we have loved, how well we have learned to let go. ~ Jack Kornfield

To find tranquility, give yourself the ability to just be, feel your breath, and notice sunshine on your skin. This month's mindfulness adventure involves my favorite yoga prep for meditation followed by a simple meditation practice. Light a candle, roll out your yoga mat, and stand at the top of it in mountain pose. Bring your hands to your heart in prayer position, close your eyes, and take five deep, full breaths. Create an intention for this moment. Feel your feet connect to the earth. Breathe in gratitude, breathe out tension.

Inhale, lift your prayer to the sky, and open your eyes. Exhale, trace your midline down to the floor. Line up fingers and toes. Inhale, lengthen your spine and lift halfway. Exhale, fold forward and release your head. Inhale, trace the midline back to the sky and exhale, return your hands to prayer position. Repeat this half sun salutation a few times. Close your eyes and let this be a moving meditation. Add side bends and gentle twists from mountain pose. Allow your body to move in whatever way it's craving.

On your next exhalation, hinge from your hips, and trace your midline into a forward fold. Open your feet hip-width apart and let your hands nestle in the crook of your arms. Sway from side to side, surrender your head and neck, and rest here for one to three minutes. Let the calming, cooling effects of this forward fold infiltrate your body. Finally, bend your knees, release your arms, and roll up one vertebra at a time. Return to mountain pose at the top of your yoga mat. Bring your hands to prayer position, close your eyes, and take ten deep breaths.



I like to begin my time on the cushion with this small dose of movement. However, you may prefer a full-on yoga practice or nothing at all before you sit. Either way, set yourself up for a comfortable sit. Come to a cross-legged seated position on a chair, the floor, a meditation cushion, or a yoga block. Bring your hands onto your thighs with palms facing up or down, or place one hand on top of the other with the palms facing up. Draw your shoulder blades down your back, lift your heart center, and settle in with a tall, not rigid, spine. Close your eyes and connect with your breath. Simply notice your inhale and your exhale moving in and out of your body.

As your mind wanders, gently return to your breath. Let your breath serve as an anchor to return to the present moment. Sit with this for a few minutes and notice the subtle shifts in your body. According to Sakyong Mipham, author of *Turn Your Mind into an Ally*, “Placing the mind on the breath and returning to it again and again is the essence of shamatha. Through resting the mind on the breath we stay present, awake, and mindful. Placement means staying with the feeling of the breathing. The flow of the breath soothes the mind and allows for steadiness and relaxation. It also reduces discursiveness.”

There are two great tools to stay with the breath. One is to use a mantra, something simple such as inhale “let,” exhale “go.” Continue to repeat this throughout your practice. A second option is presented by Mipham and has become a fast favorite of mine. “If you’re having a hard time staying with the breath—spacing out or losing track between breathing out and breathing in—counting the in- and out-cycles of the breath can be a helpful remedy to bring yourself back to focus. We breathe in, and then out—one. In and then out—two. If you use this method, count seven or twenty-one breaths and then start over. If you become distracted and lose count, start over again at one.”

You may wonder why in the world you would sit still when you have so much to do! Meditation allows you to ground, connect, feel, and surrender the busyness of life for a few minutes. Studies show meditation can have profound effects on one's mental and physical health. According to an online article by Kuschinskas, "In one study, people who meditated regularly for six weeks showed less activation of their immune systems and less emotional distress when they were put in a stressful situation. A University of Wisconsin study saw increased electrical activity in regions of the left frontal lobe, an area that tends to be more active in optimistic people, after eight weeks of training in meditation."

Meditation offers profound results in as little as ten minutes a day. One of my favorite meditation teachers is a surgeon (yep, you read that right) turned meditation teacher and she talks about how the practice helps one "respond versus react" to life's daily frustrations. It helps offer a space between actions and responses. Wouldn't that come in handy before hitting the "send" button from time to time? Incorporate a few minutes of meditation into each day this month and watch what unfolds—mindfully.

Self-Care

Life is short, wear your party pants! ~ Loretta LaRoche

Last month I pushed my Bed Day agenda, and this month I'll continue with a focus on rest and exercise—the perfect yin and yang of life! During my formative years, my beloved Gramma instilled in *moi* a deep passion for napping. Remember when you were forced to nap so adults could get a breather? Well, Gramma would plump up my cot nestled alongside her bed, put a minty balm in her nose, and off to dreamland we went. It was a highlight of my childhood. I continued the tradition in college between studies, classes, part-time jobs, boyfriends, and sorority gatherings. The naps were a staple in my repertoire. I wondered what I would do when I hit the real world and couldn't have my daily nap. Alas, the time has come, yet you'll still find me savoring them every chance I get.

One of my favorite authors, SARK, wrote a great book in 1999, *Change Your Life Without Getting Out of Bed*. She lists great spaces for napping such as sailboats, trees, planes, cars, beaches, and grass. In addition, she describes "nap equipment" as: ear plugs (I carry these in my purse, in cars, on planes, and have piles next to my bed), eye pillows, fluffy pillows, blackout shades, sleep socks, pajamas, and blankets (I like lots of them and especially my fluffy pink chenille one from a

discount store = cuddle worthy). She encourages readers to declare their homes free nap zones, and states, “The solace of a good nap makes a base for new things to grow inside of us. This growth leads to change.” Now if this doesn’t make you want to grab a pillow and curl into the fetal position, I don’t know what will.

In addition to napping, a full night’s sleep is critical for us to be our most fabulous selves. According to the National Sleep Foundation, if you are sleep deprived, you may “age more rapidly, be more susceptible to infections, display an increased risk of accidents and poor coordination, experience more emotional problems, feel irritable, forget important information, have reduced ability to deal with stress, increase your risk for obesity, and show poor judgment, poor concentration, and indecisiveness.” Whew, I’ll bet *that* helps encourage an earlier bedtime. Similar to your time in meditation, naps and full nights of slumber allow you to rest your brain and surrender an ongoing desire to do, do, do.

To balance out the resting, we also need to move. As a yoga teacher, of course I’m a proponent for heaps of yoga, but there are so many options available to help get the blood pumping. Dance can be incredibly healing and therapeutic, not to mention sexy and playful. Boxing is super empowering, especially when you put on those pink gloves. Running helps many women get into a zone, shed pounds, and find peace. Biking on trails or in the city keeps thighs toned and provides good cardiovascular work. Let us not forget the trusty gym. Having recently joined one for the first time in fifteen-plus years, I enjoy taking my Kindle, stepping onto a machine for 30 minutes, and saying goodbye to 400 calories. Walking as often as possible and going for a swim on a regular basis are also great ways to get the heart rate up, tone the body, and quiet the mind—a definite win-win.

Wondering how to get started? Consider working with a trainer, friend, or private coach to help you with the basics. When I went through my running phase in 2003, a marathoner friend took me out and helped me get started. A few months later we were running the Army Ten-Miler together and I owed my start to her.

What can you do this month to find that balanced sweet spot blending movement and rest? And, when in doubt, don your party pants.



Nesting

I would rather sit on a pumpkin, and have it all to myself, than be crowded on a velvet cushion. ~ Henry David Thoreau

Have you ever craved a quiet escape away from the commotion of your day while in your own home? Sometimes our homes can be a source of chaos—toys strewn about, piles of paperwork, unwashed dishes, unfolded laundry, plants that need watering, kitty boxes that need cleaning. Many women retreat to the bath for relief. It is definitely one of my favorite places in the world. Nothing calms and soothes quite like being enveloped in warm, lavender-scented bubble bath-filled water. This month let's create a little nook just for you.

You have a lot on your plate and alone time can fall by the wayside as you nurture others. Anne Morrow Lindbergh, author of *Gift from the Sea*, writes, “The problem is how to remain whole in the midst of the distractions of life; how to remain balanced, no matter what shocks come in at the periphery and tend to crack the hub of the wheel. For to be a woman is to have interests and duties, ranging out in all directions from the central mother-core, like spokes from the hub of a wheel.” To nurture these spokes, create a space of your own. Yes, Virginia Woolf declared it a must in order to write; I declare it a must in order to survive.

Although space may not be in abundance at your abode, carve out a tiny nook to nurture your nesting spirit. Find the area of your house that most relaxes you—porch, window, living room, alcove, corner, even a closet! Set up the appropriate seating: comfy chair (or maybe a chaise), good lighting, and side table for resting your teacup. Add curtains around your nook to create a sense of mystery (so the unmade bed or messy room won't distract you). Incorporate tranquil touches such as pillows, throw blankets, a basket for books and magazines, framed photos, and fresh flowers.



Your special nook may also be a quiet sewing room, attic, unfinished basement, potting shed, sunny porch, or greenhouse out back. The key is to find a special space to call your own where you can curl up with a good book, lose track of time, and connect within.

Do-Gooding

You cannot do a kindness too soon, for you never know how soon it will be too late.

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

Wondering how to make a difference at the office, among a group of friends, or at your local library? In addition to the ChariTea, consider organizing a volunteer day to benefit a cause close to your heart and bring the community together. There are many types of events to choose from: fundraisers or volunteer work like painting houses and walking dogs. For a fundraiser, determine the type of event you want to host such as a bake sale, rummage sale, theme party, dinner, cocktail party, dance, tournament, fashion show, “a-thon” (example, yoga-a-thon), or clothing swap (see p. 45 for a step-by-step guide). There are many ways to rally the troops to raise money and awareness for a favorite charity.



We’ve been hosting clothing swaps at my studio that cost a \$10 donation to a local charity plus ten items for swapping to participate. The remaining items are donated to a women’s shelter and participants leave with castoffs that have a new happy home. We supply cupcakes, libations, fun tunes, clothing racks, hangers, and staff support to help the event flow. This event raises money for a cause, cleans out closets in the process, and is super green. Did you know that the U.S. puts approximately four to eight million tons of clothes in the landfills each year and that the average American annually discards 68 pounds of clothes? Wowza.

Once you get the event type determined, pull together a host committee—enthusiastic, dedicated, responsible, like-minded individuals who are willing to make the event a success from start to finish. Review your calendars to find the perfect date and secure a venue. The venue search may involve hitting the pavement, so if you have one in mind or on hand, you’re in good shape. Hosting in someone’s home helps save rental fees and offers an intimate touch. Spread the word and get as many people as possible on board through social media, fliers, postcards, newsletters, and word of mouth.

Get creative with your event. In 2012 I created “Vegan, Yoga, Volunteer” to share an animal sanctuary with my studio. The intention was to teach a yoga session, serve up vegan treats, offer a private tour, and then volunteer doing special projects such as painting and connecting with the animals.

There are many ways to raise money for your favorite causes and play hostess. I like offering special events to expose diverse populations to new skills such as teaching a writing class at a prison, crafting at a women's shelter, or painting with at-risk youth. This allows the dedicated volunteers an opportunity to share their talents and see the direct connection to the service.

Work

There are two ways of spreading light. To be the candle, or the mirror that reflects it. ~ Edith Wharton

As we advance in our professional endeavors, it helps to be comfortable with public speaking. I've worked with mentoring clients who shared extreme fear standing before an audience. As you may know, studies show that fear of public speaking is up there with fear of death. Well, have no fear; it's all about baby steps and slowly putting yourself out there. Even though I've been doing it for years, I still have moments where I wonder why that came out of my mouth or I don't feel a strong connection with the group. All you can do is try, learn from mishaps, and try again. It's worth it, promise. Oh, and consider joining a local Toastmasters group for ongoing support.

Over the years I've been asked to speak at universities, women's groups, and business conferences and have accepted each and every opportunity. Recently I was a keynote speaker at a women's health conference in Pennsylvania. Now that was a tough crowd. Lovely people, but unfamiliar with my work and most were 10-40 years older than me. I didn't feel a strong connection to my gospel of tranquility.



My speaking opportunities are rarely paid, but I love the chance to share my story, health tips, or passion for entrepreneurship with hope of inspiring others. I usually bring studio schedules and books, plus scoop on my nonprofit and clothing line. This platform gives me a chance to share my work with others and hone my speaking skills.

When you are given that first opportunity to speak to a group of people, I encourage you to jump on it. Sure you'll be nervous and may wonder what you have to say, but I promise that with a few tips and some preparation, you'll be in awe of the words of wisdom that come out of your mouth. Truly. You have a story to tell and a unique way of viewing the world based on your own experiences.

Seek opportunities to share your message. How about your local hospice, business associations, women's group, church group, sorority, garden club, or alumni association? They need entertainment, why shouldn't it be you? Come up with your top five tips, and look into local organizations that may be interested in having a guest speaker at their next meeting. Remember, giving a presentation at your book club counts as public speaking and so does speaking up in work meetings. Use it as an opportunity to share your expertise with others and find your voice.

Here are five tips to help your speaking shine:

- 1. Be articulate.** Dress according to the audience and appear confident. Avoid swaying from side to side, playing with your hair, or repeatedly using “um.” Project your voice to the person farthest away from you. Speak slowly and enunciate clearly.
- 2. Be on.** Smile, make eye contact, and be enthusiastic. Use appropriate humor. Even if you had a horrible day, are jet-lagged, or feel a cold coming on, put your best self forward. People have taken time out of their busy schedules to see you.
- 3. Be prepared.** Know your subject and your audience. Start with an introduction, move into the body of your talk, and summarize at the end. Rehearse before presenting. Then rehearse again. Try not to read from a prepared speech—instead, have bullet points in large font and occasionally glance at them. Prepare fully and have automatic, authentic responses to the typical questions, such as “Why did you write this book, launch the business, leave the marriage, et cetera?”
- 4. Be gracious.** Thank the audience and your host. Offer time for Q & As, if appropriate, and end with a recap. Share handouts with takeaway tips that summarize your message and additional resources on your topic. Include your social media handles on your handout so they can connect with you virtually. Allow photo ops—more than just your signature in their book. These additional touches go a long way.
- 5. Be memorable.** Remember the adage “act as if” and present yourself as a famous rock star (even if only two people show up). Look fabulous and be the persona. Serve inspiration through your presentation, interactions with others, and body language. Give the audience more than they expect: a small trinket such as a bag of tea or scented tea light with a reminder to “continue to shine.”

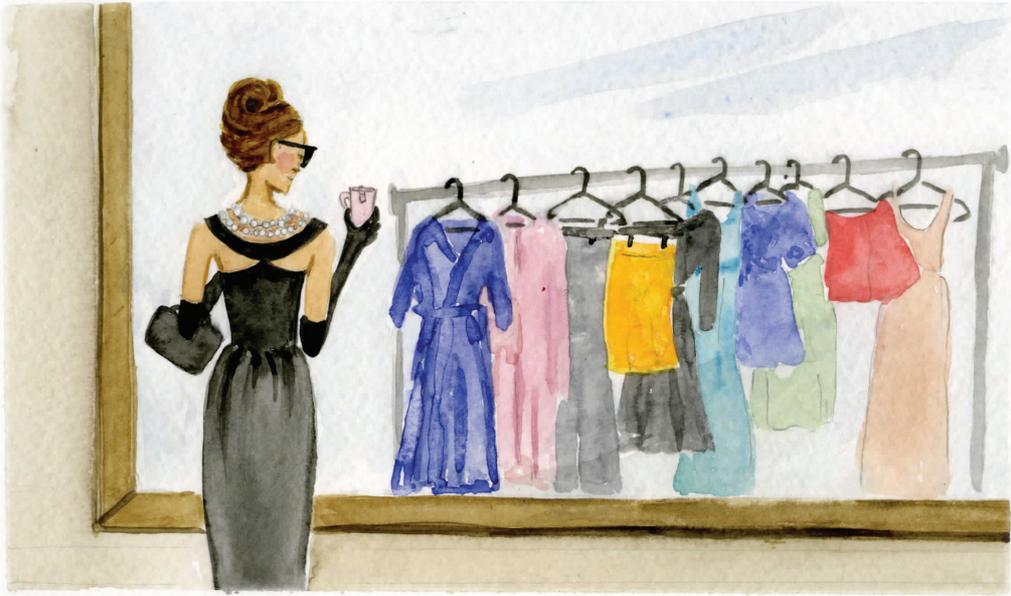
Public speaking is a skill, and each time you put yourself out there, you are able to hone the craft more and more. Try it; you may even find you like it. If you're on the shy side, break into making appearances by taking part in a panel or being interviewed on stage so the spotlight isn't solely on you. This is a great way to get your feet wet without all the pressure.

Style

For beautiful eyes, look for the good in others; for beautiful lips, speak only words of kindness; and for poise, walk with the knowledge that you are never alone. ~ Audrey Hepburn

Confession: I have a nasty habit. I broadcast my bargains to the masses. If you compliment me in an outfit, I'm quick to respond, "Oh thank you, I got it for \$20 at so and so!" Lordie, why can't I keep my mouth closed? I get excited and overshare my budget shopping finds, much to *Beau's* chagrin. However, this passion for thrifting helps me find amazing deals and stay stylish while spending less. The only designer gown I've owned is a silk Armani procured at T.J. Maxx for approximately \$80. I've worn this beauty to numerous special events over the past decade and always feel decadent. This month let's sample six tips for savvy style on a budget.

- 1. Shop secondhand:** According to Earth 911, people who bought used clothing by shopping at secondhand or consignment stores helped to save 2.5 billion pounds of clothes from the dumpster in 2006 alone. I've been a fan of consignment and secondhand shops since my early years. The love affair began with a used bookstore near my childhood home (You mean I can trade in this old book for a new one? Sweet!), and quickly evolved to prom dresses, purses, belts, and more. My ninth-grade prom dress was a pink-and-white striped Jessica McClintock with stretch off-the-shoulder lace. Well, it was darling in the late '80s and cost a mere \$30.
- 2. Upcycle:** This trend has many options. Turn pants into shorts, half-slips into tiered dresses (my latest passion), flare jeans into skinny jeans, and sweaters into arm- and leg-warmers. A basic sewing class will allow you to transform your wardrobe in this manner and we'll explore it further in October.
- 3. Shop discount:** Yes, I'm a fan of stores like T.J. Maxx, "Tarjay" (where I buy most of my vegan ballet flats), and the like for fun finds. After the holidays I picked up a gorgeous black faux fur jacket at T.J. Maxx for a steal. I added a vintage brooch from a New York flea market and I rock the look on



chilly D.C. days. These stores are a treasure trove for incorporating trend at a low, low cost. However, you need time and patience to dig, so make sure you're in the mood before hitting one.

4. **Shop flea markets and estate sales:** I've found lovely vintage brooches, bags, boots, scarves, earrings, and skeleton keys at flea markets. In addition, I've snapped heaps of sweet photos for my blog. Make a day of it—you'll find many interesting trinkets and it's a delight to browse. Over the years I've picked up two office desks for under \$30 that promptly received a fresh coat of white paint and are still being used at my studios over a decade later.
5. **Be thrifty:** I love, love, love thrift stores. And, sadly, I will usually come out with something I can't live without: a new vase, a milk glass cake plate, a glass candy jar, an old clipboard. Once I picked up old lace curtains and turned them into a caftan. This passion for thrifting is not great for my minimalist living desire so I limit myself and only take home something I truly love. I've also found staples like couches and chairs at Goodwill, so don't forget to explore these bargain stops for home basics. And if you have an Etsy.com or brick-and-mortar shop, you can resale some of your favorite finds.
6. **Sales and outlets:** I used to love outlet stores. Then I worked in one after college and realized the prices weren't always that good. Yet if you have favorite shops and can get on sale lists, it can be nice to hit the stores when you are able to find the brand you're after at a good price. Outlets can also be fun for stocking up on staples such as socks and undies. However, go in with a purpose or you may come out with more clutter for your closet.

Remember, style is so much more than what we wear—it's how we look at the world and how we want the world to look at us. No matter what, it's best when we get the most bang for our hard-earned buck, right? And you'll have fun in the process, can choose lots of eco-chic options, indulge in creative self-expression, and turn up with one-of-a-kinds.



Creativity

Nobody cares if you can't dance well. Just get up and dance. Great dancers are not great because of their technique, they are great because of their passion. ~ Martha Graham

Let's dive deeper into art journaling. For years I've kept a journal written with pen on lined paper. Somehow I missed the memo that you could actually play in your journal while expressing your thoughts and make it a creative tool for self-expression. Since getting the memo at the ripe old age of 36 (I'm a late bloomer), I've been a devotee.

According to Traci Bunkers, author of *The Art Journal Workshop*, "Combining words with visual imagery is much more powerful than either one alone. By combining the two, I create something that is fresh and rich in meaning, sometimes raw, expressing hurt or pain, and sometimes elated, expressing immense joy. Busy-ing my hands with collaging, painting, and stamping as I work frees up my mind, distracting it in a way. I am able to get out of my own way and freely express or process whatever I need or want to work on." Ah, doesn't that sound like fun? Here is a way to take the process a bit further than we did in February.

Open your journal to a double-page spread and cover it with gesso or paint using a credit card or paintbrush. Title the page: "To Be List" (see Dreams below), "Gratitude," "Fear," "Let Go," "Explore," et cetera, using letter stamps or a Sharpie. Date the page by hand or with a date stamp.

Add ephemera such as photographs, magazine cut-outs, and receipts with decorative tape or glue. Begin writing your thoughts around your chosen title. How do you want to be? What are you grateful for? What are you scared of? What do you want to let go? What is beckoning exploration?



TRANQUILITY TIP: Pull out your tools: an art journal—a basic composition book, Moleskine, Strathmore wire-bound pad, or kid’s board book (add a layer of gesso to prepare the surface for painting). A few bottles of acrylic paint. Your trusty expired gift card or credit card “paint brush.” Real paint brushes. Baby wipes for removing paint. A container lid for mixing colors. Sharpies and graphite pencils. Ephemera (ribbon, images from magazines, leaves, photos, old books, catalogs, candy wrappers, lace, tissue paper, tags). Stamps. Mod Podge. Stapler. Glue stick or Washi tape.

Continue to add more writing and collage. Add another layer of light paint. Use baby wipes to remove paint from parts of the collaged images that you want highlighted such as a face or word. Keep adding additional items and embellishments such as stamps, stickers, images, and glitter glue until you feel content with the spread.



Feeling stuck? Traci says, “Don’t know what to do? Are you drawing a blank? Then you’re thinking too much. Get your hands moving and just be in the moment and what you need to do will come to you.” Trust the process. Find journal writing prompts that resonate. Remember, the best place to start is, “How am I feeling?” Let it flow and make art.

Dreams

Do not miss the purpose of this life, and do not wait for circumstance to mold or change your fate. ~ Ella Wheeler Wilcox

After hearing the concept of a to-be list during a podcast interview with Tara Sophia Mohr (tune into *Tranquility du Jour* Podcast #247), I’ve been pondering the idea of adding it to my to-do list. We have so many lists—bucket lists, honey-do lists, five-year plan lists. All of these are important and definitely help direct us (or our significant others), but what about asking ourselves regularly how we want to be?

Recently I ran into a business colleague on my walk home and we exchanged niceties. I asked how things were going and if he was happy. I didn't even think about it, but he seemed pleasantly startled by being asked if he was happy. He went on to share recent business challenges, but summed it up as changes he needed to make for the health of the organization. It was interesting how this question in passing offered him a moment of reflection and a deeper level of communication between us. Try it. Next time you run into someone, take the "How are you?" nicety a bit deeper and watch what unfolds.

Now, let's turn this around on you. Ask yourself how you're doing and if you're happy. Take time to pen a to-be list. What would you like to be? Be grateful. Be happy. Be free. Be open to new experiences. Be more transparent. Be kind. Be thoughtful. Be generous. Be a good listener. Author Karen Salmonsohn encourages regularly asking, "Who do I need to become to get all that I want in life?"

As you ponder your dreams for the last two-thirds of the year, write out your to-be list. Would being more thoughtful or present enhance your relationships? Would being more compassionate enhance your relationship with yourself and your community? Would being more mindful affect your colleagues positively? Play with taking your dreams to the next level by exploring what qualities you need to hone.



OMWORK

1. Try a daily dose of meditation
2. Create an art journal page, or two, or three
3. Find your perfect blend of rest and movement

SAVVY SOURCES

Turn Your Mind into an Ally
by Sakyong Mipham

*The Art Journal Workshop:
Break Through, Explore, and Make it Your Own*
by Traci Bunkers

A Gift from the Sea
by Anne Morrow Lindbergh

*How to Be a Budget Fashionista:
The Ultimate Guide to Looking Fabulous for Less*
by Kathryn Finney

*The Well-Spoken Woman:
Your Guide to Looking and Sounding Your Best*
by Christine Jahnke

Bonjour, June.



*By your thoughts you are daily, even hourly,
building your life; you are carving your destiny.*

~ Ruth Barrick Golden

Yet another fresh month for us to explore and, might I add, my birthday month—always a favorite time of the year. Each month provides a blank slate and a reminder to hit the pause button for reflection. To embody tranquility, align your dreams with your daily to-dos and indulge in a regular dose of legs up the wall pose. This fresh month marks nearly the midway point for the year. As a regular monthly moment of mindfulness, pull out your art journal and pen your dreams.

Now, let's dive into this month's musings on restorative yoga, going on retreat, container gardening, starting a women's group, setting up a consulting practice, being French chic, crafting homemade gifts, and bucket lists.

Mindfulness

Your breathing is your greatest friend. Return to it in all your troubles and you will find comfort and guidance. ~ The Teaching of a Buddhist Master

Restorative yoga is truly a gift from up above. One of my first yoga classes offered a restorative practice at the end of a 10-week session and it evoked mixed feelings. You mean you want me to lie over blankets for an hour? It was a tough journey as I struggled to quiet my mind. Fast-forward over a decade and *j'adore* lying over blankets and often choose a few restorative poses to start or end my home practice.

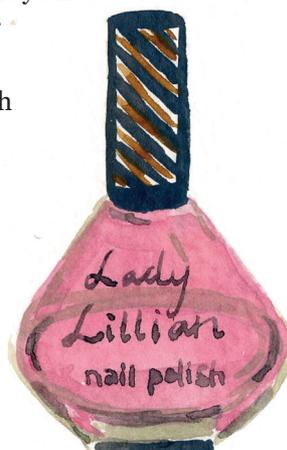
Restorative yoga is said to increase the relaxation response, stimulate and soothe organs, and improve concentration. I find a restorative practice to be therapeutically calming and grounding. If you feel lethargic, stressed, or have low energy, try restorative yoga to bring your body back to balance. Restorative yoga poses support the muscles and bones with props so they can relax. This lowers the heart rate, reduces blood pressure, and slows down the breath. Great for better sleeping, being less reactionary, and deep relaxation. Ready to try it?

Grab your yoga mat plus a couple of yoga blankets. Light a scented candle or incense and turn on relaxing tunes. Here is my go-to restorative sequence:

- **Legs Up the Wall:** Getting set up is the hardest part, then it's smooth sailing. Place your yoga mat and a folded blanket near the wall. If you are using a prop to elevate the hips, have it against the wall before getting set up. Sit next to the wall with your knees bent and your left shoulder and hip against the wall. Lower onto your back and swing your legs up onto the wall. Extend your

arms into a “T” with your palms up. Or, for a shoulder opener, reach your arms over your head and grasp opposite elbows. Rest here five to fifteen minutes. When ready to come out of the pose, bring your knees to your chest and gently roll out to your right side. Wait for a few moments before you get up. **Modification:** If your hammies are tight, push your hips away from the wall so that your legs are at a 45-degree angle versus straight up at 90 degrees.

- **Child’s Pose:** Set up a bolster support with blankets. If blankets aren’t available, try firm pillows or a pile of firm towels. Sit on your shins with toes touching and knees open. Draw the support between your knees, and relax your belly over the length of your support. Rest your forearms on the floor along the support. Place your head so your neck is most comfy—typically turned to one side and switch midway through. Rest here one to five minutes. **Modification:** If your feet or ankles are uncomfortable, roll a blanket and place it under your ankles. If your knees feel wonky or you do not sit all the way to your heels, place a folded or rolled blanket between your bum and feet.
- **Reclined Twist:** Begin lying on your back with your knees bent and feet on the floor. Place your arms out to the side, palms up, and bend your knees toward your chest. Inhale deeply and exhale as you drop your legs to the left and turn your head to the right. Rest here two to five minutes on each side. Rinse and repeat on other side. **Modification:** If your legs do not touch the floor and rest comfortably, place a blanket or bolster under your bottom leg. If your legs do not rest together comfortably, place a blanket or pillow between your knees.
- **Supported Baddha Konasana:** Place a tightly rolled blanket in the middle of your mat vertical with your body. Begin seated at the end of your blanket with your bum on the floor and the blanket pulled up to your tailbone. Place the soles of your feet together and support your legs with pillows, blankets, or even books under your knees. Lie down and savor a little slice of heaven. Place your arms in a “T” with your palms up. Or reach your arms over your head and grasp opposite elbows to open your shoulders. Rest here five to 15 minutes. To come out of the pose, remove the blanket and slowly draw your knees together, roll to your right side. As you’re ready, press up to a seated position. **Modification:** If your lower back feels tweaky, remove the blankets and lie flat on the floor.



Let this restorative sequence support you through jet lag, cramps, house guests, and lethargy. You'll emerge from these poses with a fresh perspective and deeper breath.

Self-Care

We live in a wonderful world that is full of beauty, charm and adventure. There is no end to the adventures we can have if only we seek them with our eyes open. ~ Jawaharal Nehru

This month's focus is on retreating and taking time just for you. The beauty of a retreat is the sense of spaciousness that permeates the moments, days, or weeks—depending on how long your retreat is planned. The irony is that this sense of spaciousness can be also incredibly unsettling at first. The disconnection from life's hubbub is not a simple on-and-off switch. The process of gradually settling into this slower pace can be an eye-opening experience. News Flash: Slowing down is not for the faint of heart. It's hard to disconnect from autopilot, yet a must for self-care.

You may be reading this during a deadline-driven day at the office, rolling your eyes, thinking, "Yeah, right, retreating is hard." I understand it sounds silly, but I promise slowing down and shifting habits isn't easy.

I love the minimalist movement's encouragement to simplify regular routines and create a sort of staycation in daily life. There are ideas such as "switch off Sundays," "a day of unplugging," and observing the Sabbath even if you're not Jewish. If you've ever joined these efforts, you may have noticed how hard it is to break patterns, and how intoxicating it is to settle into a new way of being.



To help illustrate this point and assist you with finding a tranquil space within, I've created five tips to help ease the discomfort associated with slowing down:

- 1. Set a retreat date and venue.** This may be an organized retreat with a group to some exotic locale, a day in bed with your furry four-legged friend, or an afternoon of picnicking in the park during your lunch break.

- 2. Prepare for the retreat.** Begin gathering tools for the experience such as a few books, a journal to record your thoughts, markers, and other necessary accoutrements. Align expectations with reality (for example, be prepared for a possibility of rain by toting an umbrella).
- 3. Start the disconnection process.** Set up an autoreply if you'll be out of touch for more than a few days. Slowly wean yourself off constant e-mail checking, Facebook updating, Pinterest pinning, and/or Tweeting. Observe your habitual patterns during this practice.
- 4. Retreat time.** Use this time to turn your attention inward. Soak up the experience. Notice sensations in your body. Feel your breath. Observe your monkey mind. Keep pen and paper nearby to jot down inspiration. Note and surrender autopilot behaviors.
- 5. Let it unfold.** Many creatives find this spacious time to offer a fountain of new ideas for projects and transitions. Stay open to new experiences. Take time to be fully present in the moment. Listen to the sounds around you.

The choice to retreat is yours and it can happen by following the five steps above at home, on a crowded subway, or in a lush Mediterranean setting. Remember that state of mind is a choice. Choose wisely. Choose to retreat. Fully and completely.

Nesting

*Our bodies are our gardens to which our wills are gardeners.
~ William Shakespeare*

Shopping for seedlings, dirtying my hands in a sliver of earth, and placing pink impatiens into a terra cotta pot brings great joy. Sound enticing? Below are two simple ways to turn your nest into a lively green space that nurtures you and your family via an indoor herb garden and a container of blossoming flowers.

Let's start with a basil, thyme, and sage mini herb garden for your windowsill, kitchen counter, or outdoor patio. Supplies are minimal: one big pot or window box, drainage tray, potting soil, a sunny spot, choose and a few herb seedlings such as sage, sweet basil, and caraway thyme. They offer different sizes and heights. Sage grows tall, basil is bushy, and thyme is a creeper that grows flat to the ground.

To create your herb garden, fill the pot with soil up to three inches from the top. Moisten the soil lightly with water and dig a small hole. Remove a seedling and place it gently in the hole. Pack an inch of dirt over top of the root ball. Repeat for your other seedlings. Leave several inches between plants so they have space to flourish. When finished, add more water and place the pot on its drainage tray in a sunny spot. Maintenance is easy peasy: water only when the soil is dry to the touch or when leaves look droopy. For cooking, cut leaves and stems off the top.

Container gardening with flowers introduces color, fragrance, and beauty into your life. It allows flowers to be part of any landscape—a deck, patio, porch, or balcony. Each spring I rush to my local nursery to pick up heaps of impatiens, dusty miller, petunias, and sweet potato vine for a lovely mix of color and greenery. I add them to my pots of English boxwoods or sky pencil hollies that survive winter with no problem. Best part? The colorful concoction lasts until the first frost—nearly six months of colorful bliss! Follow the same planting advice encouraged above.

These sweet touches of homemade happiness can bring color, flavor, and fragrance to your *maison*. Water daily and sprinkle with love. Ah, a great metaphor for life!



TRANQUILITY TIP: CONTAINER GARDENING BASICS

Avoid tiny containers because they often can't store enough water to get through hot days. Large pots insulate roots better. Choose lightweight containers, such as those made of fiberglass, plastic, or foam composites for easy rearranging. Use a light and fluffy soil-free potting mix blend to provide roots with more oxygen and nutrients. Oh, and ensure ample drainage so your new friends don't drown.

Do-Gooding

Nobody sees a flower—really—it is so small it takes time—we haven't time—and to see takes time, like to have a friend takes time.
~ Georgia O'Keefe

Our grandmothers gathered fireside to embroider, darn socks, and play cards. Why not create something to connect like-minded spirits in your own special way? In 1999 I did so by inviting strangers into my living room for yoga.

Long to get a group of ladies together to create a community garden, hike in the woods, or practice meditation? Here are six helpful hints to get started.

- 1. Start your own:** Joining a pre-existing women's group is easy, but may not be the vibe you're seeking. Established groups have their own sets of rules and procedures and a unique culture that may lack the panache you crave. If you start your own group, you create the culture, choose who you want to invite to play, and determine the mission. Now *that* should get your creative juices going.

TRANQUILITY TIP:

A few guidelines that I include on my retreats and women's circles to enhance supportive group dynamics are:

- | | |
|---|--|
| We will maintain group confidentiality. | We give supportive attention to the person who is speaking and avoid side conversations. |
| We share responsibility for making this group work. | We avoid interrupting. |
| We give everyone an opportunity to share. | If we do break in, we return the conversation to the person who was speaking. |
| We have the right to speak and the right to remain silent. | We begin and end our gatherings on time. |
| We wait until each person has had a chance to speak before speaking a third time. | We ask for what we need. |
| | We leave our smartphones in our bags. |

2. **Clarify what you want:** Is it to expand your group of friends? Bounce ideas off perceived experts? Share painting techniques? Learn wine and cheese pairing? Will this be a knitting club, a book club, a wine club, a group of new mothers, or a small business problem-solving group?
3. **Invite women:** After determining the type of group you want to launch, reach out to women whom you admire and believe would be a nice fit. Seek diversity, yet good synergy. No Debbie Downers allowed.
4. **Group guidelines:** At your first meeting, distribute guidelines and request input and feedback on them or create them together as a group. There may be some that need clarification or ones that a group member would like added to create a safe environment.
5. **Set dates:** Check your schedule and come up with a few days and times (once a week, quarter, or year) that you will have the group meet initially. Once you gather a few times, your starter group can brainstorm on what schedule works best for everyone. Consider making it simple such as seven p.m. on the first Thursday of each month.
6. **Gatherings 101:** As noted in the guidelines, begin and end on time to ensure no one person dominates the group. Bring treats and goodies to share—think of it like a mini party you’re hosting. Consider inviting a guest speaker, local yarn dyer to sell wares to your knitting circle, or a massage therapist to pamper your new mom group. Encourage group members to bring notebooks to jot down ideas and have everyone share takeaways at the end of each session.

You’ll feel a sense of accomplishment launching your own women’s group. It will also prove how you’re capable of going outside your comfort zone and doing something creative. By starting this group, you’re on your way to leaving a legacy and creating community.



Work

An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest. ~ Benjamin Franklin



Over the past few months we've explored ways to expand your brand through speaking and writing. This month we're taking it further by sharing your expertise with others for a fee. Sharing your experience is an empowering and rewarding opportunity. There are various words used to describe a person who works as an advisor to a company or individual—consultant, coach, or mentor.

As you become more prominent in the public eye due to the speaking and writing skills we've covered, you may be asked to serve as an advisor. This can be extremely flattering, and your expert advice should not be given away except as part of your karma work on a nonprofit board or similar situation. This helps others realize their potential. And, my darling, you're worth it.

In 2009, I was featured in a USNews.com article as a celebrity-style coach, and the article mentioned that the median charge for one hour of life coaching is \$200 to \$3,500! The expertise you share is valuable, so I encourage you to treat it like a business. I have my clients fill out three pre-consultation forms, including a credit card authorization form, a client guide (expectations, phone number to call, confirmed time of appointment), and a questionnaire (what is going on, top three things they hope to take away from the session, and more). They also have reflective "OMwork" to complete in advance of our session. Sending these documents to clients in advance of appointment sets expectations, allows them the chance to fill me in on their needs before our session, and formalizes the process in a pretty pink way.

To begin consulting, outline what you offer, at what price, and why you should be hired. Include your bio and testimonials from other clients, colleagues, or supervisors. Present this information in a way that projects your personality. If you're appealing to attorneys, the vibe needs to be more corporate. If you're marketing to creative folks, your promotional materials (website, businesses cards, post-cards) can convey an innovative edge. It helps clients to know you speak their language. Birds of a feather flock together and understand each other. Also, always post your pricing versus an "e-mail me for rates" notice.

You can get started today as a consultant. Add a description of your consulting offering and bio to your blog or website, offer it to a few friends for free in exchange for a testimonial, set up a PayPal account to accept payment, and, *voilà*, you're in business.

Style

Think, Travel, Celebrate, Charm, Decorate, Dress, Live—colorfully.
~ Kate Spade

Considering my passion for all things French, I want to highlight the simple, chic style that ladies in the City of Light rock every day. According to Ines de la Fressange, author of *Parisian Chic*, there are seven staples that she's coined "the Magnificent Seven" and they are: a man's blazer, a trench coat, a navy sweater, a tank top, a little black dress, jeans, and a leather jacket.

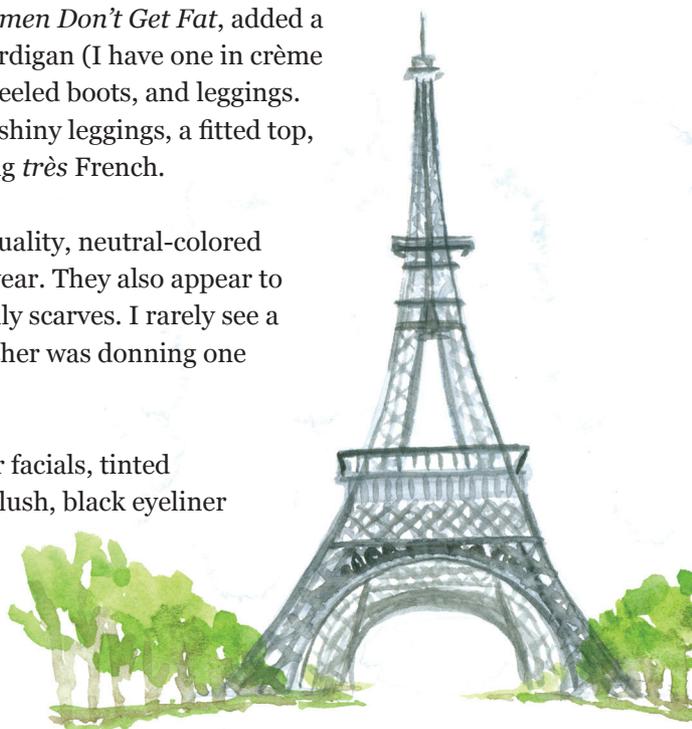
Jennifer L. Scott, author of *Lessons from Madame Chic* (tune into *Tranquility du Jour* Podcast #310 to hear more), encourages 10 core items (excluding outerwear, special occasionwear, accessories, and tees) assessed each season. As previously shared, I'm obsessed with capsule mix-and-match dressing and love the blending of a few staple pieces to make up a beautifully elegant look. Add a colorful scarf, ballet flats, sunnies, and straw bag. You're good to go, *mon ami*.

As a girl who loves to accessorize my all-black or neutral-colored looks, French style definitely appeals. One staple I see everywhere is the striped knit shirt, and, of course, the beige trench. For a hint of Parisian style, get a slim-fitting black shirt and leggings or cigarette pants, à la Audrey Hepburn in *Sabrina*.

Mireille Guillano, author of *French Women Don't Get Fat*, added a few more staples to the list such as a cardigan (I have one in crème and black to go with everything), low-heeled boots, and leggings. As I sit and pen this piece I'm donning shiny leggings, a fitted top, long faux pearls, and a cardigan—feeling *très* French.

French women tend to invest in good quality, neutral-colored staples that coordinate for maximum wear. They also appear to know the power of accessories, especially scarves. I rarely see a naked neck in Paris. Even my yoga teacher was donning one during class last year.

French make-up basics include: regular facials, tinted moisturizer with SPF, a light powder, blush, black eyeliner (for the signature cat-eye), mascara, and a red lipstick or gloss. Oh, and they appear to stay slim by walking, biking, and climbing steps to their *petit* apartments.



Embrace your inner Parisian, sort out a few staples, nurture your skin, and let your morning dress-up time feel a bit more aligned with your desire for tranquility and simplicity. Tune into *Tranquility du Jour* Podcast #289 with Jamie Cat Callan on finding your *ooh la la*.

Creativity

Movement is a medicine for creating change in a person's physical, emotional, and mental states. ~ Carol Welch

Handmade gifts are the new black. Why shop big-box for birthday or thinking-of-you gifts? Plan in advance and concoct goodies for the holidays. Sure, handmade gifts take a bit more time, but it saves money, nurtures your creative spark, and shows how much you care. Below are five staples for whipping up a splash of handmade love:



- 1. Rose sugar scrub.** Gather: two cups of sugar, grapeseed oil, rose essential oil, Ball jar. Instructions: mix two cups of sugar with nine tablespoons grapeseed oil. Add 1/8 teaspoon rose essential oil. Store the sugar scrub in a Ball jar. Add your signature touch with labels or ribbons to adorn the outside.
- 2. Lavender bubble bath.** Gather: mild shampoo (such as baby shampoo) or a mild organic dish soap, glycerin, water, a fancy bottle or jar, and lavender essential oil. Instructions: Gently mix together one cup of shampoo, 1/3 cup glycerin, and two tablespoons of water. Add 10-25 drops of lavender essential oil and gently mix. Pour mixture into a Ball jar and close tightly. Add your signature touch.
- 3. Fabric-wrapped bracelet.** Gather: needle and thread, three 1-inch wide plastic bracelets, 1-inch strips of fabric, a hot glue gun. Instructions: Attach 2 yards of 1-inch fabric strips together with a needle and thread. Wrap the bracelet with the long fabric strip and seal with your hot glue gun. Gift a set in coordinating fabrics to be stacked and rocked with glee.
- 4. Decorate a onesie.** Gather: blank canvas to create upon (such as onesies, aprons, and bags), personalization pieces (such as embroidery thread, fabric paint, iron-ons, patches, beads), and needle and thread. Instructions: Add a

decorative stitch around the neckline. (More on embroidery in November.) Attach a patch to a blank bag using a needle and colorful thread. Doodle onto an apron with fabric paint.

- 5. Green tea bath soak.** Gather: cornstarch, dry milk, oatmeal, loose green tea, loose rose tea, a Ball jar, and a blender. Instructions: Grind up 1/2 cup of oatmeal (coffee grinder works well). Add your oatmeal, 1/2 cup cornstarch, 1 cup dry milk, 2 teaspoons green tea, and 2 teaspoons rose tea to a blender.

Take the time to craft a “just for you” gift. Don’t forget the importance of packaging when presenting the gift. For example, I wrap my embellished onesies with baker’s twine, a love note penned on a manila tag and then slide them into a glassine envelope sealed with Washi tape. These small touches are the icing on the cake for your handmade happiness.

Dreams

Do not miss the purpose of this life, and do not wait for circumstance to mold or change your fate. ~ Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The term “bucket list” refers to a list of events, destinations, and activities an individual wants to do before they die, or “kick the bucket” (hence “bucket list”), or “pop their clogs” as they say in the U.K. Have you ever sat down and written out your “27 things to do in your 27th year” or “100 things to do before you die” list? If so, why not revisit it? If not, this is your OMwork for June.

You’ll often hear “that’s on my bucket list,” but many do not have a penned compilation. To make dreams a reality, get serious about your bucket list. The first step is to brainstorm and crystallize your list. Studies show we are more apt to do things when we write them down.

What are some of yours? Travel (visit Rishikesh, India), skills (speak fluent French), experiences (ride in a gondola in Italy), career (start your own company), finances (be sans debt), philanthropy (donate 10 percent of income to charity), relationships (have a loving partnership), and physical feats (run a marathon). How about watching a sunrise in Provence, having a drink at Café de Flore where Gertrude Stein mused, or savoring bubbly in Champagne?



Make an actual bucket list and increase the likelihood of putting a check mark by it and fulfilling your goal. Make the process fun. Write it out on a glossy magazine page or an art journal spread and paste it into your planner or in your office to see daily.

Don't forget the little things. Your list may have all these incredible places to visit and amazing activities to partake in, but sometimes little pleasures can be just as rewarding. For example, plant a community garden, honor a mindful morning routine, hand make your gifts, kiss your beloved goodnight, and host a ChariTea or clothing swap for charity. Make the little things matter.

There are online sources for sharing your bucket list and you may find kindred spirits through this medium. Check out 43things.com for inspiration and consider sharing yours. My bucket list on *Tranquility du Jour* is my most popular page. Share the inspiration and keep it updated as you cross items off. The world becomes your oyster.



OMWORK

1. Do restorative yoga once a week
2. Make a handmade gift
3. Write your bucket list

SAVVY SOURCES

Relax and Renew: Restful Yoga for Stressful Times
by Judith Lasater

*Small Space Container Gardens: Transform Your Balcony, Porch,
or Patio with Fruits, Flowers, Foliage, and Herbs*
by Fern Richardson

Entre Nous: A Woman's Guide to Finding Her Inner French Girl
by Debra Ollivier

Simple Gifts: 50 Little Luxuries to Craft, Sew, Cook & Knit
by Jennifer Worick

*Girl Group Confidential: The Ultimate Guide to Starting,
Running, and Enjoying Your Own Women's Group*
by Jennifer Worick

Bonjour, July.



Even after all this time the sun never says to the earth, 'You owe me.' Look what happens with a love like that - it lights the whole world. ~ Hafiz

Wowza, it's a sultry time of the year as we launch into full-on summer mode. Think beaches, camping, and tasty veggies on the grill. Remember the Tranquility Tools served at the beginning of our yearlong journey? Begin this month by pulling out your calendar and inserting the monthly tips into your schedule: massage, mani/pedi, volunteer, entertain, review budget, read two books, create something, pen month's dreams.

Can you do a 10-minute massage with mani-and-pedi combo at your corner nail salon? How about offering to walk a loved one's pet or pick up groceries for a sick friend? A lovely way to volunteer! Reach out to a girlfriend you haven't seen for a while and invite her over to brunch this month. Get your finances in check by setting up a free account at Mint.com. Each week you'll get an update on where you are with your budgets. List the two books you hope to complete this month and insert reading time into your planner. What do you hope to create this month? How about a handmade gift from June's creative suggestions or a fancy meal for a favorite friend?

Pen your dreams for this month onto an inspirational image and display it prominently. Review these dreams each and every day this month during your morning routine. For now, let's dive into the first month after our mid-year point to play with stretching our comfort zone through practicing tonglen, consciously creating community, establishing a morning routine, exploring minimalism, blogging, traveling in style, photography, and doing a mid-year assessment.

Mindfulness

One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious. ~ Carl Jung

Tonglen is a Buddhist loving kindness, compassion-filled practice that can be done on the bus, at the bank, or in a boardroom. It translates as "giving and receiving." By opening your heart and feeling the pain or negative emotions that arise (as opposed to avoiding), you will have more compassion and acceptance towards yourself and others. According to author and Buddhist teacher Pema Chodron, "Tonglen practice is a method for connecting with suffering—ours and that which is all around us—everywhere we go. It is a method for overcoming fear of suffering and for dissolving the tightness of our heart. Primarily it is a method for awakening the compassion that is inherent in all of us, no matter how cruel or cold we might seem to be."

Here's the skinny: when you see someone suffering, or you know someone who is suffering, practice breathing in their pain and sending out love. Visualize their suffering

(that of a crying baby, a tense boss, or a grieving colleague) as a dark, heavy, hot cloud that you draw in as you inhale, and send out loving compassion in the form of white, airy, cool, bright light as you exhale. Think of your breath as a filter. You breathe in other's pain and you breathe out relief from suffering. Pema Chodron reminds us, "Tonglen reverses the usual logic of avoiding suffering and seeking pleasure, and, in the process, we become liberated from a very ancient prison of selfishness."



By practicing tonglen, you don't hold onto their pain, instead you act as a catalyst. This has the capacity to enhance your connection and empathy for others—especially the ones who have a tendency to push buttons. The beauty of the practice is that it can be done during your regular sitting practice or on the spot when you see suffering.

While in India I came across so many skinny, sickly street dogs and one in particular who had heart-wrenching skin issues, yet was always so gentle and loving despite his suffering. It broke my heart. I practiced tonglen on him the entire week (in addition to feeding him dog food and tea biscuits as often as I could). Use this practice as a way to send compassion to all beings—the two- and four-legged ones.

Self-Care

Keep away from people who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great make you feel that you, too, can become great. ~ Mark Twain

Birds of a feather flock together. Communing with people offers varied effects on your overall well-being. There are those who leave you feeling energized and filled with possibility simply by sharing a quick tea date. Yet there are others who leave you feeling defeated and exhausted after only a five-minute phone call. You have a responsibility to yourself to make conscious connections with others, and to hold your time and energy sacred. By getting clear on what types of people you want in your life and nurturing those relationships while taking good care of yourself, you can create a strong support system while maintaining self-care.

When I first moved to Washington, D.C., I struggled to find my clan. I found a sorority alumni group, joined the paralegal association, attended conferences, visited yoga studios, and tried out a meditation class, to no avail. I made a few friends that I'm still in contact with, but not the family, per se, that I was seeking. Finally, longing for the perfect fit, I launched my yoga studio, Tranquil Space. This has served as a

resource for close connections over the past decade plus. However, once I began dabbling in tranquility-infused passions beyond the four walls of the yoga studio through designing clothes, writing books and a blog, and producing a podcast, I found a global family. Through these online options, I've been able to truly find my tribe. This includes ladies (and a few men) who want to make a difference, love style, enjoy yoga or other mindfulness practices, and want to live life fully—with flair.

Wondering how to find your own slice of a community in a big ol' city or tiny rural town? Create it! Last month we explored launching a women's group and I outlined lots of tips to make that happen. This month let's explore nurturing yourself and others in relationships.

Take the time for small, thoughtful gestures. This offers a continual connection even when you're not in the same town (or continent) and can make a difference. It seems like the sweetest notes on Facebook or thinking of you e-mails always come when I need a little pick-me-up. Here are a few simple suggestions to nurture your relationships:

- **Girlfriends:** Cut out an article that you know she would enjoy reading. Instead of a hat/glove set for the holidays, give the gift of an experience with two tickets to her favorite musical. Now you can spend time together connecting through the experience. Ask if she needs anything when she's under the weather. Or better yet, drop by with a box of tea, flowers, orange juice, and fresh fruit. Arrange childcare for a girlfriend in need, and whisk her away for a yoga class, on you.
- **Loved ones:** Call your Grandma simply to say *bonjour*. Remember birthdays. Send an electronic thinking of you card. Ship a care basket with their favorite things and a thoughtful note via snail mail. Leave a sweet Post-It note on a loved one's computer or the office door. Insert a handmade card into your beloved's suitcase before a trip.
- **Colleagues:** Bring back treats from your travels and leave them in your employee lounge. Create a basket for your team filled with pick-me-ups to help keep their energy strong—pretzels, raisins, trail mix, and peanut butter crackers. Leave a sweet thank you card on a helpful colleague's desk with a bag of tea or their favorite treat.
- **Bring mindfulness into your relationships:** Consciously create the relationships you're seeking while staying in tune with your own needs and desires. To achieve your aspirations, surround yourself with others who are also working



toward their own. Some of my closest friends and I get together to set goals over bubbly some days, peppermint tea on others. Pull together a network of well-intentioned and supportive friends who inspire you and help keep you on track.

For example, if you're a recovering shopaholic, continuing to commune with your former shopping buddies might not be in your best interest. Rather, it would make more sense to seek out a new set of pals to mingle with at art galleries, DIY classes, or over learning a new language. Associate with people who will lead (or at least copilot) you in the direction of your aspirations and inspire you along the way. Don't have any in your smartphone just yet? Join like-minded groups and watch your social network grow.

Relationships are meant to be fun, supportive, and eye opening. Nothing stretches you quite like your interactions with others. Relationships are a mirror of your relationship with yourself. What you dislike in others, you often unconsciously dislike in yourself. Surround yourself with people whom you want to be like. Find those who embody your values and encourage you to think bigger. Enjoy the exchange of energy that happens when you become part of a community larger than yourself.

Nesting

Stop and listen to the heart, the wind outside, to one another, to the changing patterns of this mysterious life. Live with less grasping and more appreciation and caring. ~ Jack Kornfield



The start of your day sets the tone for what is to come, so creating a morning routine is part of your recommended daily checklist. A few years ago I asked *Tranquility du Jour* readers how they started their days and was impressed with the responses. For years I leapt out of bed onto the computer (after feeding *le pug* and *les chats noirs*, of course). However, I have made strides to a more mindful launch over the past few years and now sing its praises.

Simplicity expert Courtney Carver (tune into *Tranquility du Jour* Podcast #259), notes that her morning routine changes from season to season, but that it typically includes a combination of meditation, yoga, walking, and writing. On her website she states, "Dedicating a block of time to actions that heal my body, calm my mind and inspire creativity first thing in the morning informs my day in a really positive way."



TRANQUILITY TIP- 6 HEALTHY ON-THE-GO SNACKS:

1. **Nuts:** Keep a stash in your bag to pack a tasty punch of fiber and protein.
2. **Nutrition bars:** Look for bars with 5 to 10 g of protein, little sugar, and less than 200 calories.
3. **Granola mixed with dried fruit:** Mix up a small portion of granola and dried fruit with no sugar added. Sprinkle in almonds for more protein and crunch.
4. **Brown rice cake topped with nut butter:** This fluffy treat offers a nice blend of sweet and savory.
5. **Carrots, celery, and hummus:** Dip your veggies into protein-rich hummus for a crunchy treat.
6. **Apple:** Pack whole fruits such as apples or bananas. Tote an apple slicer to cut into bite-sized pieces. Top slices with nut butter for additional protein.

Pick up a copy of the book *Never Check Email in the Morning* by Julie Morgenstern or tune into Courtney Carver's microcourse to kickstart your morning routine. Checking e-mail in the morning leads to a reactive mode with others setting your priorities. Sound familiar? Living in this reactionary way takes its toll, leading to burnout and frustration. Trust me on this one.

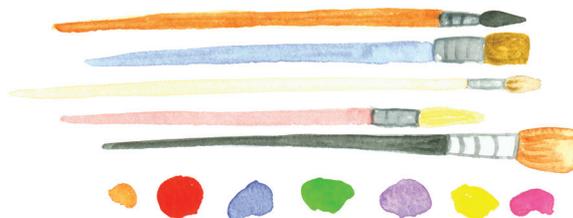
An ebook by Laura Vanderkam (tune into *Tranquility du Jour* Podcasts #199 and #263), *What the Most Successful People Do Before Breakfast*, also emphasizes starting the day intentionally. She encourages readers to picture the perfect morning and to create something aligned. Her research showed that successful people use the morning hours to nurture their careers, their relationships, and themselves. Thus, my hope is that you will begin your day with a focus on you and your needs—physical, emotional, and spiritual.

Here are a few of my favorite ways to launch the day in a mindful, therapeutic way:

- **Get your yoga on or hit the gym.** Start the day with yummy stretches, such as sun salutations or a jaunt on the elliptical.
- **Write Morning Pages.** This tool from Julia Cameron's *The Artist's Way* encourages writing three pages longhand at the start of the day to release what's taking up precious mental space.
- **Make breakfast with your beloved.** Whip up a home-cooked meal (yes, a green smoothie counts) and discuss dreams for the day.

- **Garden.** Don your sun hat and hit the patio (or windowsill) garden for pruning, watering, and harvesting.
- **Practice idea generation.** Sit down with a pen and daydream onto paper.
- **Enjoy a moment of silence.** Set your smartphone for ten minutes, close your eyes, and connect with your breath. Awaken to the sound of crickets or a chime.
- **Pack your lunch (and snacks).** Take this time to prepare for feeling healthy and satiated throughout the day.
- **Work in your art journal.** Pull out your sketchbook, add a layer of paint to a blank page or ephemera to a previously painted page. Let your thoughts come to life in visual form.
- **Review your monthly dreams.** Keep monthly dreams and bucket lists in a prominent place for regular review. This helps ensure your big picture trickles down into how you spend your days, hours, and minutes.
- **Spend time with loved ones.** Read your child a favorite story. Take your dog for a walk in the park. Ride a bike with your *beau*.
- **Savor getting ready.** Rather than rushing out the door, leave ample time for bathing, nourishing your skin, and choosing an outfit to reflect your mood.
- **Stimulate your mind.** Let thought-provoking headlines or a favorite inspirational book percolate through your mind.

The key is to set your intention for the day. Let your start be serene, strategic, and therapeutic to your spirit—not rushed, chaotic, and stressful. This will help set the tone for what will unfold and ground you. So different than rushing out the door with wet hair and a “breakfast” espresso in hand, don’t you think?



Do-Gooding

Life is frittered away by details. Simplify, simplify.
~ Henry David Thoreau

Despite my penchant for thrifting and great deals, I am forever exploring ways to simplify, simplify, simplify. In my early 20s I came across a book called *The Simple Living Guide* by Janet Luhrs and was smitten. Sadly, it appears I've forgotten some of the concepts as I look around *chez moi*. It's as if my accessories, books, pet hair, paperwork, and art supplies reproduce while I slumber. The troubling fact is that things not only get in the way of us leading a simple life, but they affect our time and energy, too.

In *The Joy of Less: A Minimalist Living Guide*, author Francine Jay emphasizes the importance of minimalizing our "stuff" by stating, "When our homes—the containers of our daily lives—are overflowing with clutter, our souls take a backseat to our stuff. We no longer have the time, energy, and space for new experiences."

Do you feel your life is so full that there isn't room for new experiences? It's common when your schedule is stacked to the ceiling, along with books and worldly possessions. She goes on to note, "Things can be anchors. They can tie us down, and keep us from exploring new interests and developing new talents." Does this feel familiar at all?

TRANQUILITY TIP: WAYS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE BY USING ONLY WHAT YOU NEED

Ignore impulse items (that's how I ended up with a pink Snuggie)

Borrow books from the library

Mend your clothing

Prepare your own food

Grow your own food

Live in a small space

Compost

Hang clothes to dry

Avoid disposable products

Buy local

Use cheap transportation (walking, biking, public transportation)

Live in a place that is walkable

Choose quality over quantity

Be content with what you have

Composer Claude Debussy said, “Music is the space between the notes.” I believe life is what happens in our pauses. Life is about experiences such as watching a sunset, snuggling with a purring feline, or chopping the vegetables to make a fancy meal. It’s not rushing between appointments or filling every moment of time in your planner. It’s about being. “Being is not wasting time, but cherishing it,” Francine Jay reminds us.

For years I’ve had friends come to my tiny home and exclaim, “You need more space!” Sure, running a few businesses (including housing TranquilT inventory), sheltering three furry friends plus two adults in 600 square feet can be tricky. But I don’t want a large home outside the city that I have to fill with even more stuff I don’t need. I want to work with my space and continue to pare down to the essentials (and a few luxuries).

You’re probably familiar with the 80/20 rule that roughly 80 percent of effects come from 20 percent of causes. Another way to look at this is that we use 20 percent of our stuff 80 percent of the time. Having recently lived out of a few bags for six weeks abroad, I know this to be true. But what to do about all our stuff and overscheduling?

Here are three suggestions:

- **One in, one out rule.** While working retail in college, a colleague mentioned that she wouldn’t bring a new piece of clothing into her home unless she got rid of one. That has stuck with me twenty years later and now I find it a highly encouraged practice among minimalism advocates. Before picking up another frame for your beloved photographs, think of which frame or knickknack you will be donating to a new home. That’ll keep you (and me) from picking up deals in those dollar bins and flea markets if you’re truly trying to simplify and struggle with the discipline of shedding to make room for new finds.
- **One-a-day declutter.** It can be anything such as a worn-out pair of socks or undies, an extra set of sheets that never gets used, a book you’ll never read or reread, a gift that isn’t you, grad school papers, a shirt that doesn’t fit, unfinished craft projects, or old magazines. Take photos and share the process on your blog or in your journal. It’s fun to see clutter go and space open.
- **Once-a-year rule.** If you haven’t used an item for a year, get rid of it. This goes with clothing, kitchen appliances, craft projects, accessories, shoes, CDs, body products, and more. Pass your unused mousse along to a friend who has curly hair or donate togs to a shelter that needs extra clothing. The point is to shed what you don’t use regularly and clear space.

You may wonder what living simply has to do with do-gooding. Well, I believe Francine Jay describes it best here: “(Simple living is) minimizing our consumption to what meets our needs, minimizing the impact of our consumption on the environment, and minimizing the effects of our consumption on other people’s lives. Once we’re warm, safe, and fed, we shouldn’t feel compelled to browse a shopping mall, or surf the Internet, to find more things to buy. Instead we could devote that time and energy to other, more fulfilling pursuits—such as those of a spiritual, civic, philosophical, artistic, or cultural nature.”

Take time this month to consider what simple, minimalist living would look like for you. There is no judgment or one size fits all. Consider your lifestyle and values. Then align your choices. May we begin to pare down, relish in basic luxuries, and find our way back to simpler times.

Work

A blog is an entity—a place that exists (albeit virtually) on the Internet—but it’s also an energetic receptacle that holds your thoughts, emotions, experiences, and inspirations all gathered together in one space. ~ Susannah Conway

Over this year we’ve explored ways to expand your brand through speaking, writing, and consulting—all possibilities for self-employed artists, stay-at-home mums, or 9-to-5ers. This month we’re going to take the writing a step deeper and discuss building a blog.

TRANQUILITY TIP: WHAT TO WRITE

Include lists, a photo of the day, a poem or quote to inspire, a lesson learned, or an insider peek into a day in your life. Snap photos at a garden or boutique to share. Review a book or magazine and snap a few photos from it. Pen a favorite way to start your day. Share “Top 10 things you don’t know about me” or profile someone who inspires you. Say what’s on your mind, describe in detail how you’re feeling or what you’re currently reading. Create a handwritten post that you photograph and share, a photographed page from your art journal or planner, or a favorite recipe with photos of it from start to finish. Add a column or series to your blog. For example, I currently have five weekly columns: “Mindful Monday,” “Things I Love Tuesday,” “Well-Being Wednesday,” “Tranquility Thursday,” and “Week in Review Friday.”



TRANQUILITY TIP:

A few design tips to keep in mind: Limit your fonts and prominent color scheme to no more than three to avoid looking busy. Black text on white background is easiest on the eye. Include photos of you, a welcome video, and a “start here” button or FAQs page written in first person so newcomers can get to know you in a personalized way. Include labels, tags, or category lists so readers can easily find favorite topic posts. Include social media buttons such as Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, Pinterest, and a way for readers to subscribe to your blog through e-mail or RSS feed. Finally, it's great to have contact information, too, in case readers want to e-mail you. Avoid ads. They look junky and take readers away from your valuable messaging.

Creating a blog is a highly encouraged way to expand your brand, hone your writing skills, and share your expertise plus interests with a large population—the world. The key to writing a blog is consistency of message and of writing. Popular British blogger Susannah Conway encourages writers to think of their blog as a magazine all about you. She states, “My blog is an ongoing collection of my thoughts, theories, and lessons that I share publicly.”

Below are seven blogging tips to help you get started or expand:

- 1. Read blogs you admire.** This goes without saying, but for years I hadn't read a blog despite writing one since 2004. When I did, I was blown away. There are so many serving up gorgeous inspiration. It was a great kick in the pants to offer more (such as fun images) to my readers. Reflect on how you feel when reading certain blogs. What draws you to your favorites? Jot down how you would like your readers to feel when they finish reading your posts. For me, it's all about inspiration. For you, it may be activism or DIY how-tos.
- 2. Crystallize your reader.** Picture your ideal reader. What does she look like? What is her day like? What is she seeking through your blog? Eye candy, travel tips, recipes, parenting advice? Is she active, filled with wanderlust, a meditator, or high school teacher? Similar to describing a target market when launching a business, describe the target reader of your blog. Avoid trying to write for everyone. It's best to offer a niche blog that will appeal to a targeted group aligned with your values and interests. The others? Well, they can find another blog.
- 3. Clarify why you write.** For me, blogging has become a way to connect with like-minded individuals far and wide. For example, I've been lucky to

meet people from around the globe who found their way to my studios or retreats through the blog. I write to express myself, teach what I most need to learn, share struggles, solicit feedback, and create an online community—similar to why I started Tranquil Space, but this goes beyond the brick-and-mortar. Writing a blog can be transformative for readers and the writer in making connections.

4. **Start writing.** Introduce yourself and your blog. My first post in October 2004 was titled “What is Tranquil Thoughts?” and shared what readers could expect when coming to my blog. It’s a great place to start! Set aside an hour per post to engage your creative muse and let her out to play. Ideally, post three to five times per week to build your audience and keep them coming back for more.
5. **Include images.** I used to write mainly a text-based blog (boo) and have been adding images to provide inspiration that may not translate only with words. You don’t need anything fancy; a simple camera phone works wonders. I use my iPhone now (instead of toting a camera, as I did for years) and am madly in love with the app Instagram that offers a variety of filters to help pics pop.
6. **Engage your readers.** I love to request feedback and offer giveaways when I travel. I’ll pick up coffee from Costa Rica or trinkets from Paris and do a giveaway in exchange for feedback, a tranquility tip, or a love note. This is a fun way to connect with readers, hear what they think, and give them a goodie. Remember that a blog is about building relationships. Reach out via social media by networking your posts to Facebook using an app such as Networked Blogs or tweeting a link to your latest layout of fashion pics. Ask your readers questions and get them involved in the process. For example, with Friday’s “Week in Review,” I always ask readers what’s on their weekend wish list and love it when I hear back.
7. **Blog layout.** I’ve used a free platform called Blogger since I began. Some of my e-courses and websites are built in Word Press and Square-space, which are also good options. A web designer created my customized blog template and I continue to update it.

Start simple and grow your blog (and readers) organically. Add podcasts and videos from time to time. Make a playlist for your readers using a free site like 8 Tracks or Spotify. Remember those mixed tapes from the ’80s? Well, we still love them. Let your creative spark shine and watch this blog build a platform of like-minded ladies far and wide.

Style

The world is a book, and those who do not travel read only a page.
~ Saint Augustine



With visions of beaches and great getaways dancing in heads, a dose of deep breathing and smart style will keep your travels tranquil. Careful planning, strategic packing, and a flexible attitude are critical for today's traveler. There will be delays, lost luggage, wrong turns, and language barriers. However, indulge your travel bug and explore new territories that push your comfort zone and open up a world of possibility.

Below are four travel tips for staying tranquil on-the-go:

- 1. Research.** When I backpacked through Europe after university, I carried my trusty five-inch-thick *Let's Go* guide everywhere and was at the mercy of the author's suggestions. Now, detailed directions, hotel booking, and suggested itineraries are at your fingertips online. Do your due diligence so you're sure to find lodging in the area of town where you want to spend the most time to save on in-city transport fees. Determine the sights you want to visit and when to prevent disappointing closed signs. I vividly recall my disappointment when planning a shopping excursion on my last day in Paris, a Sunday. Sigh, for the record, most shops are closed on Sunday. Lesson learned.

Practice basic phrases such as, "*Excusez-moi, parlez-vous anglais?*" Allow ample time to obtain a visa or passport. Don't forget your electric converters (you don't want to fry your beloved electronics). Let your credit card company and bank know you'll be traveling to avoid declined cards and ATM withdrawals. Delight in being spontaneous—walk city streets without a plan, sip tea for hours at a sidewalk café, and bask in the scenery. Parisian parks are open on Sundays!

- 2. Go green.** Choose green hotels when possible. Avoid having sheets and towels changed daily. Tote reusable utensils, a fabric napkin, a water bottle, and tea thermos to avoid contributing to the landfill with plastic bottles and utensils, paper napkins, or to-go cups. Leave the environment as you found it—maybe even better by hauling out any pesky litter. Go on a road trip in a hybrid car. Take a week long bicycle trip through your nearby forest or national park. Forego plastic bags at checkout and carry a mesh market bag that expands as needed. If you jaunt far, offset your plane's carbon emissions by planting trees (or an entire forest) through Trees for the Future (tff.org).

- 3. Pack mindfully.** Comfort is key if you are going to be plane or car bound for extended treks. My go-to travel outfit is black palazzos or leggings, slip-ons such as ballet flats and fitted layers to take on or off as the temperature shifts. My water bottle, lip balm, earplugs, and moist toilettes ensure I stay hydrated and refreshed during the voyage. Avoid metal earrings, bangles, or necklaces that may hold you up in security. We pay a pretty penny to take luggage on a plane and our back takes a toll by lugging extra shoes so travel as simply as possible. Pack staples that can easily be mixed and matched to make multiple outfits and work from one base color. It's no secret I'm a fan of *noir* luggage and find it travels beautifully. I can dress up or down with accessories and it doesn't show wrinkles or dirt the way lighter colors do.
- 4. Tranquil travel touches.** I like to bring little touches of homey comfort for my travels and here is my go-to list:

TRANQUILITY TIP: MY PACKING LIST FOR SIX WEEKS IN FRANCE

Dark denim capri jeans	Straw market bag
midi flare skirt	Expandable mesh market bag
palazzo pants	Purse
Flared leggings	Four pairs of shoes
Dark denim shorts	(patent Puma tennies,
Lounge shorts	patent wedges,
Three pairs tights	clogs, ballet flats)
Cardigan	Ten pairs undies
Long-sleeved wrap tunic	Two bandeau bras
Two long-sleeved fitted shirts	Swimsuit
Two sleeveless chemises	Sun hat
Denim jacket	Slouch cap
Three scarves	
Long faux pearl necklace	These staples were in black unless
Pair of earrings	noted and took me from beach to
	yoga to art to travel through mu-
	seums, lavender fields, and cafés.

- A thin travel yoga mat to stay tranquil on the road.
- A scented candle in a small tin, a few sticks of nag champa incense to insert into the candle wax. Oh, and don't forget the matches or lighter.
- Noise-reducing headphones or earplugs.
- A small perfume to dab behind your ears.
- An eye pillow or eye mask soothes and keeps streetlight out during slumber.
- An assortment of favorite teas such as caffeinated jasmine for morning and calming chamomile for evening.
- Healthy snacks such as almonds, fresh and dried fruit, carrot sticks, and plenty of H₂O in your reusable water bottle help combat airplane food.
- Aspirin to help recover from a red-eye, and non-drowsy allergy pills to combat allergic reactions in new environments.
- A journal and plenty of pens allow you to record your insights.
- A camera allows you to capture the moments and may be integrated into your smartphone.
- Reading material such as magazines to go through on the plane (tear out what you want to read and recycle the rest) and at least two powerful books to motivate and inspire or, better yet, your Kindle filled with favorite reads.
- Chargers for all techy toys.
- Travel-size toiletry basics such as soap, shampoo, conditioner, razor, deodorant, tweezers, medications, mascara, lip gloss, and moisturizer. Look for products that can serve multiple purposes like Dr. Bronners, shampoo/soap, and body/face moisturizer.

Creativity

You don't take a photograph, you make it. ~ Ansel Adams

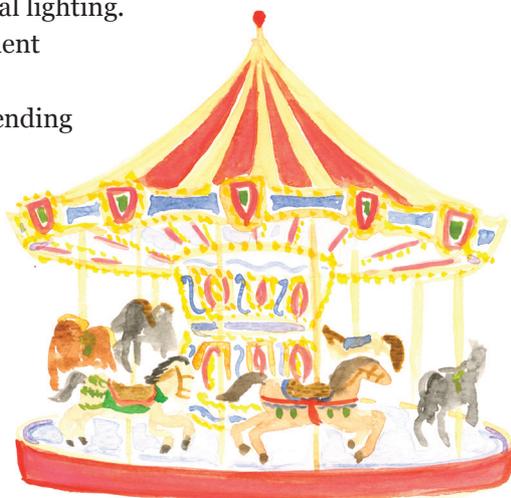
I grew up with a father obsessed with cameras and posed on rocks or other natural habitat props for hours as a little girl. We even had a darkroom in my childhood home. In today's world, technology offers us the opportunity to snap beautiful images of flowers we pass, expressions our pets make, graffiti art on the passing train, and little slivers of sparkle on a birthday candle—all with our smartphones.

When leading Creativity Circles, I encourage participants to carry their cameras with them everywhere and to make their creative process a priority. When walking to the subway, thrifting, sitting on a bus, watering a garden, or browsing a bookstore, there is always something special to capture.

By using certain smartphone apps, you can turn basic photos into stunning black-and-whites, give them special effects, or make them look like a vintage Polaroid. As mentioned in the section on blogging, when I began reading other blogs and viewing beautiful images, I thought I would need to buy a Polaroid and fancy equipment to offer similarly appealing images. Then various apps came on the market and my blog photos have never been the same.

Below are helpful hints to make your photos uniquely you:

- Avoid auto flash and look for natural lighting.
- Choose backgrounds that complement the objects in your photos.
- Crop photos as you snap versus spending lots of time in post-production.
- Frame your images. When snapping nature shots, I like to let overhanging branches frame the shot.
- Avoid direct sunlight as it can create shadows on your subject.
- Zoom in and capture the details.
- Try fun angles or even sans head to offer an interesting view of the subject.
- Shoot by an open door or window to let the natural light stream in and highlight your subject—they'll look angelic.
- Remove clutter like cords, pet toys, or rug edges from the shot.
- Strive to shoot during the magic hours of the day. This is the first and last hour of sunlight when the sun is lower in the sky.
- When shooting pictures of people, use props like chalkboards, flowers, baskets, fall leaves, yoga mats, umbrellas, bicycle, et cetera.
- Shoot from various angles. Stand on a stool and shoot down, shoot up and make the subject look taller, or capture your subject from a side view. Experiment!
- Develop a creative eye. Tear out images in magazines that appeal to you. Paste them into a photography journal. Observe what photographs resonate with you (like landscapes or portraits) and emulate them with your own unique flair.
- Snap from various views and always ask yourself how you can make the picture better.



I hope these simple tips have inspired you to begin capturing scenes from your every day.

I'll leave you with this Photography Manifesto by Susannah Conway, co-author of *Instant Love: How to Make Magic and Memories with Polaroids*:

“There’s a camera out there for everyone. And, like babies, all cameras are beautiful! The more you practice, the more your eye will improve. Fact. We can be inspired by others and imitate their style as we learn, but it’s our own style that will give us the most satisfaction. Give it time and you will find it. Slow down. Take a breath. Look again. Pay attention to the in-between moments. Remember to lie on the floor and stand on chairs once in a while. Play with digital and film. iPhones and Hasselblads. Canon and Nikon. Try everything to decide which translates your eye best. Learn a few rules so you know how to break them. Take a photograph every day, even if it’s just your lunch. Especially if it’s your lunch. Shoot it every day for a month and see what happens. The camera is only a tool; it’s your eye that really matters.”

Dreams

Success means the person is living the kind of life she really enjoys and finds fulfilling. ~ Janet Luhrs

Last month you wrote your bucket list. How did it come together? Did the task feel daunting or exhilarating? Maybe a little of both? I hope the process allowed you to explore beyond the microcosm of your day-to-day life. It’s easy to get caught up in the routine of morning tea, day at the office, evening in front of the television, followed by rinse and repeat. Boo. Without remembering you loved drawing as a child and would like to take classes, life can become a series of to-do lists lacking meaning beyond picking up soy milk, dropping off dry cleaning, or submitting a proposal. Prominently post your bucket list and review it regularly. Life is about consciously creating.

This month let’s do a mid-year assessment and focus on creating micro-movements so that you’re not only listing your dreams, but also making them happen. Pull out your penned list from January. Create the space to review the list with a pen in hand. Check off the items that have been accomplished, highlight the pending items that still appeal, and mark through the items that no longer interest you.

How did that feel? Are you happy with the progress so far? Did you forget some of your hopes for the year due to daily minutia? If so, it’s absolutely understandable, which is why we’re taking the time this month to do a complete reassessment and rewrite.

Pull out a blank sheet of paper or open to a fresh page in your art journal. Divide the page into a top and bottom half with a line, Washi tape, or doodles. On the top half, write the heading “Kudos” and the bottom half, write the heading “Dreams.” On the top half, transcribe all the hopes from your January list that you completed. On the bottom half, transcribe all the dreams from your January list that remain (even ones you started, but haven’t yet completed) and any new ones that you’d like to add to the mix.

Next pull out your *Daybook* and begin adding action steps for your dreams list into your calendar. This is where your hopes for the year translate into reality. It starts with breaking big goals down into manageable, bite-sized chunks. If you don’t break them into these little nuggets, goals may appear too far away or, even worse, unattainable. You can accomplish most of what you set out to do if you follow these steps (and add a sprinkle of *joie de vivre*). Whatever you want to call it, zest is a must-have ingredient to bring goals to life. Without it, everyday life minutia can feel like a constant haze obscuring your full vista of possibility.

Let’s avoid that haze and continue creating our ideal life now. What if a dream is to shed those ten stubborn pounds? Here are a few action steps that you can put into your *Daybook* and help make this happen (versus simply penning it annually):

1. Set aside a few hours to go through your cupboards and remove foods that are highly processed. Donate them or bring them to the office to share.
2. Add weekly trips to the local farmers’ market to your planner. Is it each Sunday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.? Well, note that every Sunday from 10 to 11 a.m. you have an appointment at the market.
3. Add time in your planner to walk to work or walk in the morning before work. Get a pedometer and track your daily steps.
4. Schedule research time to find a nutritionist or join a local support system like Weight Watchers.
5. Add a weekly exercise class like yoga or biking with a friend to your calendar.



6. Note certain evenings for cooking in and list ingredients needed for pick up at the farmers' market.

By taking a dream for the year (or even a big one from your bucket list) and breaking it down into actionable steps that go directly into your planner, these hopes will become reality. Promise.



OMWORK

1. Practice tonglen once a week
2. Snap a photo each day and upload online
3. Pen your rest-of-the-year dreams' action steps

SAVVY SOURCES

*Inner Excavation: Exploring Your Self Through
Photography, Poetry and Mixed Media*
by Liz Lamoreux

A Beautiful Mess: Photo Idea Book
by Elsie Larson and Emma Chapman

Start Where You Are: A Guide to Compassionate Living
by Pema Chodron

What the Most Successful People Do Before Breakfast
by Laura Vanderkam

*The Joy of Less: A Minimalist Living Guide.
How to Declutter, Organize, and Simplify Your Life*
by Francine Jay

Bonjour, August.



*Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take,
but by the moments that take our breath away.*

~ Maya Angelou

Bodies are supple, warm, and ready for tranquil transformation. The beauty of this heat is that it makes you a bit more malleable. August is the month where slowing down seems to be the norm. Families head to the beach, friends hit the trails, and couples escape the city in search of tranquility. When was the last time you had a true belly laugh or indulged in idleness on a sandy beach or state park? Let's make it a priority.

Marianne Williamson writes, "Joy is what happens to us when we allow ourselves to recognize how good things really are." Despite the pending to-dos and projects, take a step back to relish what is going well. This month allow yourself a moment of idleness and the space to note what is working for you. Is it the bird that greets you with a song each morning? The air-conditioned office that welcomes you each workday? The four-legged friend who greets you at the door? The yoga class that ignites your spirit every time?

Simple pleasures are soul balm and this month is the perfect time to plan a few into your routine. In addition, we'll explore walking meditation, creating space, the tea lifestyle, armchair activism, making your workspace work, accessorizing, designing inspiration folders, and creating a manifesto. Stay open this month as the temperatures soar and the sun shines brightly. As always, I hope the checklists are helping keep you on track by infusing your days, weeks, and months with tranquility.

Mindfulness

Exploring the world is one of the best ways of exploring the mind, and walking travels both terrains. ~Rebecca Solnit

Have you had the opportunity to practice tonglen while out and about? I hope so! It's a beautiful way to explore making a difference in another's day. This month we'll practice walking meditation. If you've gone on a meditation retreat, you may have been exposed to walking meditation interspersed with seated meditation.

This experience takes something we do regularly and creates mindfulness practice out of it. Thus, you don't have to find more time in your day for a new activity. You simply need to make your walking a mindful experience. Practice this as you're walking to work, down the hall at the office, or enjoying a leisurely stroll this weekend. Anytime, anywhere—that's the beauty of walking meditation.

Begin by consciously standing on both feet. Feel the sensation of your feet connecting to the earth. Take a few deep breaths and become fully present in the moment. Place your hands one on top of the other in front of your body with thumbs connecting. Or, if you're in a public setting and want to be discreet, let your arms hang relaxed alongside the body. Soften your gaze and place one foot in front of the other at your standard gait, just a tad bit slower. Observe the sensations in your toes, balls of the feet, and heels as they make contact with the earth.

Notice how your feet feel in the texture of your socks or shoes or go barefoot. Thich Nhat Hahn says, "Walk as if you are kissing the earth with your feet." Expand this awareness to your thighs. Notice the feeling of your clothing against your skin. Observe the muscles in your legs. Feel the muscles around your hips. Notice the movement of your pelvis, lower back, middle back, and upper back. Observe your belly. Feel your inhale and exhale moving throughout your body. Connect with your shoulders; relax them away from your ears. Drop your shoulder blades into your back pockets (figuratively, of course). Soften your jaw, the space between your eyebrows, and your gaze.

Continue this practice for as long as you can—five minutes to an hour. Observe the feelings in your body. Is there anxiety, tension, relaxation, heat, or coolness? Notice your thoughts. Is your mind busy, content, or dull? Avoid judgment; simply practice being an observer of your mind during this process.



To stay mindful during the practice, authors Arinna Weisman and Jean Smith of *The Beginner's Guide to Insight Meditation* recommend "walking by counting—a focus on developing stability and mental concentration—is another practice that can assist you when your mind is distracted. In this practice, you can walk at a normal pace. When you take your first step, you count one. On the next two steps, you say one, two. On the next three steps, you say one, two, three. The next four steps are one, two, three, four, and so on all the way up to 10. When you reach 10, you say 10, then 10, nine for the next two steps; then 10, nine, eight for the next three steps, et cetera. Whenever you lose your concentration, you go back to one. What often happens is that when you are in the middle of the sequence and get to 10, you then say 11—you do not remember to make the transition back because you are not really concentrating; you are on rote."

This practice can also be incorporated into jogging, running, biking, gardening, and more. Repetitive movements and everyday activities such as folding the laundry offer an opportunity to connect within. Our bodies have so much to tell us. Let's try to listen.

Self-Care

*Do you really want to look back on your life and see how wonderful it could have been had you not been afraid to live it?
~ Caroline Myss*

The practice of creating spaciousness seems to be a theme throughout modern society. Some are focused on minimalism, others grow produce in their backyards, and a few are downsizing to tiny houses on wheels. We romanticize downshifting (for example, memoirs tout leaving city life in pursuit of the French countryside), but may not see it as a viable option in an overbooked life. I mean, we are so attached to our tech devices that some sleep with it in arm's reach, check Facebook incessantly, and can't imagine not "checking in" at various locations. Sound familiar? Ah, what about engaging in self-care, taking time to nurture your soul, and refilling the well, too?

Why do we do this to ourselves? Tim Kreider, author of *The New York Times* article "The Busy Trap," explains, "Busyness is purely self-imposed: work and obligations they've taken on voluntarily, classes and activities they've 'encouraged' their kids to participate in. They're busy because of their own ambition or drive or anxiety, because they're addicted to busyness and dread what they might have to face in its absence." He goes on to share that this busyness "serves as a kind of existential reassurance, a hedge against emptiness; obviously your life cannot possibly be silly or trivial or meaningless if you are so busy, completely booked, in demand every hour of the day." Hmm.

Do the above explanations of busyness resonate with you? I've also read that keeping overscheduled is a form of avoiding our feelings and ourselves. Who has time to explore unhealthy relationships or challenging work situations if you run



yourself ragged, hit the bed with a crash nightly, and wake up to do it all over again? There's something to be said for having space in life to process, reflect on feelings, and savor down time.

Kreider also states, "Idleness is not just a vacation, an indulgence or a vice; it is as indispensable to the brain as vitamin D is to the body, and deprived of it we suffer a mental affliction as disfiguring as rickets. The space and quiet that idleness provides is a necessary condition for standing back from life and seeing it whole, for making unexpected connections and waiting for the wild summer lightning strikes of inspiration."

Are you partaking in the recommended daily, weekly, and monthly Tranquility Tools? When you look at your day, week, or month schedule, do you feel a sense of excitement or a sense of dread? If it is dread—even though it may be filled with things you love to do, just too many of them—make some changes. With the amount of data coming into your life each day, take the time to unplug, light a candle, and read a book sans smartphone within reach.

Consider replacing "busy" with "grateful" or something equally lovely when asked how you're doing. Carve out open space in your calendar to engage in a Bed Day, look out a window and daydream, meander through a museum, or spend time doing something you absolutely love with no agenda attached. Our minds (and bodies) need space to bloom and grow. Give it to yourself this month and watch how nurtured your soul will feel. Then make it routine.

Nesting

Drink your tea slowly and reverently, as if it is the axis on which the world earth revolves—slowly, evenly, without rushing toward the future. Live the actual moment. Only this moment is life. ~ Thich Nhat Hanh

It's no secret I'm tea obsessed. I start each day with a cuppa green tea and at one point had dreams of running a tea salon, serving up savory sandwiches and pots of tea to gracious patrons. Now I simply enjoy hosting tiny tea parties *chez moi*, complete with homemade tea sandwiches, tiny glass teacups, and pots of rose green tea. Simple and sweet.



TRANQUILITY TIP: TEA BREWING

According to Numi Tea's website (tune into Tranquility du Jour Podcast # 172 for their story), here are the ideal temperatures and steeping times:

White Tea: Just under boiling (170-185 F)	STEEPING TIME: White Tea: 2-3 minutes
Green Tea: Just under boiling (170-185 F)	Green Tea: 2-3 minutes
Oolong Tea: Just under boiling (170-190 F)	Oolong Tea: 2-3 minutes
Black Tea: Boiling (200-212 F)	Black Tea: 3-5 minutes
Pu-erh Tea: Boiling (200-212 F)	Pu-erh Tea: 2-3 minutes
Herbal Teasan: Boiling (212 F)	Herbal Teasan: 4-5 minutes

This month let's explore the tea lifestyle as a form of nesting. Many start their days with a cup of joe or cuppa tea, warming their hands around a hot mug and savoring a comforting libation. Our daily lives are made up of many repetitive experiences. Creating a ritual around this morning habit can be a meditative practice.

Avid tea drinkers refer to tea as a lifestyle. A choice. A way of being. You may wonder, what exactly connotes a tea lifestyle? Authors Donna Fellman and Lhasha Tizer of *Tea Here Now* explain, "In living tea we remain present with what has now become part of our nature, the daily rituals of preparing and pausing, experiencing and doing, and reflecting and gathering." As the above quote by Thich Nhat Hanh suggests, tea and meditation are often paired to cultivate a mindful moment. The *Tea Here Now* authors go on to explain that the tea-drinking ritual "makes us less likely to become emotionally reactive to the ups and downs of everyday life." By taking the time at the start or end of your day to savor tea or another mindfulness practice, you invite awareness into your routine.

Connect to your breath. Create an intention for the day, for the moment, or for the time it takes to consume your cup of tea. Heat the water. Listen to it boil. Choose your pleasure: grassy, fruity, flowery, blooming, rich. Pour the water over your tea and listen to it hit the bottom of the cup. Let it steep for two to five minutes, depending on the type of tea (see the Tranquility Tip for details). Smell the aroma of your chosen infusion. Feel the warm cup in your hands. Observe the steam rising. Taste the tea in your mouth.

Pema Chodren writes, “Our whole life could be a ritual; we could learn to stop when the sun goes down and when the sun comes up. We could learn to listen to the wind; we could learn to notice that it’s raining or snowing or hailing or calm . . . If we can hold it all in our hearts, then we can make a proper cup of tea.”

Can you set a date with yourself to curl up with a cup of tea and create a ritual around it? It’s the perfect nesting practice as you begin anew in your breakfast nook or settle into your pajamas after the end of a long day.

Do-Gooding

The truth will set you free. But first, it will piss you off.
~ Gloria Steinem

Passionate about animals, health care, equal pay, or gay marriage? Wondering how to ensure your voice is heard? Well, there are many ways to make a difference, even through armchair activism, where you don’t have to leave the comfort of your own chaise. This month I’ll share a few tips on making a difference for the causes that pull at your heartstrings.

Being an activist doesn’t mean only protesting in the streets, fighting for passage of a law, or raising funds for an organization. It means advocating or engaging in activism and you choose how you make this happen. Your voice can make a difference in raising awareness on an issue and even changing laws. “Your one voice does count,” affirms Mary Wilson, president of the League of Women Voters of the United States, “but working within organizations or with like-minded people is usually the most effective way to make a difference. More than likely, someone else has already covered some ground that will help you in what you want to achieve.”

Find your passion and get started sharing it. Connect with individuals and organizations currently championing your cause. Attend conferences, fundraisers, special events, or meet-ups aligned with your cause. Create a documentary (check out award-winning *Vegucated* for a great example by first-time filmmaker Marisa Miller Wolfson and tune into *Tranquility du Jour* Podcast #236 to hear her story). Find aligned organizations or individuals on social media



and connect with them. Locate books, podcasts, websites, and magazines on the cause and connect with the creators. You have found a kindred spirit. Financially support like-minded organizations, sanctuaries, and shelters. Volunteer your time and skills. Help spread the word through your own social media outlets. Even crafters are launching a movement (see Savvy Sources). There is a community for everyone.

Organizations may assist you in locating the government agency handling your issue, the proposed legislation to focus on, or the lawmakers to befriend. They may also offer advocacy training, special conferences, and coordinate activities with other activists from your community. For example, some animal rights conferences I've attended organize a "lobby day" after their conferences for concerned citizens to head to Capitol Hill while they are still fired up.

Share your voice through writing. According to People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, "There are so many ways that you can put writing into practice to make a difference for animals. Create a website or a blog or comment on other people's sites. Write letters to editors of magazines and newspapers, food manufacturers, cosmetics companies, and elected officials." If animals aren't your thing, translate this to your cause.

No matter who you are, you can do something that matters by making lifestyle changes, voting with your dollar, and speaking up.

Work

Be wise with what you have. Be wise with what you are using. When you have something and you are not using it, you are telling the universe that you don't have the room to be blessed with more.

~ Dr. Robin Smith

Your workspace is a haven for creating inspiration to share with the world. Some thrive on piles of paperwork, while others need everything perfectly in its place and color-coded. Since many of your waking hours are filled with work, infuse your personality (and a dose of tranquility) into your environment and watch your work product shine.

- To organize clutter, set up a designated inbox for incoming documents—bills, notes, letters, and paperwork to handle. Go through this inbox daily to file, trash, or handle what is inside.

- Clear off blank space on your desk, even if you have to put all your papers into one big pile (my secret sauce). You'll breathe easier and make space for new ideas to flow.
- Set up a filing system. I tend to keep businesses or categories together and have a four-drawer cabinet in my home and studio office clearly labeled in case anyone else needs to locate something in my absence.
- Keep office accessories handy, such as a stapler, pens and pencils, tape, address labels, and a calculator. Get rid of unnecessary items such as pens that don't work, broken office equipment, or old ink cartridges.
- Go through magazines and trade publications weekly so they don't pile up. Pull out fun images for collaging, interesting articles for reading when you have more time, and recycle or donate the remainder of the publication.
- Have a designated place for your *Daybook* and laptop to live.
- Add plant life to your desk. Greenery and fresh flowers make everything happier.
- Write your company mission, organizational values, or monthly sales projections on colorful note cards to hang on a polka dot ribbon from your wall.
- Create a comfort drawer complete with personal care products—moisturizer, lip gloss, facial cleaning pads, mascara, tampons, headache control, lavender aromatherapy oil, and green tea.

These simple tips can do wonders to bring about organization to your workspace and, ultimately, your life.

Style

A girl should be two things: classy and fabulous. ~ Coco Chanel

As you know, the most important accessories you wear are a smile and glowing attitude. These top two accessories make you more approachable and accessible for suitors and friends. It also projects confidence and makes you seem more like a team player—enhancing your magnetism. This month, let's explore infusing your wardrobe with a few varied and key accessories in addition to warm smiles.



TRANQUILITY TIP: INFUSE YOUR OFFICE WITH YOUR SIGNATURE STYLE

Choose jumbo paperclips in pastel colors.

Write your to-dos with a calligraphy pen.

Use pink Post-Its over passé yellow squares.

Keep slippers under your desk to offer tired toes a rest.

Color-code your work by projects using different colored highlighters.

Use artsy decorative file folders rather than plain ol' manila.

Have a wrap nearby to keep you cozy on over-air-conditioned days.

Add a desk or floor lamp for ambiance.

Have a patterned throw strewn across the extra chair in your office—perfect for those spontaneous picnics in the park, or to cover your legs on a chilly day.

Keep a lavender-scented candle nearby—ready to be lit at deadline notice.

Accessorizing is a skill that can be honed and perfected with practice. Avoid the need to be matchy with shoes, handbags, and accessories. If you've walked the streets of New York, Paris, or San Francisco, you've been privy to chic style with pieces that have nothing in common. It works! Determine your favorite accessories to build on. These will become traits of your signature style. Is it big sunnies? Chunky layered necklaces. Tall boots year-round. Vintage buttons or brooches on jackets. Dangly rhinestone earrings. Big belts. Sparkly cocktail rings. Colorful neck scarves. Whatever your passion for accessories, let yourself play. A well-accessorized look can add big flair to your basics.

Here are a few ways to accessorize various parts of your body:

- **Arms:** Arm warmers. Wood or metal bangles. Rings. Tie a thin scarf around your wrist.
- **Legs:** Leg warmers. Over-the-knee socks. Tights.
- **Feet:** Ballet flats. Boots. Heels. Flip-flops (a must for pedis). Espadrilles. Sneakers (if you run). Clogs. Wedges. Canvas tennies.
- **Head:** Headbands. Scarves to tie in your hair, or around your head *a la* Audrey. Eyeglasses. Sunnies. Hats. Barrettes. Flower pins.
- **Ears:** Earrings make your face sparkle.
- **Neck:** Long beads, chains, and chokers—wrap around your neck, use in layers to add the perfect accent. Colorful scarves.
- **Body:** Outerwear such as a trench, vintage bomber denim, and faux fur (straight from Grandma's closet). Bags such as a clutch, overnighter, and an everyday. Belts. Brooches.

When traveling, teaching yoga, or hitting the town, I've found that the basic ensemble of black pants and a white T-shirt can become a work of art when paired with a few of the options above. Browse vintage or secondhand shops for one-of-a-kinds. Go through your mum's jewelry box and ask for family heirlooms. Peruse Etsy.com for handmade treasures created by female artists or make your own. Explore DIY ideas throughout creativity sections. There are many ways to turn your simple staples into uniquely you artistic treats.

Creativity

Our deepest wishes are whispers of our authentic selves. We must learn to respect them. We must learn to listen.

~ Sarah Ban Breathnach

Inspiration folders are a form of art journaling onto a simple file folder. One inspiration folder I created includes images *j'adore*: yoga, macarons, style, Paris, gardening, pink hair streaks, loving couples, tea, chocolate, blue bird eggs, bobs, fancy soaps. I used packing tape to "laminare" and secure the images and then tied a big pink ribbon around it. My inspiration folders currently house images to use for collage, along with articles I've pulled from magazines and plan to read in future sit-down sessions. I love using manila folders for this project since I typically have a few lying around to reuse. Turn them into a colorful masterpiece of inspiration.

Here's how you can get started creating your own inspiration folders. Begin gathering images, words, or phrases that inspire you. Perhaps you're remodeling your kitchen? Consider creating a folder to house all the ideas you have for it and cover the folder with a visual such as the drawings by the contractor, a happy woman cooking in your ideal kitchen, or a freshly baked pie coming out of the oven. I have a few varied inspiration folders that house collage material, do-gooding articles, TranquilT design ideas, and interesting women featured in print to reach out to for a podcast interview. Design a few to support your creative ideas.

Arrange your images onto the folder front, back, and/or inside until you like the layout. Then pull out your trusty double-stick tape or glue stick to attach the images to the folder. Similar to your art journal, you can write or stamp over the images. Circle what you like about the photo to show your contractor (renovation ideas), publicist (book ideas), or friend (style ideas). When creating the design aesthetic with my contractor before moving into a multi-level studio space, I created an inspiration folder where I circled concepts that I loved. I still have it and refer to it when considering new design elements.

Another idea is to hang a ribbon, wire, or fishing line across a wall and clip post-cards, fabric swatches, or quotes to it as a mini inspiration board. You can mix and match and move things around as the muse hits. If you're debating between two different website looks, having images of both hanging up side by side may help you with decision-making.

TRANQUILITY TIP: Watch my how-to video from April 2010 on the Tranquility du Jour YouTube channel.

Dreams

The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams. ~ Eleanor Roosevelt

This month we're crafting a life manifesto—a public declaration of your principles and intentions. The following are examples of manifestos that I've created for my books and clothing line.



Hip Tranquil Chick Manifesto

Live fully, seek serenity, laugh often, tread mindfully, savor simplicity,
love passionately, think globally, exude creativity, treasure tranquility

As a Hip Tranquil Chick, I, _____, promise to:

- Create a vision for my life
- Nourish my inner artist through constant creativity
- Breathe through challenges
- Consciously carve my career path
- Host savvy soirees to expand my community
- Handle my money mindfully
- Design an oasis to nurture my soul at home and work
- Think globally through socially conscious actions
- Exude my signature style with a dash of flair
- Challenge myself daily
- Seek opportunity and express gratitude
- Practice yoga on and off the mat daily
- Nurture my relationships
- Surround myself with candles, flowers, and positive pals
- Nourish my body with oodles of water, fresh fruit, and whole grains
- Schedule herbal tea sipping, bathtub soaking, and journal writing
- Find inspiration in the mundane



TRANQUILISTA MANIFESTO

I, _____, promise to:

- connect to my spiritual core daily.
- access my aspirations seasonally and create aligned action steps.
- be an activist for causes close to my heart and do good every day.
- express my creativity daily and replenish my creative spark weekly.
- exude my signature style in a way that helps my inner spirit shine.
- start something that aligns with my values, intentions, and passions.
- build a brand with authenticity and focus on community.
- expand organically, strategically and compassionately.





Manifesto

I believe in handwritten notes. I believe in using china at every meal. I believe in the healing power of bubble baths. I believe that animals are to be loved, not used. I believe that you're never too old to wear a tutu. I believe that Paris holds the key to my heart. I believe in stargazing around a campfire. I believe in lazy Sunday mornings. I believe that magic happens on the yoga mat. I believe in high tea at all times of the day. I believe in living life full out. I believe in sharing deep thoughts with my journal. I believe in donning noir and living pink. I believe that glitter and washi tape make life better. I believe in lighting candles every day. I believe that paint, collage, and markers make for hours of fun. I believe in pink and white twinkle lights. I believe in seeking balance between doing and being. I believe in the power of one person to make a difference. I believe that a home filled with books is a happy one. I believe in cat eyes and red lips à la Parisian chic. I believe in brunch and belly laughs with girlfriends.

Aren't these inspiring? A fun way to capture what is important to you. Let's pen yours. Begin by listing all the things you value in your life. Ask yourself what you'd like to accomplish before you die. Consider what kind of legacy you want to leave.

Next narrow your list down to the top five to 10 things. Now expand on them to serve as reminders on how you want to live. Let the statements in your manifesto clarify what actions you should take to align with your values. Write it in the present; instead of "I want to infuse my days with laughter," try "I infuse my days with laughter."

Add watercolor, design flourishes, or decorative font to your manifesto. Let it be a written reminder of what you want to offer and receive from the world. Your manifesto is a guiding light to connect with your higher purpose. When making big decisions or tough transitions, return to your manifesto. Ask yourself which choice aligns most deeply with your manifesto. Then, take that path.

Reread it regularly. Place it in your *Daybook*, in your office, or on your desktop. As you read it, note any discrepancy between who you are and what you've written. For example, when getting upset at the not-so-friendly lady at the post office recently, I remembered that I have a mantra (similar to a manifesto) tattooed on my arm encouraging loving thoughts and actions toward all beings. Yep, that includes crabby ladies at the post office, and I had a change of heart in the moment. You don't have to tattoo your manifesto on your arm, but seal it in your heart and align your daily actions.





NOTES:



OMWORK

1. Practice walking meditation once a week
2. Personalize your workspace
3. Create a manifesto

SAVVY SOURCES

*You Can Buy Happiness (and It's Cheap): How One Woman
Radically Simplified Her Life and How You Can Too*
by Tammy Strobel

Tea Here Now: Rituals, Remedies, and Meditations
by Donna Fellman & Lhasha Tizer

Meditation: The Complete Guide by Patricia Monaghan

I Spy DIY Style: Find Fashion You Love and Do It Yourself
by Jenni Radosevich

*Craft Activism: People, Ideas, and Projects from the New
Community of Handmade and How You Can Join In*
by Joan Tapper, Gale Zucker, Fayth Levine

Bonjour, September.



Adopt the pace of nature: her secret is patience.
~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

The balmy heat is beginning to lift and leaves are changing into golden hues. While savoring time in the woods recently, I came across a beautiful red leaf with the shape of a heart inside. Typically I would have walked past nature's artistic flair in a hurry to get where I was going, but this day was different. I turned around and knelt down to draw it close to my heart. Wow, a sweet work of nature.

This month's theme will revolve around embracing change and making a deep connection to what lies within through practicing yoga on-the-go, penning a love note to your younger self, canning, blending craft and activism, planning the week ahead, fall fashion, making bunting, and recording your dreams. Whew, we've got a busy month ahead.

To ensure you stay connected to the spark of tranquility, I encourage you to return to the basics of the tranquility movement through the daily, weekly, and monthly checklists. These tools will assist you during this time of transition, back to school, and fresh season filled with possibility.

Mindfulness

There is no enlightenment outside of daily life. ~ Thich Nhat Hanh

This month we'll explore seven simple yoga practices as a mini retreat from the mundane. When you're on the bus, sitting at your favorite sidewalk café, or traveling to an exotic locale, these tranquility-to-go tips will come in handy. Begin by sitting at the edge of a chair with your feet hip-width apart. Extend the crown of your head toward the ceiling and close your eyes.

1. Three-Part Yogic Breath

Inhale deeply through your nose. Bring your breath into the belly, ribs, and chest. Exhale through the nose, feel the breath release from the chest, ribs, and belly. Repeat at least 10 times, and watch the tension fade away. This breath is soul balm for your nervous system.

2. Alternate Nostril Breath

This little gem comes in handy in most situations. Follow these simple steps and enjoy having tranquility within reach—except for those allergy-ridden. If you're suffering from sinus congestion, wait until you feel well and can breathe fully through both nostrils to try this one. Place your right middle and index finger on your eyebrow center so that your thumb, ring, and pinkie

fingers are free. Close your right nostril with your thumb and inhale deeply through your left nostril. Close your left nostril with your ring finger, release the right nostril and exhale through the right nostril. Inhale through your right nostril and then close the right nostril to exhale through the left nostril. Inhale through your left nostril and then close the left nostril to exhale through the right nostril. Continue this pattern back and forth until it feels natural. Then inhale to a count of four, five, or six, and exhale evenly so your breath becomes long, deep, and smooth. Alternate nostril breathing balances both sides of the brain and assists with calming the mind and the nervous system.

3. Seated Cat and Cow

Rest your hands on the arms of your chair with palms facing down or place your hands on your thighs. Inhale, lift your chest, draw the shoulder blades together and down, and take a slight back bend into cow pose. Exhale, bring your belly toward the back of



the chair as you drop your shoulders forward into cat pose. Repeat 10 to 20 times. Concentrate on coordinating each movement with your breath. This pose helps to relieve back tension and keeps your spine supple.

4. Chair Twists

Inhale, lengthen the crown of your head toward the ceiling. Exhale, bring your left hand to your right knee. Place your right hand on the chair back. As you twist to the right, let your head follow and gaze over your shoulder. Hold here for five to 10 breaths. Inhale, return to center, and repeat on the other side. Repeat one to two more times on each side. This pose helps to massage internal organs, detoxify your system, and release lower back tension.

5. Neck and Shoulder Rolls

Inhale, lengthen your spine, and lower your right ear toward your right shoulder. Exhale, lower your chin to your chest. Inhale, move your left ear toward your left shoulder. Exhale, lower your chin to the chest. Repeat five times. Inhale, roll your shoulders forward and up to your ears. Exhale, roll the shoulders back and down your back. Repeat five times in both directions.

6. Eagle Arms

Inhale, extend your arms out to the sides. Exhale, bring your left arm under your right arm. Cross both arms at the elbows, point the elbows toward the floor and fingers toward the sky. Try to place the palms of the hands together

with both arms externally rotated. Inhale, lift your elbows to shoulder height. Exhale, draw circles with the elbows in one direction and then the other. Hold 30 seconds to two minutes. Rinse and repeat on the other side.

7. Seated Pigeon Pose with Fold

Inhale, place your right ankle onto your left knee and flex your right foot. Exhale, fold forward. Place your hands or forearms onto your thighs, or let them dangle to the floor as you lower your chest to your thighs. Release your head and breathe deeply. Switch sides, repeat.

These seven poses offer you a chance to return to the present moment, to feel your body, and release anxiety. When you find yourself frustrated or in need of a quick jolt of energy, try these on and watch your mood shift. Incorporate a daily connection to your breath along with these basic movements to keep your heart open, and body supple. Watch your spirit soar.

Self-Care

The price of anything is the amount of life you exchange for it.
~ Henry David Thoreau

There is a therapeutic exercise of writing letters to past and future selves. This month, we're going to pen one of each. Try one of support to yourself during a tough age (such as 16, ah, remember the drama?) and one to who you hope to become in the future.

Think of a struggle from your youth. A time when you felt unease, disease, or forgotten. What would you tell your younger self? What support would you offer based on all the experiences you've had since then and the lessons you've learned? What does your younger self need to hear? These letters can also be lovely to pass down to children, nieces, and beloved young ladies in your life.



Now, imagine yourself five to 10 years from today. How do you see yourself? What advice would you give? What do you hope to be doing? Where do you see yourself living? Who are you with? What have you created? What would you say to your future self?

TRANQUILITY TIP:

Here's a note to my future 2017 self penned in 2012:

"Oh my, you'll be 44 years old and a LICSW (licensed clinical social worker) possibly working toward a Ph.D. in something fabulous. Tranquil Space will be 17 years old, TranquiliT will be 15 years old, Tranquil Space Foundation will be 11 years old, Tranquility du Jour will be 12 years old, and Louis the Pug will be a senior 12-year-old. You will have been dating Beau nearly 14 years. You will be living simply with little extravagances (such as twinkle lights, scented candles, and bubble baths), volunteering for the animals, writing heaps, mentoring women, and traveling with a tiny pink vintage trailer to call your own. You will have written one, possibly two, new books and have fully immersed yourself in crafting, mindfulness, homemaking, and getting back to basics. Your focus is on health, happiness, and creating magical experiences. Your advice to my current self would be to not sweat the small stuff and live *lokaḥ samastāḥ sukhino bhavantu* (translation below). Take more time off to bask in being and studying. Travel, create, and see the world beyond your bubble. Always carry an ideas book. Build relationships. Respond versus react. Eat more greens (and less sugar)."

Take a moment to write these letters in your journal, on your computer, or on a blank sheet of scrap paper. They can be short and sweet or you may find that a lot tends to pour out as you start writing. Work with what comes up and reflect on how you can incorporate some of the future advice into your present day. Today.

TRANQUILITY TIP: The Sanskrit mantra *lokaḥ samastāḥ sukhino bhavantu* as translated by my teacher Sharon Gannon means, "May all beings everywhere be happy and free. May the thoughts, words, and actions of my own life contribute in some way to that happiness and to that freedom for all."

Nesting

The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams. ~ Eleanor Roosevelt

I recently whipped up my first batch of lavender peach jam with Mama Wilson and became smitten with canning. As we focus on nesting this month, canning seems to be the perfect antidote to savor nature's abundance of fruits and veggies. We can keep these concoctions for our families or wrap a love note around the jar and pass it along to a lucky friend. Either way, the canning process helps connect to a simpler, slower pace of life. Let's get started with the nine basic tools needed to get your canning on.

1. Canning jars and seals for housing your creation. Find Mason jars with sealed lids and rings online and at select stores.
2. Wide-mouth funnel for filling jars with sauces or jams.
3. Magnetic lid wand for easy removal of lids and rings from boiling water. Ouch!
4. Ladle for filling jars.
5. Two large pots for boiling canned goodies and for keeping the jars, lids, and rings sterilized.
6. Tongs or jar lifters for removing cans from their water bath.
7. Clean cloths for wiping down jars, lids, and rims of jars.
8. Eight-cup Pyrex measuring cup for pulling together ingredients.
9. Labels for naming and dating your goodies made with love.

Set out your nine basic tools. Sterilize your jars by washing your lids and jars in hot soapy water or in your dishwasher, and move them to a boiling water bath in your large pot for ten minutes. Next, remove the jars from the water bath and leave the lids in the hot water until you're ready to seal your jars.



Now slice, dice, and pour. Whip up your ingredients (refer to April's strawberry rhubarb recipe). When filling your jars, avoid filling them to the brim. Produce expands during the boiling process, so leave a smidgen of space near the rim. After filling your jar with produce (unless canning jams, jellies, and preserves), you'll be pouring liquid to submerge the fruits or vegetables. Pour the boiling water, pickling solution, or juice to cover up to the top of your produce.

Now let's process your jars. Heat water in your pot to a boil. Add the jars using your tongs or jar lifter, and place them in the large pot. With water bath canning, bring the water to a slow boil, and start your timer to process for the length of time dictated by the recipe. Keep the water an inch or two above the top of the canning jar when they are placed in the pot.

When ready, remove your jars and place them on a flat wood or cloth-covered solid surface to cool for 12 to 24 hours. While cooling, your jars will start to pop creating the vacuum seal, and it's a most rewarding sound. After they have cooled, press down on the center of your jars to ensure they have sealed completely. Any lids that spring back have not sealed and should be placed in the refrigerator to be eaten first.

Label your jars with the contents and the date. You can write directly on the lid with a Sharpie or print specialty labels for your jars. Once labeled, store your food in a dark, dry place until you're ready to enjoy or begin gifting.

Of course, I have to share my favorite yummy peach lavender jam recipe (courtesy of *The Complete Book of Small-Batch Preserving*) that yields six delicious cups.

Supplies

2 tablespoons dried lavender flowers

1/2 cup boiling water

4 cups finely chopped peaches (from about 5 to 6 medium peaches, peeled)

2 tablespoons lemon juice

6 cups granulated sugar

1 pouch liquid fruit pectin

Instructions

Place lavender flowers in a small bowl. Pour boiling water over flowers and steep for 20 minutes. Strain and discard flowers. Prepare canner and wash/sterilize 6 half-pint Mason (or equivalent) jars. Keep jars in hot (not boiling) water until ready to use. Warm lids in hot (not boiling) water to sterilize and soften seal. Combine lavender liquid, peaches, lemon juice, and sugar in a very large stainless steel or enamel saucepan. Bring to a full boil over high heat and boil hard for 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and stir in pectin. Ladle hot jam into jars, leaving 1/4-inch of headspace. Wipe jar rims and threads. Screw on lids and rings. Process in a boiling water bath for 10 minutes. Remove from water and let cool completely, 12 to 24 hours. Check seals. Any unsealed jars should be refrigerated and used within three weeks.

Do-Gooding

*We need to question what we . . . consume and what we are consumed by.
~ Virginia Fleck*

According to craftivism.com, “Craftivism is a way of looking at life where voicing opinions through creativity makes your voice stronger, your compassion deeper, and your quest for justice more infinite. Through activities such as teaching knitting lessons, crocheting hats for the less fortunate, and sewing blankets for abandoned animals, craftivism allows for creativity to expand previous boundaries and enter the arena of activism.” Don’t you love this? The idea of blending craft and activism to make a difference and spread your message.

By living your life with a focus on recycling, reusing, creating community, and making a statement, you make your life into your message. According to Craftivism’s leader Betty Greer, “By advocating the use of creativity for the improvement of the world, craftivists worldwide taught knitting lessons, sewed scarves for battered women’s shelters, and knitted hats for chemotherapy patients. In promoting the idea that people can use their own creativity to improve the world, craftivism allows those who wish to voice their opinions and support their causes the chance to do just that . . . but without chanting or banner waving and at their own pace.”

Activism takes many forms and can be shared through your passions. Over the year we’ve explored ways to use your day job skills to support favorite causes and this month it’s about your handmade skills. Consider ways to blend your crafty



TRANQUILITY TIP: HOW TO YARN BOMB



Choose your item to bomb—a tree, bench, telephone pole, or fence.

Measure the item and make your yarn bomb smaller so it’s snug. Work with an easy pattern to start. Head out with scissors, needles, cable ties, yarn bomb piece, calling card, extra yarn, and camera in tow. Oh, and a water bottle and partner in crime come in handy, too. Attach the yarn bomb to your object with cable ties, ribbon, or hand sewing. Add a tag such as a laminated calling card to your blog or cause. Snap a photo of your masterpiece.

passions (such as embroidery, cooking, canning, knitting, photography, sewing, crocheting, quilting) with a cause close to your heart.

One craftism passion is yarn bombing. A yarn bomb is a type of graffiti art using colorful displays of crocheted or knitted yarns. My mum crocheted the sweetest “bomb” to keep the tree outside of my D.C. yoga studio toasty last winter.

How can you add a splash of color to an object in your community, home, or office through yarn bombing or sharing your joy of crafting? Activism comes in many forms and it’s rewarding to explore it by using hands and hearts.

Work

You cannot solve a problem with the same mind that created it.
~ Albert Einstein

On Sunday evenings you’ll find me curled up with my *Daybook*, colored pens, and a cup of tea—it’s planning time! You may wonder how to get more items checked off your to-do list and focus on priorities while pulled in multiple directions. This simple act of settling in with my tools at the start of the week makes a big difference in how my week runs and my mind settles. This helps me stay productive at work, keep my household running, and relationships nurtured.

Sunday may not be your day of choice. Maybe you prefer planning your next week on Friday evening or Monday morning. Whichever you choose, the method is the same. The key is to set aside at least 30 minutes for this process and it will reward you ten-fold with saved time, completed projects, and fulfilled dreams.

Pull out your *Tranquility du Jour Daybook* and an assortment of colorful pens. Settle in for a review of your week ahead. Begin by marking out your appointments: times you’ll be at work, in meetings, in class, or otherwise engaged. Note the remaining open space and insert any items you’d love to add to your schedule (such as date night, soak in the tub, yoga class, tea date with friends, or volunteering).

Next, move down to your to-dos. Categorize them in the seven different columns of the week. My various creative businesses make up four of the columns, along with personal, and a list of talking points for the week’s meetings. Yours may be allocated to projects at work, your children, the different hats you wear, home projects, consulting clients, or an assortment of the above. Now fill in your to-dos with ac-

tion items such as call insurance company, mail thank-you notes, set meeting, write marketing plan, call Mom, design next collection, et cetera.

Finally, pen your biggest projects that are the focus of your week (coined Most Important Tasks, “MITs”). Limit your MITs to five main projects that you want to accomplish or focus on that week. For example, when I’m about to launch a new collection, it is a project that guides many of my to-dos and appointments throughout the week.

Play with this for a few weeks and see how it feels. Notice how getting the tasks, to-dos, and focus points out of your head and onto paper can help keep you on track. Make your planner inspiring to look at and refer to throughout the week. Include foil gold stars for the days you exercise or eat well. Reward yourself while keeping an eye on your priorities.

Style

The beauty of a woman is not in a facial mole, but true beauty in a woman is reflected in her soul. It is the caring that she lovingly gives, the passion that she knows.

~ Audrey Hepburn



There is something about fall fashion that makes my heart sing. Tall boots, tights, and chunky sweaters. Swoon. The best part? You don’t have to purchase heaps of recommended trends, or anything new for that matter.

Fall style is about layers, layers, and more layers. Done smartly, of course. Stop at three levels of layers or you may begin to look less “boho chic” and more “hobo chic.” Below are my tried-and-true tricks for rocking fall in style no matter what is featured as the season’s must-have.

Begin by moving beachwear and other truly summer items into a back section of your closet. Move your fall jackets and boots out as the weather begins to cool. Keep certain summery pieces such as rompers and shorts out as you can add opaque tights and a long-sleeved top or cardigan. You can even keep those strappy sandals out and wear them with fall pieces and heavy tights until the weather turns too cold to tolerate the transitional look.

Tote your favorite scarf everywhere you go. It’s super stylish, plus when your neck is warm, your body is warm. As temperatures begin to drop (or you work in an

overly air-conditioned studio), having a toasty scarf on hand helps keep you cozy and chic.

Continue rocking your favorite summer sundress with patterned tights and a blazer to get extra mileage out of your frock. Rain and snow can ruin your shoes, so make sure you have rubber boots on hand for these foul-weather days. I have a pair of bright pink rubber boots from Target that I get heaps of compliments on and they add flair to my rainy-day look.

Enjoy dramatic contrasts such as kimono or dolman sleeves with skinny jeans. Avoid over-accessorizing with hat, scarf, belt, necklace, or earrings all at once. Let your chosen accessories speak for themselves. Add texture with faux fur. Animal prints are always a fashionable fall choice.

The key to fall fashion is adding texture and layers while savoring the sensation of being swaddled with these comfy pieces. My favorite look is a comfy pair of leggings, a fitted black turtleneck, tall boots, a chunky sweater or wrap, a colorful scarf, and a knitted beanie. This can look chic for the office by replacing the wrap with a blazer or great for heading to yoga (and easy to practice in, too). Think ease and comfort this fall while reusing the many items you have during this transitional season.

Creativity

The best way to predict the future is to create it. ~ Unknown

While sewing triangles of patterned fabric to vintage lace recently, I thought how much better everything would look with a dose of bunting. It's now hanging up around *chez moi* and the yoga studios. Bunting is a string of festive decoration made typically of fabric or plastic triangular flags (think car sales lots). They are easy to whip up and turn the most mundane space into a nest of festivity. This month we're going to explore a few ways to create your own even sans sewing machine or home ec know-how.

- 1. Simple squares:** Cut 15 to 30 4x4-inch squares out of reclaimed fabric such as old sheets, curtains, remnants, or dresses. String embroidery thread through a needle and begin attaching each flag with a running stitch. Leave a little space between each flag. Hang on your wall with thumbtacks and you have a little dose of handmade love.

2. **Traditional flags:** Create your flag template (standard is 7 inches wide x 9 inches height). Place your template on top of the fabric and cut fabric with a rotary cutter. To attach your triangle flags together you'll need a package of bias tape or ribbon. Sew approximately 12-inch of the bias tape or ribbon to create a tail. Once you have a tail, add your first triangle by opening the bias tape fold and slipping in the top of the triangle or simply sew the triangle under the ribbon. Continue this process, adding triangles until you have reached your desired bunting length. Once all triangles are attached, sew a 12-inch tail of bias tape or ribbon at the end of the bunting.

3. **Add lettering:** Add a word to your bunting to personalize the occasion. On a square bunting I added "tranquility" to 11 fabric squares. To make it pop, I cut out 11 smaller squares of beige muslin and stamped each letter onto one of the beige squares. Next, I counted the squares to be sure I centered "tranquility" properly and sewed the small squares over the larger printed fabric for a sweet message. I also stamped a friend's initials with a plus sign and her fiancé's initials for a wedding bunting and they had it hanging at the altar on their special day. It's a cute and easy way to personalize. Of course, you can also embroider letters. More on that craft in November.

4. **Paper strings:** Cut or punch hearts, stars, or another shape out of an old book, scrapbook paper, or magazine. You can do assorted sizes or all one size. Begin feeding the paper through the machine and you'll create the cutest mobiles for hanging from the ceiling, curtain rod, or inspiration board. If you're sans sewing machine, use a needle and thread with the trusty running stitch.

5. **Fabric garland:** Gather an assortment of fabric scraps and cut them into 2-inch by 20-inch strips. Use twine, ribbon, or yarn as the base for the garland. Attach the fabric strips approximately 1.5 inches apart by wrapping the strip over the garland, threading the ends between the front and back layer for a loop. Include add-ons such as pom poms, lace, or burlap strips.

TRANQUILITY TIP: Bunting tools include: Grab fabric, scissors, an old book, a rotary cutter, a cutting mat, an iron, ribbon or bias tape, and stamps for adding lettering. Create a template for the traditional flag with thin cardboard such as a cereal box. Pull out your sewing machine or simply grab a needle and colorful embroidery thread. Most of these items can be found at a local craft shop or in your cupboards.

Create little doses of bunting love and watch the space you're decorating come alive with these handmade beauties. For an extra dose of flair, incorporate pink or clear twinkle lights. Let your creative flag fly!



Dreams

Those who dream by day are cognizant of many things which escape those who dream only by night. ~ Edgar Allan Poe

Do you have recurring dreams of showing up for tests unprepared? *Moi aussi!* Do certain objects make regular appearances? Dreams are a connection to the unconscious. Note ongoing themes to better understand yourself and what lies beneath the surface.

Founding father of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud believed dreams are driven by unconscious wish fulfillment and called them the “royal road to the unconscious.” He argued that important unconscious desires often relate to early childhood memories and experiences. Analytical psychologist Carl Jung believed recurring dreams show up to demand attention on an issue the dreamer is neglecting related to the dream. He encouraged paying attention to dreams for they are messages to the dreamer with revelations to help resolve issues. Psychotherapist Fritz Perls saw dreams as projections of the self that has been ignored, rejected, or suppressed. These three theorists provide great insights into the world of dreaming.

Start a journal to record nightly dreams and reflections of them. Keep it near the side of your bed to record them immediately after waking up or the details will fade once you move into your morning routine. According to Barbara Condron, author of *The Dreamer's Dictionary*, “Writing the next day's date in the dream journal asserts a conscious thought to remember dreams, which communicates intention to the subconscious mind. The subconscious mind then responds by fulfilling that desire. This mental action causes the conscious and the subconscious minds to work together toward the common goal of remembering a dream.” She also states, “During sleep, the dreamer's subconscious mind experiences the freedom to go into the past, present and probable future, unimpeded by the conscious mind.”

TRANQUILITY TIP: Tune into *Tranquility du Jour* Podcast #277 with Rachael Rice to hear more about the art of dreaming.

The author of *Dream Well* blog writes, “Take time to think about what’s really going on with you. Is something bothering you deep down? Our fears and hopes are often at the root of many of our dreams. It is not by accident that we use the same word for what happens while we sleep, as we do for our goals and hopes in life. With a little effort, these processes of understanding ourselves better and understanding our dreams better will become interwoven and inseparable. It is like a loop; each one feeds the other. But more than that, it can move our hopes and dreams out of our minds and into the real world. Dreams can shine the light on who we are and where we are going, and if we act on their advice, can change our lives for the better—waking or sleeping.”

Begin to better understand yourself by penning a spiritual autobiography in your dream journal. Your nightly dreams may hold the key to better realizing the waking dreams you’ve been exploring all year.





NOTES:



OMWORK

1. Practice one yoga on-the-go pose each day
2. Record your dreams
3. Create a bunting or canned item

SAVVY SOURCES

*Wherever You Go, There You Are:
Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life*
by Jon Kabat-Zinn

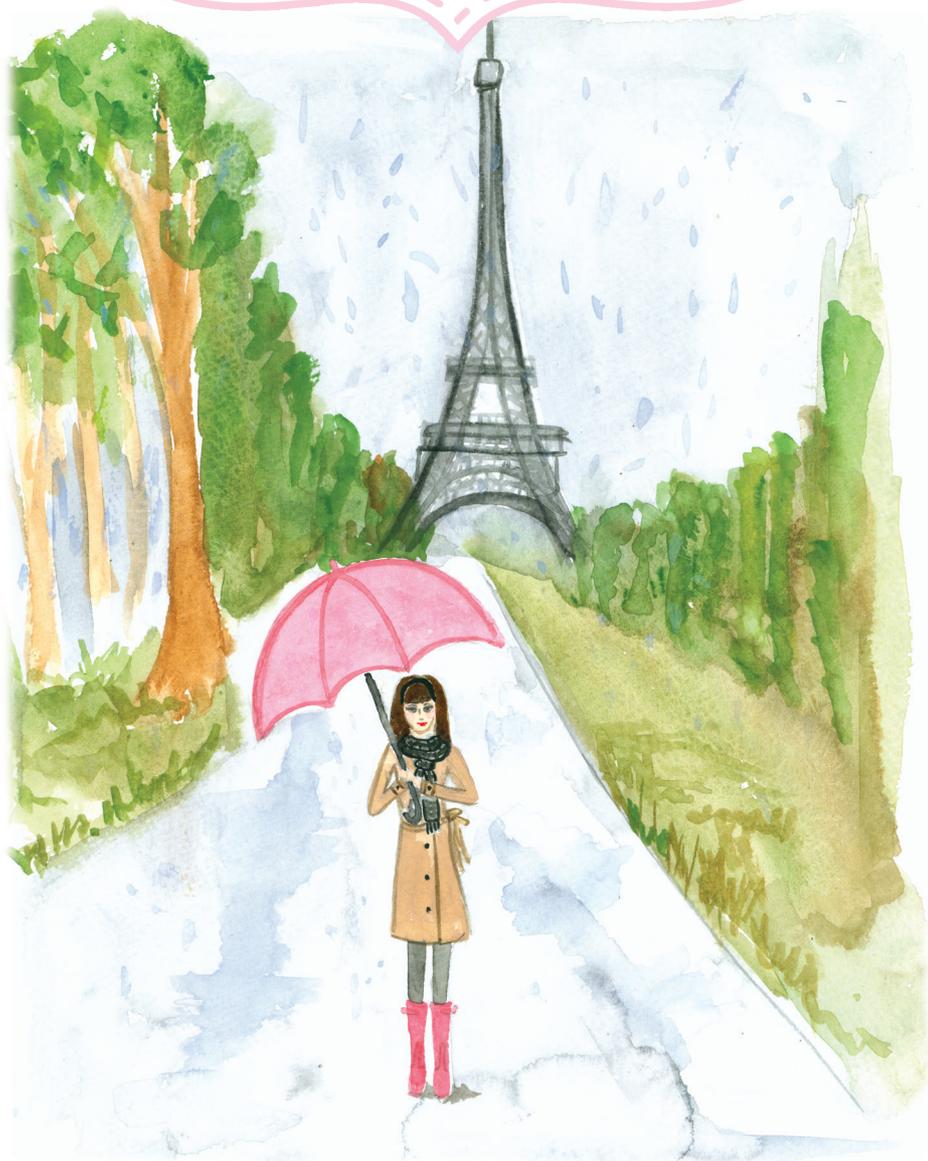
Granny Chic: Crafty Recipes and Inspiration for Handmade Home
by Dottie Angel and Ted & Anges

Dream Sight: A Dictionary and Guide for Interpreting Any Dream
by Dr. Michael Lennox

Write It Down, Make It Happen: Knowing What You Want—And Getting It
by Henriette Anne Klauser

*Canning for a New Generation:
Bold, Fresh Flavors for the Modern Pantry*
by Liana Krissoff

Bonjour, October.



*There is something in October sets the gypsy blood
astir. We must rise and follow her, when from every hill
of flame, she calls and calls each vagabond by name.*

~ William Bliss Carman

Leaves are changing, the air is cooling, and nature beckons us to slow down. Inside you'll find my favorite grounding practices, tips for slowing down, tasty apple treat recipes, simplification projects, innovation ideas, ways to upcycle, sewing basics, and examples on creating a support system.

Stay connected to the spark of tranquility by regularly reviewing your daily, weekly, and monthly Tranquility Tools. They will assist you during this time of transition. As always, we've got an exciting month ahead!

Mindfulness

The body says what words cannot.
~ Martha Graham



Do you ever have those days where you feel pulled in multiple directions and struggle to catch a breath? From multi-tasking, checking your digital devices, and running between appointments, this hurried state can take its toll. By bringing mindfulness into your day through a morning meditation or conscious sipping of tea, life can begin to feel less chaotic.

Below are six of my favorite ways to get grounded, whether you struggle with anxiety, overcommitting, or a deadline-driven profession.

- 1. Body scan.** Take a moment to check in with your body. Notice areas of tension or tightness. Observe heat or coolness. Relax your muscles. Notice your heartbeat. Unclench your teeth and relax your tongue to the bottom of your mouth. Soften your jaw and the space between your eyebrows. Check in regularly with your body and scan from the top of your head to the tips of your toes to help ground yourself. Your body does so much more than exist to tote your head around. Tune in.
- 2. Breathe.** Close your eyes and feel your breath. Notice your inhale and your exhale. Feel the breath move in and out of your nostrils. Observe your belly expanding and contracting. Stay here five to 50 minutes.
- 3. Touch.** Feel your clothes against your skin. Hug someone or put your hand onto their arm when talking to them. Watch how this lowers your heart rate and helps bring you both into the present moment.
- 4. Yoga.** Move your body with your breath. Try the sun salutations from January or some of the on-the-go yoga poses from September. Get in touch with your body

and move through poses while focusing on your breath. Your mind will calm and be better equipped to quiet through this connection to body and breath.

- 5. Observe.** Notice sensations in your body. Move your body. Connect to the breath. Avoid judging what you notice. Sure, you may feel snug hamstrings or tightness in your chest. That's okay. Simply observe without labeling it as good or bad. Same with your emotions. Notice anger arising or sadness coming on. There is no right or wrong; just notice what comes up. Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh writes in *Peace is Every Step*, "We must be aware of which programs do harm to our nervous systems, minds, and hearts, and which programs benefit us." Observe how you feel after watching, reading, or eating certain things—our bodies have lots to tell us.
- 6. Be in the moment.** Notice how the mind moves from future worries to past events and back again. Try to bring the mind back to the present moment. So much of life is lost by not being with the here and now.

This month make mindfulness a priority and watch how your breath, pace, and presence changes. October beckons you to slow down and relish this shifting season.

Self-Care

Enjoy life—there are no reruns. ~ Shirl Lowery

Nature is slowly transforming. As leaves begin to shift color and fall to the ground, it's the perfect time for you to make changes and shed what needs to be released. The idea of slowing down may sound like a good idea, but how do you make it reality?



Below are five simple strategies for decelerating this season and making a commitment to live on a deeper level.

- 1. Review commitments.** Notice what fills your days. Is it to-dos you dread, plans you wish you hadn't made, or work that makes your heart sink? If you find your days filled with drudgery instead of delight, make changes. Can you graciously bow out of that committee or remove yourself from that task group? What about sharing a carpool versus doing it all yourself or teaching your family how to do their own laundry? Once you take a hard look at what's in your *Daybook* and how it makes you feel, it may be time to start weeding out what no longer makes your heart sing.

2. **Curb consumerism.** As an avid thrifter and bookstore browser, it's hard to spot a deal and not leave the store with a shiny new toy. However, I've been accumulating more blank notecards, books, and vintage dresses than I can possibly use. Over the past few months I've made a conscious effort to avoid going into certain stores that I find tempting (hello, Target!). Instead I'm using what I have, filling the found time with writing, and resisting the urge to browse. Play with limiting purchases to consumables or essentials for a day, week, or month and notice how this opens up space in your life (and wallet). More in this month's Do-Gooding!
3. **Focus on experiences.** With the space you find from curbing consumerism, play with creating experiences. Have a friend over for tea. Light a fire, pull out a blanket, and read fireside. Picnic in the park. Go on a bike ride through a trail covered in colorful fall leaves. Head to the country and go apple picking. Get tickets to a concert and go with a dear girlfriend. Experiences such as these will leave an imprint on your life in a way that means much more than another pair of wedges.
4. **Go small.** Bigger isn't always better. More and more articles, documentaries, and books are coming out about people choosing to live in small spaces. Maybe living in 200 square feet isn't for you, but you can choose to live small by biking, getting a car share membership, or using public transportation. Or perhaps you prefer not to have a television in your home and instead fill your free time with reading and writing. You may have a wardrobe of 33 items (see how-to in Do-Gooding and tune into *Tranquility du Jour* Podcast #259) versus a closet filled with frocks you don't wear. However you choose to slow down and go small, make it a conscious decision.
5. **Simple pleasures.** Instead of seeking outside stimulation, immerse yourself in the simple pleasures of everyday life. This time of the year it's so lovely to warm fireside, soak in the tub, hike through fall foliage, roast marshmallows over a campfire, or curl up in a chenille blanket with a steaming cup of hot cocoa and a good read. Sensory experiences can bring about true bliss.

As you dabble in slowing down this month, let the cool weather and changing landscape offer inspiration to begin the process. Our lives are cyclical and so is our energy. Focus on creating a lifestyle that warms your soul, allows for building solid relationships, and offers you the chance to savor the simple moments in between the to-dos.



Nesting

Surely the apple is the noblest of fruits. ~ Henry David Thoreau

I've recently become addicted to sliced apples smothered in almond butter. Apples are the perfect on-the-go treat, come in heaps of varieties (*bonjour*, Pink Lady), and pack a big punch of fiber. Since it's apple season, below are a few ways to make these tasty treats part of your palate's experience this month.

VEGAN APPLE CRISP *via about.com*

This apple crisp is a favorite for casual family dinners as well as the holidays because it is not only dairy-free and egg-free, but it's so easy to prepare. For quicker weeknight preparation, leave the skins on the apples, but this recipe truly benefits from peeling them first.

Ingredients

Filling:

10 cups peeled, cored apple pieces
3/4 cup white granulated sugar
1 T. corn starch
1 t. ground cinnamon
1/4 t. nutmeg
3 T. water
1 T. lemon juice

Topping:

2 cups 1-minute oats
1 3/4 cup white all-purpose flour
1 1/2 cup packed brown sugar
1/2 cup white granulated sugar
1/2 cup finely chopped pecans
1/2 t. baking powder
1/2 t. baking soda
3/4 cup dairy-free soy margarine,
melted

Preparation

Preheat the oven to 350 F. Lightly oil or grease a 9" x 13" baking dish, or, alternatively, smaller baking dishes for individual crisps. Set aside. Make the filling. In a medium-large mixing bowl, toss the apple slices with the sugar, corn starch, cinnamon, nutmeg, water, and lemon juice until evenly coated. Pour into the prepared baking dish. Make the topping. In a medium mixing bowl, sift together the oats, flour, sugars, chopped pecans, baking powder, and baking soda until well combined. Add the melted soy margarine, mixing until the mixture is consistent. Using your hands, crumble the mixture over the apple mixture. Bake for 45 minutes to 1 hour, or until golden brown.

VEGAN APPLE BUTTER *via allrecipes.com*

Ingredients

5 1/2 pounds apples—peeled, cored and finely chopped
4 cups brown sugar
2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
1/4 teaspoon salt

Directions

Place the apples in a slow cooker. In a medium bowl, mix the sugar, cinnamon, cloves, and salt. Pour the mixture over the apples in the slow cooker and mix well. Cover and cook on high 1 hour. Reduce heat to low and cook 9 to 11 hours, stirring occasionally, until the mixture is thickened and dark brown. Uncover and continue cooking on low 1 hour. Stir with a whisk, if desired, to increase smoothness. Spoon the mixture into sterile containers, cover, and refrigerate or freeze.



VEGAN APPLE SAUCE *via godairyfree.org*

Ingredients

8-10 tart apples, washed
Dark brown sugar (optional)
Lemon juice (optional)
Cinnamon (optional)

Preparation

Wash the apples and cut them into chunks. Put them in a pan with enough water to just cover the bottom of the pan. Simmer, covered, for about 15-20 minutes, until the apples are soft. Run the apples through the food mill over a clean bowl. Discard the seeds and peels left in the mill. Taste the applesauce, and add a tiny bit (1-2 teaspoons) of dark brown sugar if desired. If the applesauce isn't tart enough, add a shot of lemon juice. Stir cinnamon into the applesauce or serve with cinnamon on top if desired.

APPLE SANGRIA *via health.com*

Ingredients

3 medium apples, sliced with skin on (about 3 cups)
1 1/2 cups apple juice
1 1/2 cups apple-cranberry juice
1/2 cup Calvados (optional)
1 cup water or seltzer
3 cups dry white wine

Preparation

Place apples in a large chilled glass pitcher. Add juices, Calvados (if using), water or seltzer, and wine; stir. Cover and refrigerate for 2-4 hours. Remove from fridge. Fill 6 glasses halfway with ice cubes; add 1 1/4 cups sangria with fruit. Also, nothing beats having sliced apples, cloves, and cinnamon sticks simmering in apple cider on the stove for a delightful aroma to permeate your home and heart. Or sticking cloves into an orange and making a pomander.

Take time this month to nourish your senses with tasty in-season fruits and veggies while getting your hands dirty whipping up some of these delicious concoctions.

Do-Gooding

My desire to live a meaningful life was getting forestalled by the petty, day-to-day demands of all my stuff. ~ Dave Bruno

As you prepare for slowing down and savoring fall's pleasures, explore these creative projects to help make a difference for yourself and the world. The great news is that some of these projects have a structure to follow so you don't have to reinvent the wheel and they offer support systems, too. Peruse each of them and consider if your lifestyle could benefit from trying any of these three ideas.

1. **Project 333 by Courtney Carver** (tune into *Tranquility du Jour* Podcast #259). According to the Project 333 website, here are the basics:
What: 33 items including clothing, accessories, jewelry, outerwear, and shoes.

What not: These items are not counted as part of the 33 items: wedding ring or another sentimental piece of jewelry that you never take off, underwear, sleepwear, lounge wear, and workout clothing.

How: Choose your 33 items, box up the remainder of your closet, seal it with tape, and put it out of sight.

What else: Consider that you are creating a wardrobe that you can live, work, and play in for three months. Remember that this is not a project in suffering. If your clothes don't fit or are in poor condition, replace them.

Next: After three months, determine if you missed any items. If not, donate what you're not using and stick to your staples. You no longer need a closet full of clothes and the struggle of having nothing to wear.

- 2. 100 Things Challenge by Dave Bruno.** On his website, guynameddave.com, Dave writes, "The goal of the 100 Things Challenge is to break free from the confining habits of American-style consumerism. A lot of people around the world feel 'stuck in stuff.' They feel like their closets and garages are too full of things that don't really make their lives much better. But how to get unstuck? Reduce (get rid of some of your stuff), Refuse (to get more new stuff), and Rejigger (your priorities). I totally believe that living without an abundance of personal possessions for an extended period of time is the first step we ought to take in order to realize that we don't need ever more stuff. You'll spend the rest of your life creating a more valuable life, instead of wasting your money and time on stuff."

Many minimalists such as Leo Babauta of the popular blog *Zen Habits* have taken this challenge and posted an inventory of their belongings on blogs and websites. Listing items in groups such as tools and accessories (for example, car and books), consumables (for example, food), kitchen items (for example, pots and pans), bathroom items (for example, scale and toiletries), electronics (for example, laptop and stereo), furniture (for example, sofa and bed), decorations (for example, artwork and plants), and clothing (including shoes and accessories) has become a way to share how one is simplifying and limiting consumption.

- 3. 30-Day Nothing but Essentials Challenge.** Imagine only buying what you need for an entire 30 days. It's a challenge that will help not only your clutter and time management, but also your pocketbook. Once I stopped going into certain big-box stores to browse or see what was in their oh-so-tempting dollar bin, I felt like I'd turned the page on a subconscious disorder. Rather than picking up "just in case" items, spending hours debating over pink or yellow (pink!), and storing said items, my errand running lightened

and so did my credit card bills. Consider curbing consumption and watch how your daily patterns shift. Do you carry your coffee or tea to the office in a reusable thermos? Can you pack your lunch? Are more mindful at the grocery store? Do you have more time once retail therapy is controlled?

Our do-gooding journey involves keeping our actions aligned with our values and these three challenges offer an opportunity to blend the two.

Work

I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work.
~ Thomas A. Edison

Creating a consistent product is a key to continuous brand building. However, a sprinkle of innovation may work wonders to bring a fresh spark to what you do. As I see it, the queen of innovation is Madonna and the king is Steve Jobs. I'm inspired seeing the work product of geniuses that continue to delight consumers with quality while keeping us guessing what's next.

Below are six steps to innovate in work and play. Consider exploring these this month and watch what bubbles up.

- 1. Always keep learning.** I'm a big fan of taking heaps of workshops, online courses, and classes, as well as picking up books to add new skills or enhance current ones. With each new sign-up or book purchase, I feel a sense of possibility. For example, when I take a meditation workshop or find a new mindfulness book, I'm watering seeds for deeper connection to mindfulness in daily life. Seek out family or friends who have a skill you covet and ask for a tutorial. Want to learn to can, crochet granny squares, work with Excel, or plant bulbs? I'll bet you have someone in your sphere who would be happy to share his or her knowledge. If not, peruse YouTube, community classes, online articles, and e-courses. Never ever stop learning.
- 2. Push your edge.** As the Thomas Edison quote above reminds us, in order to create something new, there will be many lessons learned on how not to do it. In yoga I explain the edge as that point past sensation, before pain. Get outside your comfort zone and explore. Avoid going well beyond your comfort



zone into territory that feels paralyzing. It's in this in-between place where you will find new ways of doing things and fresh ideas will flow.

3. **Write things down.** Many creative minds throughout history have used sketchbooks to capture ideas. Carry a tiny composition note book with you at all times to pen inspiration as it hits. I get new ideas when out and about in a completely unrelated setting. For example, when in New York recently, I saw a glass-encased menu box in front of a restaurant with plants dangling from the fixture. I snapped a photo and brought it back to the studio as an idea to feature our schedules out front.
4. **Get away.** Step out of routine and into a new setting. You'll find inspiration and perspective simply by going for a walk around a different block, taking pen and paper to the local café, or even rearranging your workspace.
5. **Solve the opposite problem.** Wondering how to redesign a website or update a clunky product? Try writing out what you would not want on a website or in a new product. By working backwards you can eliminate what you don't want in your site or product that can be helpful to clarify what you want. Tricky, eh?
6. **Host a brainstorming session.** Get your colleagues or friends together for a brainstorming pow-wow. Sometimes you can't see the forest for the trees when making a decision, but those around you can see clearly. Set aside time to describe the project or problem to a group of trusted companions and take down their ideas. Avoid dismissing any, have an open mind, and hear what your pals have to say.

These six simple steps can work wonders to bring an innovative idea to life. When you find yourself feeling stale or longing for a new product or service to offer your community, play with one of these steps. Watch the magic begin to shine forth. Innovation is a way to constantly become more and more of who you are while offering the world all that you can.



Style

*I'm a material girl—want to see my fabric collection?
~ Author Unknown*

As mentioned, I'm a sucker for thrifting. I've found it helps influence my style to offer one-of-a-kind creative flair. Why look like you've just walked out of a big-box store donning the same "uniform" as everyone else? Style is about expressing yourself in a way that feels uniquely you. Sure, you will be influenced by what you see on the streets, in the magazines, and on your favorite shows (hello, "Mad Men"), but how you pull it off is what makes it your style.

Over the years of shopping secondhand (remember May's Style feature?), perusing flea markets, and making my own togs, I've picked up a few tips that I love to share. The key to crafting your own sustainable style is to let your creative muse come out to play. For example, I was recently shopping at Goodwill in New York City and found the sweetest tea-length black and white floral print skirt for \$7. I had just been gifted a Madonna concert tee and thought combining the two would make the best ensemble. However, for the office I paired the skirt with a striped black and white tunic picked up at a discount store and a \$14 blazer from that same Goodwill. You may not typically be one to pair stripes and florals or tea-length skirts and tees, but allow yourself to play and explore in these economical ways.

This month, dabble in upcycling by taking reasonably priced finds and turning them into something new. As you'll find in one of this month's Savvy Sources, *Generation T*, there are literally hundreds of ways to turn a basic tee from the local thrift store into a bag, skirt, apron, or arm warmers. Below are a few projects to get you started on the upcycling journey:

MAKE ARM WARMERS FROM A SWEATER

This pattern is simple and makes for a great gift. Find an old sweater lurking in the back of your closet or hit a thrift store for the perfect color or print.

Supplies

Sweater
Scissors
Pins
Needle
Thread

Instructions

From the hem of the sweater, cut two rectangles 12 inches high and 8 inches wide. Fold each piece lengthwise with the insides facing out. Mark the thumbhole 2 1/2 inches wide and 2 inches from the top with pins. Sew 1/2 inch from the edge, leaving the thumbhole open. Reinforce the thumbhole and sew a 1/2-inch hem at the bottom. Optional: Add a star or heart felt patch.



MAKE A BAG OUT OF A T-SHIRT

via MarthaStewart.com

Turning an old tee into a reusable shopping bag is a simple, clever craft transition of a favorite tee full of memories into a tote.

Supplies

Heavyweight cotton T-shirt

Pins

Sewing machine

Medium-size bowl

Water-erasable marking pen

Scissors

Instructions

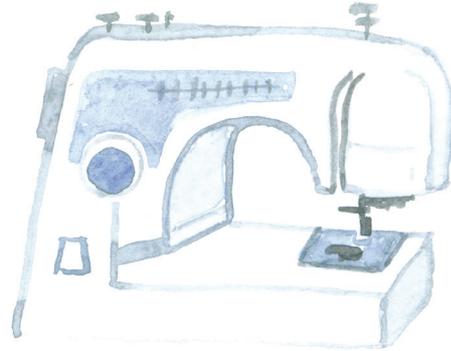
Turn T-shirt inside out and pin bottom of the T-shirt along the hem. Using a sewing machine, sew bottom of T-shirt closed. Flip shirt right side out and lay flat on table, making sure all seams are lined up. Place medium-size bowl about halfway over the neck hole. Using a water-erasable marking pen, trace along the edge of the bowl. Cut along the outline, making sure to go through the front and back sides of the shirt, in order to create an opening for the bag that's larger than what the neck hole allows. Line up the hems on the front and back side of the sleeve and cut, making sure to go through both sides of the shirt. Repeat on the other sleeve. Tip: A jersey shirt would also work well for this craft, as it is already sleeveless, and it's made of a great mesh material.

MAKE JEWELRY FROM VINTAGE LACE

Here's how I whipped up earrings and a necklace from vintage lace doilies picked up at a thrift store.

Supplies

Chain
2 hook ear wires (for earrings)
1 clasp (for necklace)
4 jump rings
Lace doilies
Jewelry pliers
Wire cutters
Rotary cutter



Instructions

First, carefully cut your lace doilies with a rotary cutter and trim to desired shape. Cut your chain to desired length with your wire cutters. Use your fingers (or pliers) to open up the jump rings. Hook the jump rings through the lace. Slide the chains through each jump ring. Use your pliers to close the jump rings. Add a clasp if you've created a choker too short to go over your head. Use your pliers to open up the rings on your ear wires. Slide both ends of your chains onto the ring. Close up the ring using your pliers. *Voilà*, cutest vintage ensemble ever!

Oh, and for ongoing inspiration, check out the amazing blog and book, *New Dress a Day*, where Marisa Lynch reworks thrifted items into inspiring new frocks.

Creativity

Take your needle, my child, and work at your pattern; it will come out a rose by and by. Life is like that—one stitch at a time taken patiently and the pattern will come out all right like the embroidery. ~ Oliver Wendell Holmes

My adventures in sewing began at an early age while watching Mum and Gramma whirring away on their machines. There is something fab (and intimidating for newbies) about whipping up your own curtains, dresses, and bags. The good news is that there are great hip resources out there to help you get started, including sewing lounges in many major cities.



TRANQUILITY TIP: SEWING ACCESSORIES

In addition to your machine, there are many other helpful accoutrements. You'll need a pincushion plus long pins. Sewing machine needles in various sizes and types. For example, when working with knits, make sure you have a stretch (ballpoint-style) needle versus a sharp needle for wovens. Seam rippers are handy especially when learning (and prone to make more mistakes). A cloth tape measure is great for measuring curved areas such as hips, bust, and waist. A strong pair of fabric scissors and pinking shears. Good thread goes a long way and many swear by Coats & Clark or Gutermann. Don't forget extra bobbin spools for switching out thread colors easily. A rotary cutter and mat help ensure a straight cut. Marking tools such as chalk and disappearing ink markers are used to mark fabric and know where to sew. A dress form helps with draping and sizing your garments. Look online for used ones. A trusty iron is another important tool.

One of my favorite books filled with innovative ideas for repurposing is *Little Green Dresses: 50 Original Patterns for Repurposed Dresses, Tops, Skirts, and More* by Tina Sparkles (tune into *Tranquility du Jour* Podcast #220). Begin by getting comfortable with a machine and look into local classes for a private session. Many fabric stores offer sewing classes and it's a great way to learn the basics.

Taking the plunge into sewing machine ownership can be a big commitment. My Gramma had a coveted Bernina and passed it down to my mother. Working on it is like a dream compared to my new fancy machine that barely does the basics well. Test drive a few, read reviews online, and invest. If you work with a lot of knits and have heaps of patience for threading, a serger may be a nice option, too. Sergers use three to five spools of thread, working together to create what's called an overlock stitch. It's how many seams of store-bought clothing are finished. For example, if you look at the hems of your T-shirt collection, it's probably been finished with a serger. It's also the go-to for the TranquiliT collection and my fabric of choice—jersey stretch.

Ready for a simple sewing project that also makes a great gift? Try these coasters by darling sewing blogger, *Sweet Verbena*. She writes, "Coasters were about the easiest, yet still functional project I could think of. They also employ several sewing techniques. The concept of making a coaster is very similar to the concept of making a throw pillow, and even a tote bag. If you can master this, then you can adjust sizes and make all kinds of things. So I've made a quick tutorial on how to make some fun coasters. You'll just need some scrap cotton fabric and coordinating thread (along with the other basic supplies discussed earlier)."



Instructions: Cut squares 4.5" x 4.5". Pair the squares, placing right sides of the fabric together. Pin. Sew with a 1/4" inseam. When you get to a corner, stop with the needle down. Lift the presser foot and pivot the coaster 90 degrees. Continue with a 1/4" in-seam. Clip out the extra material in the corners. This helps to reduce bulk and creates nice, sharp corners. Turn the coaster inside out. Poke out the corners. Use your iron to shape the coaster with chopsticks or a similar tool. It won't look quite right until you've done this. Finally topstitch all the way around. This gives a nice finish and closes up the gap.

Confession time: I was the home ec queen in junior high despite sewing my finger with a machine, breaking the needle off inside, and having to go to the local clinic to have it removed. Oh, and getting a tetanus shot! Needless to say, I'm a bit more cautious these days and do my best to keep my fingers far from the speedy needle. However, I continue to preach the home ec sewing gospel with hope of staying worthy of my 1988 crown.

Dreams

The creation of a thousand forests is in one acorn.

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

When assisting clients in crisis, therapists will often ask the client about their support systems—family and friends whom they can turn to during times of trouble. As we explore ways to make our dreams a reality, let's also explore our support system and ponder creating a dream team.

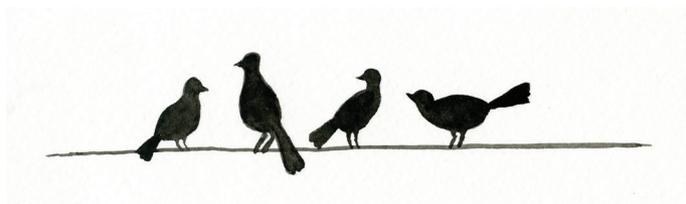
Over the years I've been blessed with a few key supporters whom I could turn to for advice, resources, and belly laughs. Ironically, these people were not sought out, but gracefully appeared at the perfect time. From a dear sorority sister who has helped edit my books; to a yogi from my living room days who has helped co-

launch a non-profit, facilitated strategic planning sessions, and offered hours of management advice; to a yogi from my gym days who serves on the board of my non-profit—each of these connections happened spontaneously. There’s more, such as a marketing maven I approached after hearing her speak at a women’s business conference and we became fast friends; to a former yoga student who is now a confidant and fellow studio owner; to *Beau* whom I met online and now helps me run my businesses. As an introvert, I’m not one to wear my heart on my sleeve, so I feel blessed with these tight connections that began serendipitously years ago.

Consider the people closest to you: colleagues, family, friends. Do they support your dreams? Are they going after their own or savoring status quo? When seeking support, make sure you have the right people “on the bus,” so to speak. For example, when I decided to leave a regular paycheck behind to jump into the unknown world of self-employment, I had a mixture of both on my bus. I had to put on my big girl pants and let the naysayers know that I didn’t need their judgment, but rather their support. Duh! I credit my ability to make it on my own to my early supporters. I can’t emphasize enough how the people you surround yourself with can impact your dream fulfillment.

Of course we don’t want to only surround ourselves with “yes!” people who don’t help us reflect on pros and cons of certain actions, but I find it helpful to note the level of dream achievement by those doling out advice. For example, does your closet artist auntie encourage you to keep your dead-end desk job rather than create full time? It’s hard for those who haven’t fulfilled their own dreams to encourage another’s reach for the stars.

Get the right people on your dream team bus. Share your dreams with passionate spirits wanting to make the world a better place while fulfilling their own passions. That way your seedling dreams won’t get run over before they’ve had a chance to sprout.





NOTES:



OMWORK

1. Make one of the mindfulness practices a daily habit
2. Commit to one of the do-gooding projects
3. Create an upcycled item

SAVVY SOURCES

Peace Is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life
by Thich Nhat Hanh

*The Power of Less: The Fine Art of Limiting
Yourself to the Essential . . . in Business and in Life*
by Leo Babauta

Steal Like an Artist: 10 Things Nobody Told You About Being Creative
by Austin Kleon

*The 100 Thing Challenge: How I Got Rid of Almost
Everything, Remade My Life and Regained My Soul*
by Dave Bruno

Generation T: 108 Ways to Transform a T-Shirt
by Megan Nicolay

Bonjour, November.



*Even if something is left undone, everyone must take
time to sit still and watch the leaves turn.*

~ Elizabeth Lawrence

The leaves are falling, the air is crisp, and we're transitioning into the homestretch of the year. Ah, the festivities of holiday season, yet nature beckons us to heed her call for hibernation. This month's theme will revolve around going deeper into the season and yourself. Inside you'll find a yoga flow that blends a potpourri of what we've covered so far this year, the importance of gratitude, recipes for veggie holiday feasts, minimalism practices, strength building, simple holiday décor tips, embroidery basics, and emulating role models. As always, lots to explore!

Mindfulness

Yoga is a light, which once lit, will never dim. The better your practice, the brighter the flame. ~ B.K.S. Iyengar

Throughout the year, we've dabbled in sun salutations, yin yoga, restorative yoga, heart opening, and yoga on-the-go. This month we'll explore a sparkly flow to get that post-yoga glow as we gear up for the holidays. Let's blend a few of your favorites from the past few months and pull together a holistic flow. Ready, set, go! (For an audio rendition of this sequence, tune into kimberlywilson.com/tranquilologie).

1. Roll out your yoga mat. Sit in a comfortable cross-legged seated position and spend a few minutes connecting with your breath. Create an intention or dedication for your practice today.
2. Begin with butterfly pose. Bend your knees and bring the soles of your feet together. Move your feet forward so they form a diamond shape. Your knees will resemble butterfly wings. Bend forward from your hips and round your spine. Let your head rest into the soles of your feet or onto a blanket or pillow placed between your head and feet. Rest here two to five minutes. To come out, slowly draw your knees together, begin to rock forward and back on your spine, and roll into a standing forward fold. Bend your knees and roll up slowly one vertebra at a time.
3. From mountain pose, inhale and reach your arms overhead, exhale as you fold forward. Open your feet hip-width apart, rest your hands into the crooks of your arms and hang here one to five minutes. Gently sway from side to side and savor the sensations in the back of your legs. If you feel any discomfort in your back, bend your knees slightly.

When ready, release your arms and rest your hands on the floor or your shins. Inhale, lengthen the spine and lift your head. Exhale, fold. Repeat five to 10 times.

Bend your knees, hook your thumbs, and sweep your arms to the sky into a gentle backbend. Exhale, bend your knees, drop your chest to your thighs, interlace your hands behind your back, and straighten your legs. Repeat a few times and return to mountain pose.



4. Next, take four to 10 sun salutations (above). Begin at the top of the mat and plant your feet firmly into the earth. Press into all four corners of your feet, reach through the crown of your head, and exhale your hands to prayer position in front of your heart. Inhale, extend your arms to the sky. Exhale, trace your midline into a forward fold. Inhale, step back with your right leg to a lunge. Exhale, step back with your left leg to downward-facing dog (an inverted “V”). Press the floor away from you. Inhale, float forward to plank pose, line your shoulders over the wrists with your heels above the balls of the feet. Exhale, drop knees, bend your arms to 90 degrees, hug your elbows in as you keep shoulders and hips in a straight line for half-chaturanga (alternate: keep knees lifted for chaturanga). Inhale, uncurl your toes, drop your belly, lift your heart center, and slide into cobra (alternate: upward-facing dog with straight arms plus belly and thighs lifted), and relax your shoulders from your ears. Exhale, curl your toes under, lift your hips up and back to down dog. Inhale, step forward with your right foot. Exhale, step your left foot in between both hands to a forward fold. Inhale, trace your midline up and bring your hands together above your head. Exhale your hands to prayer in front of your heart. Stand in mountain pose. Rinse, repeat.

5. Inhale, reach your arms to the sky. Exhale, fold forward. Inhale, step back with your right leg into a lunge. Exhale, step back with your left leg into downward-facing dog. Pedal your feet, shake your hips back and forth, and shed any tension in the body. Inhale, lift your right leg up and back into down dog split. Exhale, draw your knee to your nose and place your right foot in between your hands. Drop your back knee, hook your thumbs, and sweep your arms to the sky. Guide your shoulder blades down your back, lift your heart, and exhale into your hips. Stay here for five to 20 breaths. Release your

hands back in line with your toes, pull your hips back as you straighten into half splits and flex your front foot. Take another five to 20 breaths. Vinyasa. Inhale lift your left leg up and back into down dog split. Exhale, draw your knee to your nose and place your left foot in between your hands. Drop your back knee, hook your thumbs, and sweep your arms along your ears. Savor the sensation of heart- and hip-opening. Stay here for five to 20 breaths. Release your hands back in line with your toes, pull your hips back as you straighten into half splits and flex your front foot. Take another five to 20 breaths. Vinyasa. Rinse and repeat four to 10 times. From down dog, step or float forward into a forward fold. Hang here, feel the weight evenly distributed on all four corners of your feet. Interlace your hands behind your back to open your heart as you fold forward. Bend your knees, release your arms, and slowly roll up one vertebra at a time. Bring your hands to your heart center. Take five to 10 deep breaths.

6. Bend your knees and sweep your arms along the ears for chair pose. Bring hands to your heart and twist to your right for five breaths. Return to chair pose. Bring your hands to your heart and twist to your left for five breaths. Lower your bum to the floor into boat pose, a V pose that strengthens your core. Take five to 10 deep breaths and release your legs straight out on the mat. Inhale your arms along your ears, exhale and fold forward with a straight spine, reaching for your toes. Take five deep breaths. Slowly roll up and cartwheel your arms behind you with fingers pointing toward your hips. Bend your knees and lift your hips until you can't see your knees. Release your head, if comfortable. (Modification: avoid lifting hips and simply press your heart center forward). Lower your hips and come onto your back into happy baby pose with bent knees. Hold the soles of the feet and draw your knees toward the earth as you gently rock back and forth, massaging your lower back. Bring your feet near your bum with knees pointing up. Touch your heels with your fingertips and slowly lift your hips into bridge. Hold five to 10 breaths. Release and hug your knees to your chest.
7. Move into a gentle reclined twist. Begin lying on your back with your knees bent and feet on the floor. Hug your knees towards your chest and exhale as you drop your legs to the left. Rest here two to four minutes on each side. Repeat on other side. Modifications: If your legs do not touch the floor and rest comfortably, place a blanket or bolster under your bottom leg. If your legs do not rest together comfortably, place a blanket or pillow between your knees.



8. Place your yoga mat and a folded blanket or firm pillow near the wall. If you are using a prop to elevate the hips, place it against the wall. Sit next to the wall and swing around to bring yourself close to the wall. Slowly move your legs straight up the wall. Keep them relaxed. Take your time and do what feels right for you today. Place your arms out by your side with your palms turned up. Or reach your arms over your head for opposite elbows. Rest here five to 15 minutes, then bring your knees to your chest and gently roll out to your right side. Wait for a few moments before you get up. Modifications: If your hammies are tight, push your hips away from the wall until you feel more comfy.
9. End with five to 20 minutes of seated meditation. This special class blends all the yumminess we've explored the past many months into a full body practice that nurtures your entire being. Try it; you'll like it!

Self-Care

Life is such a miracle, and a lot of the time we feel only resentment about how it's all working out for us. ~ Pema Chodren

November serves up Thanksgiving, a holiday devoted to giving thanks surrounded by family and friends. At times you may become preoccupied with what is lacking, missing, or not quite how you'd like it to be. Yet I encourage you to take a moment to contemplate what *is* working—especially in these challenging times. As noted in *The Wall Street Journal*, “Adults who frequently feel grateful have more energy, more optimism, more social connections and more happiness than those who do not.”

As I pass people on the street, I hear a constant exchange of complaints. Yes, life can be hard. Yes, people will misunderstand you. Yes, you will make mistakes. Yes, your back may ache. But what about the miracle of everyday life?

During a recent yoga class, I read a beautiful quote from a favorite book by Sarah Ban Breathnach, *Simple Abundance*: “You have no idea of the countless lives you touch in the course of your lifetime.” Rather than fueling daily life with complaints and negativity, why not explore what is working and enhance what needs improvement? Yes, I know, so simple and easier said than done.

When presented with new ideas, I like bullet points of how to incorporate said idea into daily life. So here goes: You've probably heard about penning a gratitude

journal—noting a few things that you are grateful for each day. Studies show it can have profound effects. And there are other ways to express gratitude through visual reminders, auditory cues, having a gratitude partner to send your gratitude list to regularly, and changing negative self-talk. There are even apps to help you keep track electronically. Yay, gratitude opportunities abound and it is on your daily checklist, after all.

As Pema Chodren reminds us, “You can leave your marriage, you can quit your job, you can only go where people are going to praise you, you can manipulate your world until you’re blue in the face to try to make it always smooth, but the same demons will always come up until finally you have learned your lesson, the lesson they came to teach you. Then these same demons will appear as friendly, warmhearted companions on the path.” May you learn many lessons and allow these warmhearted companions to accompany you on this journey of life.

Take a step back, notice your response to what comes up in everyday life, and explore new ways to embrace it as a miracle instead of a struggle. It all begins with gratitude for everything (and everyone) that comes along.

Nesting

Through the practices of yoga, we discover that concern for the happiness and well-being of others, including animals, must be an essential part of our own quest for happiness and well-being.
~ Sharon Gannon

The holidays are a time of joy, tricky family dynamics, and feasting—all rolled into one. Below is a carefully selected menu to nurture your palate with recipes from vegkitchen.com. The website offers “mix-and-match menus of seasonal recipes, from soup to dessert, complete with vegan stuffings and main dishes—all the holiday traditions you adore, updated for a compassionate plant-based feast. Enjoy, share the blessings, and spare the turkeys!”

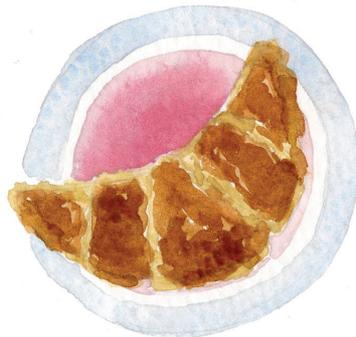


GREEN CHILI CORNBREAD

This moist, chili-flavored cornbread is an ideal companion to bean dishes, stews, and other hearty fare. From *Vegan Soups and Hearty Stews for All Seasons* by Nava Atlas.

- 1 1/2 cups cornmeal, preferably stone ground
- 1/2 cup unbleached white flour
- 1/4 cup toasted wheat germ
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 6-ounce container plain soy yogurt or coconut yogurt
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1/3 cup rice milk, or more as needed
- 1 small fresh hot chili, seeded and minced, or one 4-ounce can chopped mild green chilies
- 1/2 cup frozen corn kernels, thawed

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Combine the first 6 (dry) ingredients in a mixing bowl and stir together. Make a well in the center of the dry ingredients. Pour in the yogurt, oil, and half of the rice milk. Stir until well combined, adding more rice milk as needed to make a smooth, slightly stiff batter. Stir in the chilies and corn kernels. Pour the mixture into an oiled 9-inch-square baking pan. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, or until the top is golden and a knife inserted into the center tests clean. Let cool slightly; cut into squares and serve warm. Makes one 9-inch pan bread.



PEAR AND TOASTED WALNUT SALAD

This salad has flavors that speak fall to me—pears, walnuts, bitter greens, and cranberries. You can substitute other dried fruit if you like. Contributed by Jill Nussinow, MS, RD, from *The Veggie Queen: Vegetables Get the Royal Treatment*.

1/4 cup water
1/4 cup orange juice
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
1/4 cup dried cranberries
1/4 teaspoon guar gum (or substitute 2 teaspoons olive oil)
3 tablespoons walnut halves or pieces, toasted
2 large ripe pears, each cut into 8 to 12 slices
4 to 6 cups greens, including bitter ones like arugula or cress
Freshly ground pepper to taste

Combine the water, orange juice, balsamic vinegar, mustard, and 2 tablespoons of the cranberries in a food processor. Process. Add the guar gum and process. Set aside. Put washed and dried greens in a large bowl. Pour half the dressing over the greens and toss. Arrange pears over greens and sprinkle walnuts and cranberries over pears. Add remaining dressing if you like. Top with freshly ground pepper. Serve right away.



BLACK BEAN AND SWEET POTATO CHILI

When the evenings turn nippy, few things hit the spot like a bowl of chili. With the addition of sweet potatoes, this easy chili is filling and warming. Make this big pot of chili, and enjoy leftovers for a thermos lunch or subsequent dinners. Adapted from *The Vegetarian Family Cookbook* by Nava Atlas.

3 medium-large sweet potatoes
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1 cup chopped onion
2 to 3 cloves garlic, minced
1 medium red bell pepper, diced
Two 28- to 32-ounce cans black beans, drained and rinsed
One 28-ounce can diced tomatoes (try fire-roasted)
One 16-ounce can crushed tomatoes
1 or 2 small fresh hot chilies, minced, or one 8-ounce can chopped mild green chilies
2 teaspoons ground cumin, or more, to taste
1 teaspoon dried oregano
1/4 cup minced fresh parsley or cilantro, or more, to taste
2 to 3 scallions, thinly sliced, optional
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Bake or microwave the sweet potatoes until just firm. When cool enough to handle, peel and cut into 3/4-inch dice. Set aside until needed. Heat the oil in a large soup pot. Add the onion and garlic and sauté over medium heat until the onion is golden. Add the remaining ingredients except the last three. Bring to a simmer, then simmer gently, covered for 15 minutes. Add the sweet potato dice and continue to simmer for 10 to 15 minutes longer, or until the vegetables are tender. Stir in the parsley or cilantro and optional scallions, then season gently with salt. If time allows, let stand off the heat for an hour or two, then heat through as needed. Top each serving with extra parsley or cilantro, if desired. Serves 4 to 6

CRANBERRY-PEAR WILD RICE STUFFING

Wild rice adds a wonderful texture to this stuffing, and the slight sweetness of dried cranberries lends a delicious flavor. This is an ideal stuffing for winter squashes, and used that way makes for a dazzling holiday main dish.

2 1/2 cups prepared vegetable broth, or 2 1/2 cups water with 1 vegetable bouillon cube
2/3 cup raw wild rice
1 1/2 tablespoons olive oil
1 medium red onion, chopped
1 large celery stalk, diced
2 medium firm pears (such as bosc), cored and diced
4 cups finely diced whole grain bread
1/3 cup dried cranberries
1/4 cup finely chopped pecans or walnuts
2 teaspoons seasoning blend (like Spike or Mrs. Dash)
1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme, to taste
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
1/2 cup apple or pear juice, or as needed

Bring the broth to a simmer in a small saucepan. Stir in the wild rice, then cover and simmer gently until the water is absorbed, about 35 minutes. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Heat the oil in a medium-sized skillet. Add the onion and sauté until translucent. Add the celery and sauté over medium heat until both are golden. Combine the onion-celery mixture with the cooked wild rice and all the remaining ingredients except the apple juice in a mixing bowl. Stir well to combine. Drizzle the apple juice in slowly, stirring all the while, until the mixture is evenly moistened. Transfer the mixture to a lightly oiled, large shallow baking dish. Bake for 30 to 35 minutes, or until the top begins to get slightly crusty. Serves 8 or more



FESTIVE KALE WITH FENNEL, CRANBERRIES, AND WALNUTS

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 fennel bulb
2 pounds kale (roughly 8 cups, packed), stemmed and cut into bite-sized pieces
1/4 cup sherry
1 pinch red pepper flakes
1/3 cup dried cranberries
1/3 cup walnuts
Sea salt and pepper to taste

Heat oil in a large pot over medium high heat. Remove stalks and fronds from fennel. Chop fennel bulb into bite-sized cubes, roughly 1 1/2 inches. Add chopped fennel to pot and sauté 10 minutes or until tender. Add kale by the handful, stirring gently until wilted, but still bright green, about 8 minutes. Stir in sherry, pepper flakes, and cranberries. Recipe may be made up to a day ahead at this point. Cover well and refrigerate. Return to room temperature before proceeding. Preheat oven to 350° F. Spread walnuts on a rimmed baking sheet. Toast for 10 minutes or until golden brown and fragrant. Remove from oven and chop walnuts coarsely. To serve: Gently reheat kale on stovetop over medium heat until heated through, about 8 minutes. Stir in walnuts. Add salt and pepper to taste. Serves 6 to 8



PEAR AND APPLE CRUMBLE

If you'd like an alternative to pumpkin pie, or an additional dessert, here's a good one. It's especially tasty served warm over vanilla non-dairy ice cream.

4 medium bosc pears, cored and thinly sliced
3 firm, crisp apples, peeled, cored, and thinly sliced
2 tablespoons natural granulated sugar
1/3 cup finely chopped almonds
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Topping:

1/2 cup whole wheat pastry flour
1/2 cup wheat germ
2 tablespoons natural granulated sugar
1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
2 tablespoons safflower oil
Nondairy vanilla ice cream, optional

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. In a mixing bowl, combine the fruits with the next five ingredients and stir together until evenly coated. Pour into a lightly oiled 9- by 13-inch baking pan. In a small bowl, combine the first 4 topping ingredients and toss to coat. Drizzle in the oil and stir until evenly coated. Sprinkle the crumble topping evenly over the fruit mixture. Bake for 35 to 40 minutes, or until the fruits are soft and the topping is golden. If desired, serve warm in bowls topped with nondairy ice cream. Serves 8



Create an experience when you dine: light candles, curl up with tasty hot dishes and libations, and take time to nest with a belly full of compassionate choices. Yoga teacher Sharon Gannon says that our fork has the power to harm or help all beings, including ourselves. May you savor these healthy, non-harming spins on traditional holiday fare.

Do-Gooding

Simplicity involves unburdening your life, and living more lightly with fewer distractions that interfere with a high-quality life, as defined uniquely by each individual. ~ Linda Breen Pierce

This month focus on how simplifying is good for you, others, and the environment. According to the authors of the popular blog, *The Minimalists*, “If we had to sum it up in a single sentence, we would say, minimalism is a tool used to rid yourself of life’s excess in favor of focusing on what’s important so you can find happiness, fulfillment, and freedom.” They go on to write that minimalism has helped them eliminate discontent, reclaim time, live in the moment, pursue passions, discover their missions, experience real freedom, create more, consume less, focus on health, grow as individuals, contribute beyond themselves, rid excess stuff, and discover purpose in their lives. Sounds good to me!

Here are four simple steps to embrace minimalism:

- 1. Downsize.** During my India travels, I’ve witnessed overwhelming joy from a child playing with a cardboard box or a woman making an evening meal with manure as fuel. Yes, true joy, despite not having the latest video game or high-tech cooking equipment. Studies show that those who have more are typically less happy due to the stress of maintaining their stuff (notice all the storage facilities to house excess stuff) and a continual desire for more, bigger, and better. Consider “downsize” versus “supersize.” Your pocketbook, closets, and obligations will thank you.
- 2. Shed nonessentials.** Nonessentials are the knickknacky, never worn, or used items sitting around homes, offices, cars, and other nooks and crannies. Remove nonessentials. Sell them on Craigslist.org or eBay.com. Truth be told, most of what we own is nonessential. If it’s nonessential, but you use it often (at least three times a month), keep it for now. If it’s collecting dust, bid it adieu. Start with putting one item up for sale or donation each week.
- 3. Simplify.** Take your projects in step two further. For example, consolidate your clothes and shoes (review last month’s idea about Project 333) and stick to a solid color palette for clothing. *Noir* is my staple and makes getting dressed easy peasy.
- 4. Let go.** A minimalist journey not only involves material possessions, but toxic relationships, constant online connections, or obligations that no longer align with your values.

Let's join in the minimalist journey. It's an inspiring challenge and good for everyone affected by the creation of our products: the environment, slave labor in some countries, and our pocketbooks.

Work

For a person to be truly happy and live a meaningful life, that person must recognize their personal strengths and use these strengths for the greater good.~ Martin Seligman

In your professional (and personal) life, you may wonder if you should spend time improving areas where you struggle or run with where you shine. According to many experts, your focus is best spent on areas sans struggle. Martin Seligman, the father of Positive Psychology, says it's best to spend time on your strengths versus doing things that don't please you or take you away from doing what you were made to do. Basically, find your flow.

Flow is a concept coined by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and means "a state of concentration or complete absorption with the activity at hand and the situation. It is a state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter." When you know what activity it is, focus on it and do it to the best of your ability. By doing this you'll be more efficient, creative, and productive, plus happier and more successful. Sounds like a win-win to me.



I was first introduced to this concept by author Marcus Buckingham in *Now Go Discover Your Strengths*. He shared overwhelming evidence that trying to overcome or improve on weaknesses may be counterproductive. Focusing on what you don't do well weakens confidence, enthusiasm, creativity, and overall performance. Instead, place your attention on expanding upon your strengths. Buckingham characterized strengths as not only something you are successful at, but also find energizing. You know, so engaging that you lose track of time when doing it. Hence, flow!

Buckingham suggests making two lists: a Love It list and Loathe It list. The Love It list would contain activities where you show talent and feel energized after doing. The Loathe It list would capture those activities that sap your passion and energy, regardless of how good you are at doing them. Build your life around things on your Love It list.

Take an inventory of your past and present performance and identify the things you look forward to doing. This will help you arrive at your unique core competencies. When it comes to deciding your strengths, peers and colleagues may be a good resource to help you identify them.

Finally, focus on your strengths versus overcoming weaknesses. Spend your development energy honing your strengths instead of attending workshops to remedy your weaknesses. Work on projects where you can showcase your best abilities. Don't worry about being sidelined for what you cannot do. Shine brightly doing what you do extremely well.

Style

A Christmas candle is a lovely thing; it makes no noise at all, but softly gives itself away; while quite unselfish, it grows small.

~ Eva K. Logue

Setting up your home for holiday festivities is both an art and science and a delightful way to express your signature style. Think simple, sensory experiences, and celebratory all whipped up into one.

- 1. Theme.** To keep things easy, stick with a consistent theme. Gold or silver? Uber-modern or Victorian? This will make your décor shopping easier and make your rooms flow together nicely.
- 2. Nurture your senses.** Place potpourri, scented candles, incense, and aromatherapy diffusers near your entry and throughout your house. Bake cookies and simmer mulled cider on the stove before guests arrive for homespun aromatherapy.
- 3. Host a DIY decorating fête.** Purchase a ready-made wreath of greens or straw and gather items to decorate it. Invite friends over to help you get festivity-ready or to make their very own wreath. Use pine cones, ribbons, leaves, beaded garland, silver bells, or dried flowers. Stick cloves in oranges and fishing wire through popcorn or cranberries for a beautiful handmade effect. Try the fabric garland project from September's Creativity for your mantle or tree.



- 4. Lighting.** Avoid colored or flashing lights as they compete with your other décor. White lights go with everything and look great hanging on trees, plants, mantels, banisters, and curtain rods. Use lots of candles. Nothing makes a room feel warmer and more inviting than illumination. Keep windows bare for the ultimate blank canvas.
- 5. Nature.** Pine wreaths and garland smell yummy and bring the outdoors in. Flowers such as poinsettia and white amaryllis offer a nice seasonal touch. Use greenery to create garlands, wreaths, swags, and to add to centerpieces and flower arrangements. Gather winterberries such as holly from your shrubs or dried flowers from your garden to accessorize your garlands and wreaths. Set out mini pumpkins and gourds. Paint them white and add a sprinkle of silver glitter.

Let your holiday décor be an extension of your personal style. Make it fun, playful, and a representation of what you want to put out into the world.

Creativity

When an item is handmade, a little part of the creator of that piece goes into it. Artists put their ideas, personality, style, and often blood, sweat, and tears into their work. ~ Rancho del Art

A few years ago, I took my first embroidery class and began a love affair with this handicraft. It's fun to whip up tea towels, monogrammed handkerchiefs, onesies, and more. With the holidays around the corner, let's prep for gift giving. I've pulled together the basics to create your own handmade gifts of embroidered love.

- 1. Prepare your hoop.** Cut a square of fabric slightly larger than your hoop. Loosen the nut at the top to separate the top and bottom hoops. Place the larger one with the nut and bolt aside and drape the fabric over the smaller one. Now place the top hoop over the bottom one to sandwich the fabric. Tighten the nut and pull the fabric taut.
- 2. Thread the needle.** Threading your needle involves deep breathing and lots of patience. And, truth be told, possibly a magnifying glass or needle threader. Begin by dividing your six-strand floss into three or four by slowly separating the strands. Dampen your floss and flatten it between your thumb and forefinger. Pull the thread through the eye, let a few inches hang loose, and knot the other end.

- 3. Get stitchy.** My go-to stitch is the running stitch, which is similar to a sewing machine stitch. Insert the needle into the fabric from the back and begin “painting” with your thread. You can make the stitches long or short or randomly placed, depending on your design.

My second favorite stitch is the backstitch. Insert the thread through the back of the fabric, and make a stitch to the left or right, depending on which way you’ll be going (left if you’ll be going right, right if you’ll be going left). Bring the thread up again a stitch length from the original. Take the thread back down right next to the original stitch.

Another common decorative and delicate stitch is the French knot (this is the one I often use around the necklines of onesies). Use them for eyes, polka dots, and sweet details. To French knot, pull the floss through the back and wrap some of the floss that’s between the fabric and the needle around the needle one to five times (depending on how large you want the knot), and hold the floss tightly so that it is wrapped around the needle. Using your other hand, push the needle through to the back of the fabric very close to where the floss came through. Hold the floss taut and pull the needle all the way through.

Now that you’ve got some of the basics, pick up a blank bag, apron, or handkerchief and start creating a special gift for a loved one. Drawing with a needle and thread can become addictive and is a fun way to express your crafty side.

TRANQUILITY TIP- EMBROIDERY SUPPLIES: You’ll need the following basic tools: embroidery hoop; small, sharp scissors; your not-too-stretchy fabric of choice (I like plain muslin); embroidery floss; and embroidery needles.



Dreams

It isn't until you come to a spiritual understanding of who you are—not necessarily a religious feeling, but deep down, the spirit within—that you can begin to take control. ~ Oprah Winfrey

As a dreamer, it's helpful to have role models to emulate by observing, analyzing, and replicating what contributed to their success. According to Life Coach Evelyn Lim, “While there is no 100 percent guarantee that you can garner the same results, modeling helps you shorten your learning curve. You learn to avoid common mistakes and apply the essential steps and strategies that have helped your role model succeed. The idea is that it is much easier to follow a previously proven path to success.” Let's take a moment to learn from two role models, shall we?

There's J. K. Rowling, whose original *Harry Potter* was rejected by a dozen publishers. She was living in poverty, severely depressed, and a single parent. She went from relying on welfare to being one of the richest women in the world in a span of only five years through hard work and perseverance.

We can't forget Oprah Winfrey, who endured an abusive childhood and numerous challenges before becoming the “Queen of all media.” In her early years she was fired from her job as a television reporter because she was “unfit for TV.” Oh, the irony! She stated, “I don't think of myself as a poor deprived ghetto girl who made good. I think of myself as somebody who from an early age knew I was responsible for myself, and I had to make good.”

Make a list of bloggers, activists, authors, philanthropists, entrepreneurs, artists, et cetera, whom you admire. What is it you admire about them? What lessons can you learn from them? Create a collage with images and quotes from your role models. When pondering a decision, ask yourself, “What would X do?” This can be helpful when debating options and striving to embody new, mindful qualities. Who would you like to emulate today?

Tranquilologie



NOTES:



OMWORK

1. Identify your strengths
2. Whip up one of the veggie recipes or embroider a goodie for a loved one
3. Define your role models

SAVVY SOURCES

*Go Put Your Strengths to Work:
6 Powerful Steps to Achieve Outstanding Performance*
by Marcus Buckingham

Embroidered Effects: Projects and Patterns to Inspire Your Stitching
by Jenny Hart

*Vegan Holiday Kitchen:
More than 200 Delicious, Festive Recipes for Special Occasions*
by Nava Atlas and Susan Voisin

*I'm Dreaming of a Green Christmas:
Gifts, Decorations, and Recipes that Use Less and Mean More*
by Anna Getty

On Admiration: Heroes, Heroines, Role Models, and Mentors
by W. D. Wetherel

Bonjour, December.



*I wonder if the snow loves the trees and fields, that it
kisses them so gently? And then it covers them up snug,
you know, with a white quilt; and perhaps it says, 'Go to
sleep, darlings, till the summer comes again.'*

~ Lewis Carroll

This month marks the end of our *Tranquilologie* journey. Over the year we've explored numerous ways to bring more tranquility to the Earth, to others, and, ultimately, to everyday life. The journey doesn't end here. We still have lots to explore this month, including the eight attitudes of mindfulness, holiday de-stressing, creating your own holiday rituals, serving others, making a difference through your work, gifting experiences, and crafting your year in review.

Before diving into this month's material, set your smartphone timer for five minutes, close your eyes, and feel your breath. Notice what you're experiencing internally. Is your mind quiet or racing? Is your body heavy or light? Is your heartbeat fast, or slow and steady? No judgment; simply observe your breath flowing in and out of the body with a keen sense of the present moment. Once the timer goes off, allow your eyes to open, and continue reading further. Throughout this month, as the hustle and bustle becomes too much, allow yourself this much-deserved respite.

You've come a long way, baby, and I'm grateful to have your spirit on the tranquility path.

Mindfulness

I am larger and better than I thought. I did not know I held so much goodness. ~ Walt Whitman

According to Jon Kabat-Zinn, "Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally." So far we've explored yoga, breath work, sitting meditation, tonglen, walking meditation, tools for grounding, and more.

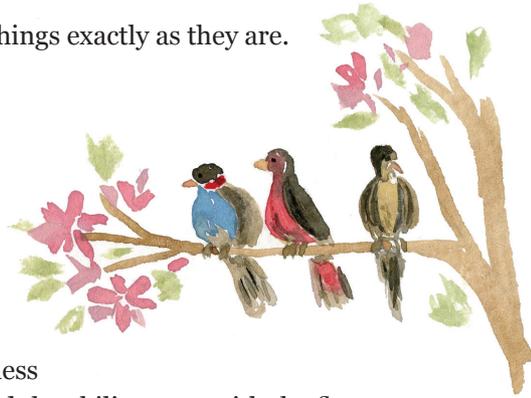
All the practices explored this year help bring you to the space of paying attention. The beauty of mindfulness is that it helps you recognize a choice in response to daily stressors. Psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl states it clearly: "Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom." Let's choose freedom (tune into *Tranquility du Jour* Podcast #267 interview with Elisha Goldstein for more on this quote).

Mindfulness practices are broken down into formal and informal practices. Much of what we've dabbled in are formal practices (mindful breathing, body scan, sitting and walking meditation, yoga, tonglen) with a touch of informal practices

(mindful listening, mindful communication, activism, and weaving mindfulness into daily life). There are many additional informal practices such as mindful eating, mindful driving, mindful leadership, mindful exercise, and the list goes on and on.

To conclude our mindfulness journey, let's touch on the eight attitudes of mindfulness. They are beginner's mind, non-judgment, acknowledgement, non-striving, equanimity, letting be, self-reliance, and self-compassion.

1. **Beginner's mind** is the ability to see something fresh with a sense of openness and curiosity, as if you were approaching it for the very first time without preconceptions. There is a great quote from Zen Buddhist teacher Shunryu Suzuki that sums this up perfectly: "In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities; in the expert's mind there are few."
2. **Non-judgment** is observing thoughts, feelings, or sensations without labeling them good or bad, but simply taking note of what is happening.
3. **Acknowledgment** recognizes things exactly as they are. "Ah, so *this* is happening."
4. **Non-striving** means you don't try to get anywhere other than where you are. There is no holding on or pushing away from what is unfolding.
5. **Equanimity** is a state of steadiness within your ever-changing life and the ability to go with the flow.
6. **Letting be** is the ability to be fully with things as they are and not try to shift them to your own agenda.
7. **Self-reliance** helps you observe and experience what is true or untrue based on your own awareness.
8. **Self-compassion** is the cherry on top and encourages love for yourself without self-blame or criticism.



Explore ways to bring the eight attitudes of mindfulness to yourself, others, and your daily activities by observing the impermanent nature of the mind and life's struggles. Be present and pay attention to all that unfolds without expecting things to be a certain way. This release of expectations, coupled with these eight attitudes plus your formal and informal mindfulness practices, will help you tolerate life's many twists and turns.

Self-Care

Nourishing yourself in a way that helps you blossom in the direction you want to go is attainable, and you are worth the effort.

~ Deborah Day

The glitter and shimmer of the holidays also bring a dose of overwhelm and stress. I've found the best way to combat being the damsel in distress is to indulge in large doses of self-care by inserting them among daily to-dos. During this time of the year, you may find your heart feeling heavy, your pocketbook and patience dwindling, and experience a sense of "How will I ever get it all done?" Never fear, you've prepared yourself for this through all your efforts this year and you will survive. Not only survive, but thrive! Here's how:

- 1. Failing to plan is planning to fail.** Swami Chidanand Saraswati, a leader in India, uses this phrase and I wholeheartedly agree. Prepare for the holidays by taking time to write out your holiday plans, from gifts, to parties and other obligations, to where and how your family will spend them. Leaving these items to chance will result in misunderstandings, last-minute shopping, and potential overbooking. Annually, I enjoy hosting an intimate dinner party mid-December and send out a save-the-date quite early (yes, late October) so it's on everyone's calendar before the season gets away from us. Gather your gifts early.

I've become a big fan of Amazon.com or Etsy.com gift cards (more on gift giving in the Creativity section)

in addition to handmade treats. Recognize when your schedule has become too packed for complete enjoyment and begin saying "non, merci" to new requests. Practice filling your schedule with only your must-haves such as work and close friends' holiday parties, volunteering, and family time. Focus on what supports rather than drains you.



- 2. Keep up routines.** When more gets added to your schedule, you may notice that sacred things such as exercise, home-cooked meals, and long soaks in the tub lose their place in your priority list. This month, ensure you keep your routine and connection to the daily, weekly, and monthly Tranquility Tools. I know it's a lot to ask, but it helps balance out the exhaustion of being pulled in so many directions. Leave the party early enough to have time for a hot bath and eight hours of sleep. Get up a few minutes earlier to start your day with meditation or sun salutations if you have an extra-long day ahead of you.
- 3. Make time for simple pleasures.** Escape the office for 30 minutes to go sit in the local café and savor a cuppa tea. Tote lavender essential oil with you and rub it on your wrists and temples while waiting for your children's holiday performance. Dress up and take yourself out on a date to see a holiday favorite such as *The Nutcracker*. Invite friends over to help decorate your home while sipping eggnog, baking, and decorating sugar cookies. Insert legs up the wall into your practice to ease tired toes from fancy party shoes. Bring candles, bubbles, and a pot of peppermint tea to the bath. Tote your journal or idea book with you at all times. The end of the year brings up a lot of to-dos and memories that you'll want to capture as they arise.

Take good care of yourself this month. Although this season has a bad reputation for depression and exhaustion, set yourself up for success through self-care and you'll be better equipped to weather the pull in multiple directions.

Nesting

Winter is the time for comfort, for good food and warmth, for the touch of a friendly hand and for a talk beside the fire: it is the time for home. ~ Edith Sitwell

Holidays often bring up anxiety around blending family tradition with who you are today. To help alleviate some of the struggle, below are seven suggestions to help you savor this magical time of the year. Take what appeals and leave the rest. You deserve the merriest of holidays on your own terms, at your own pace, and with the tranquility you desire.

- 1. Celebrate the solstice.** The first day of winter and the shortest day of the year. Filled with recognition of rebirth in various cultures, it signifies the return of light. Light candles to illuminate your home. Write letters or set

intentions for the new season. Burn a yule log and roast marshmallows.

2. **Turn off technology.** Curb the time you spend watching television or playing on your smartphone. That time will be better spent doing something meaningful with your loved ones. Play a board game. Sing carols. Read books. Tell stories. Share pictures from your year's adventures. Go on a hike.
3. **Share.** Host a potluck for friends who are on their own during the holidays. Serve food at a homeless shelter. Bake cookies for residents at an assisted living center. A holiday spent volunteering is one of my fondest memories. Make calls to loved ones who are solo during this special time and let them know they're in your thoughts.
4. **Get outside.** Many holiday experiences are inside with fluorescent lighting—concerts, shopping, parties, or indoor ice skating. Develop rituals that involve stepping outdoors. Hang pine cone ornaments (covered in peanut butter and bird seed) on trees in the woods as a treat for the birds and squirrels. Make snow angels. Go snowshoeing or cross-country skiing. Take a walk through the brisk morning air. Unplug and reflect on the real meaning of the season while enveloped by Mother Nature.
5. **Retreat.** This is an opportune time to surrender at an ashram or a monastery. E-mails are light, projects are on hold, and the world is quiet. Ideally you can slip away without much fuss and go off the grid for a few days. Look at options far and wide to help make this time of the year as sacred as possible.
6. **Celebrate Bed Days.** The week between Christmas and New Year typically involves lots of Bed Days for *moi* (review April's Self-Care for a refresher). E-mail and responsibilities lighten, energy slows, and slumbering beckons. Use this time to nurture your spirit through heaps of rejuvenation with a dollop of lavender oil strategically placed behind your ears.
7. **Transform chores into play.** At times, traditional holiday activities such as putting up decorations, sending greeting cards, or baking goodies can feel like a chore. Instead of sitting at a dreary desk with inadequate lighting writing cards, take your stationery to a cozy café and make an afternoon of it. Or invite loved ones to help you frost and sprinkle crushed peppermints onto freshly baked cookies.



Make this season what you want it to be without feelings of guilt or “should.” This is your holiday season to celebrate where you want (at home versus Aunt Olga’s), how you want (in nature or solitude versus running from house to house), and why you want (gratitude for the year versus watching Bowl games). Whatever dream makes up your perfect holiday plan, grasp it, and cling to it. This season is yours.

Do-Gooding

My life is my message. ~ Gandhi

Giving back to your family, community, and world-at-large has been a consistent theme during our time together. Zoe Weil coined the term “MOGO: most good” in her book, *Most Good, Least Harm: A Simple Principle for a Better World and Meaningful Life*. She shares many tips for serving others and living a life that embodies a message of kindness. I wanted to share four that help tie a beautiful bow around our do-gooding efforts this year.

- 1. Consider your epitaph.** What do you want said about you in your obituary or at your memorial service? What change did you bring about? What message did you spread? How did you live your life? These simple questions can help determine what you want to express in your lifetime. May your life be a message of compassion.
- 2. Deliver simple acts of kindness.** Smile at strangers. Give up your seat on the subway to someone in need. Share a karma wave when you’re let into a lane of traffic. Offer to help someone struggling with doors, packages, or strollers. Bring treats to the office. Give hugs, thank-yous, and kudos generously.
- 3. Model your message.** Weil writes, “To create a peaceful world, we must each make our lives mirrors of the world we want.” She goes on to share, “Modeling our message—walking the talk—may be the most challenging task before each of us. It is, in my mind, a spiritual discipline that is as demanding and difficult as any practice could ever be. It begins with being kind, respectful, and honest in your interactions, but it doesn’t end there. Modeling your message



also entails making choices about products, clothing, transportation, recreation, food, volunteerism, and work that reflects your values and are peaceful, humane, restorative, and sustainable.” Be a model of meaning.

- 4. Find community.** As I’ve shared, I started Tranquil Space yoga studios to create community. Finding, sharing with, and practicing among like-minded individuals can be incredibly helpful to your own growth. To find community in your neck of the woods, create a girls’ group (refer to June’s Do-Gooding how-to), help in a community garden, gather together at a local café for Sunday afternoon knitting, volunteer at a shelter, take yoga classes, sign up for workshops, go on retreat, or post a flier at the library or online about what project you’d like to commune over. Connecting with others who have similar values is good for the spirit and, as Margaret Mead reminded us, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

As Weil shared in *Tranquility du Jour* Podcast #258, there are many ways to make a difference through our daily actions. “We may not be able to single-handedly create a peaceful world, but we can still strive to live without causing avoidable violence and destruction as much as we are able. And although we cannot solve every problem, this doesn’t mean we cannot become politically active and visionary in our thinking to advance meaningful, positive change.” May your life be your message. Let your daily actions reflect your values. Make do-gooding a daily choice versus only an annual check. The world is waiting.

Work

Each time a woman stands up for herself, without knowing it possibly, without claiming it, she stands up for all women.

~ Maya Angelou

I often joke that I moved on from my life as an intellectual property paralegal because I didn’t feel like I was changing the world one trademark at a time. As I began teaching yoga, I saw and heard changes happening within my students, and I knew I was moving in the right direction to help effectuate change. Through the work you do—whether paid or volunteer—you can make a difference.

Throughout *Tranquilologie* we’ve touched on speaking, consulting, writing, and more ways to spread your message at work. In addition to all of these conduits for inspiration, there is teaching. Teaching is sharing what you know to an aspir-

ing mentee, to a non-profit struggling in your area of expertise, or to a group of women seeking assistance with a product you've previously launched. If you want to get better at what you do, start teaching it!

I began teaching yoga in 1999 after my first teacher training, and have been training teachers since 2002. I've been through months of training over the past decade and am continually reminded how much more there is to learn. When I teach yoga aficionados, I am challenged to embody the qualities I preach when training others. I also have to break down what has become second nature to me into understandable, bite-sized pieces. This process helps me return to the basics and cultivate a beginner's mind.

Explore teaching opportunities in your field. Lead workshops, hold a retreat, facilitate a teleclass, or launch a series at a community center, university, art or fitness facility, or online. Each of these projects will deepen your understanding of your craft, grow your community, and assist others.

The teaching process is similar to writing. Determine your passion and knowledge base. How can you break it down into small steps? When guest teaching at yoga studios, I choose a topic such as "hips" or "spiritual activism"—something very specific—begin with an introduction (this is what we'll be doing and why), proceed to the body of the lesson (the practice or discussion), and finish with a conclusion (a final relaxation and meditation, followed by a themed reading that brings it all together). The process is similar to writing a paper or a speech—find your special spin on a standard topic.

The work you do can make a difference in the lives of others. Whether you work for a non-profit or Fortune 500 company, you can use your skill set to serve through the ideas shared above in Do-Gooding and via writing, consulting, speaking, and teaching. Let your voice be heard and your message be meaningful.

Style

*One is never overdressed or underdressed with a Little Black Dress.
~ Karl Lagerfeld*

The holidays offer a chance to sparkle and shine in a way no other time of the year allows. Okay, maybe birthdays and weddings, but you get a whole month of sparkles if you want them right now. There are a few staples that work well at any holiday event—from cocktail chic to fancy pants to casual brunch—and it doesn't involve a sweater with reindeer or bells. Thank goodness, right?

Velvet, sequins, tulle, crepe, and lace always make me want to don party pants with a flute of bubbly in hand.

Gather one item that makes you think “party!” My go-to for eveningwear has been that designer dress purchased at a discount store a decade ago. My go-to for party wear is a black sequin jacket, lace pants, sparkly silver dress, or velvet skirt worn as a tube dress topped with a long beaded necklace. Sometimes I throw a couple of them together, other times I wear them separately and pair with an everyday staple such as palazzo pants or a wrap dress.

The key is not to panic and think you need a new wardrobe. Simply pick up a few sparkly staples at a secondhand shop or thrift store and make any necessary tweaks (taking in the waist, removing the sleeves, et cetera). My cute short ball-room wrap skirt came from a less-than-flattering dress with sheer sleeves picked up at a thrift store. With the help of my sewing teacher, I removed the wrap top and unbecoming sleeves, and was left with a darling poufy skirt that I wore home from the lesson over my leggings because I was so proud of it.

Try red lipstick and black cat-eyes for a dramatic look. I love to break out my glittery silver eye shadow this time of the year. Add a big sparkly cocktail ring from a costume jewelry or secondhand shop. Pull up your hair into a top knot (hello, helpful bun donuts) or braided bun and add small dangly sparkly earrings. Top the look with a vintage evening clutch, sparkly shoes, and faux fur coat to match the look.

My go-to shoe for special events these days is a faux leopard-print or faux suede platform wedge ankle boot because they always make a statement and are actually quite comfy, especially compared to heels. Your coat will most likely be checked or tossed over a chair upon arrival at your event, so lots of fuss here isn't necessary. A toasty faux fur coat with three-quarter sleeves from my Grandma's closet keeps me warm and chic while gallivanting between winter events. Make sure you have one that highlights your outfit, fits nicely, and makes you smile when you slide your arms into it.

If you're going someplace creatively festive, try a wig. I have a platinum one that is fun to wear and plan to add a pink and blue one to my loot at some point in the future. Putting on a wig is like putting on a whole new



persona. Obviously it's not appropriate for a law firm *soirée*, but if it appeals, I trust you'll find the perfect occasion to don it with glee.

Think of your holiday style as the chance to express your girly, glittery side fully. Mix pieces that would be over-the-top worn together any other time of the year—break out vintage family brooches, faux fur, sparkly berets, and sequin leggings.

Creativity

Curiosity about life in all of its aspects, I think, is still the secret of great creative people. ~Leo Burnett

When asking a girlfriend what she planned to give her family for the holidays years ago, she replied, “We focus on experiences versus things.” What? I was confused. You mean you don't wrap up a gift and put it under the Hanukkah bush or Christmas tree? An experience, what's *that*? Well, I now understand and have embraced her ritual as my own.

As my gift giving has increased to a larger pool of people over the years due to the studio's staff growth, I've found myself working to hone ways to offer an experience the recipient will remember. For example, to share my journey to India, I picked up 50 colorful meditation shawls covered with Oms and mantras for Tranquil Space teachers. One year the team was gifted with their own personal lavender aromatherapy spray, lavender incense, and lavender soy candle in honor of the special lavender-infused touches we offer at the studio.

When penning your gift list, get personal with each person on it. What have you experienced together? Perhaps you enjoyed a museum exhibit. Consider a book from the museum exhibit with a special inscription inside. Maybe you saw a favorite artist or author together. Consider their latest album or book with a note describing the highlights from the event with your friend. What does this person love to do? Has she recently taken up long-distance biking or yoga? If so, a book on the subject with a reusable water bottle or applicable accoutrement may be a good fit. If you're both fans of a handicraft, arrange for a private session for the two of you to take your skills further. Enjoy a fun evening together doing something you love.

You get the gist. Now make a list of everyone you'd like to acknowledge this holiday season. To the right of their name, note their hobby, favorite color, or something special you know about them. Set the list down and come back to it later.

Let this simmer for a day or two. Then return to the list and note what ideas have come up for you. Is a friend expecting a baby or new foster dog? Try out your new embroidery skills from November and whip up a tiny tee. Is your mum eager to hike through a National Park? Get her a backpack and accompanying guidebook.

While penning this month's section, I received a blog post update from *The Minimalists* titled, "Gift Experiences, Not Stuff" with these ideas: "concert tickets, a home-cooked meal, tickets to a play or musical, breakfast in bed, a back rub, a foot rub, a full-body massage, a holiday parade, walking or driving somewhere without a plan, spending an evening talking with no distractions, making out under the mistletoe, visiting a festival of lights, cutting down a Christmas tree, watching a sunrise, skiing, snowboarding, sledding, dancing, taking your children to a petting zoo, making snow angels, making a batch of hot apple cider, taking a vacation together, watching a wintertime sunset." Considering the synchronicity, I had to share these additional tips. How apropos that it aligns with this year's ongoing desire to simplify.

During a meet-up with the authors of *The Minimalists* in D.C., someone from the audience asked how to handle receiving gifts that cause clutter while trying to minimize. The response was "to request consumables such as coffee or gift cards." This helps avoid accumulation of more and more stuff and we can all use more consumables such as green tea, lavender bath salts, or peppermint candles.

Make this year's gift giving unique. Truly connect with the person you are gifting. Let them know you appreciate them and intimately know their dreams and desires. In today's fast-paced society, feeling understood by someone can go a long way to alleviate feelings of isolation.



Dreams

You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one. I hope someday you'll join us. And the world will live as one. ~ John Lennon

In addition to penning the dreams of this year's finale month, let's tie a bow around it by listing your highlights and lessons learned since January 1. Whew, get ready! Peruse your *Daybook* and journal, dig through your photos, and reflect on all the shifts and shimmies this year. There are a few ways to personalize your year in review.

Using an app called Collage Creator, I enjoy putting together a pictorial history of the year to share on my blog. I will also paste a beautiful image (hello, Anthropologie catalog) into my art journal and write tons of experiences on it with a Sharpie to capture the year's highlights. This allows me to remember the ups and downs of the year with a smile on my face, express gratitude for all that transpired, and move on to what's next.

According to Sarah Susanka, author of *The Not So Big Life: Making Room for What Really Matters*, "The end of year review process is very similar to sowing seeds. When you plant a garden, you don't sit and stare at the seeds until they sprout. You know that some will germinate and some will not, but it is not up to you to make them grow. All you can do is set the conditions for their growth with good soil, adequate water, and the right amount of sun. And that's what this exercise does—and while you are sowing seeds during this period, you can be enjoying the fruits of the previous year's harvest at the same time."

Here are a few questions to help you start the process:

1. How did you spend your time? There are 168 hours/week and 8,736 hours/year. Where did yours go? Break it down into categories such as family, creativity, work, spirituality, et cetera. Compare where it went to where you'd like to see it go next year.
2. What journeys have you taken?
3. What themes have you noticed in monthly dreams and nighttime dreams?
4. What were your accomplishments and disappointments?
5. What lessons did you learn?
6. How have you grown from this time last year?
7. Who do you hope to be this time next year?

After this process (which can take days, by the way), review your answers, images, hopes, and dreams. Give yourself kudos for the effort made. Light a candle in honor of your many adventures and any losses. Acknowledge how every experience has made your year unique. Create an intention for what you hope to see unfold during the holidays and into next year. Allow this process to nurture who you are and who you are becoming. Sans judgment, simply observation filled with loving kindness. You deserve it.



OMWORK

1. Incorporate one formal and informal mindfulness practice into each day
2. Craft your experience gift list
3. Pen your year in review

SAVVY SOURCES

*Make Your Creative Dreams Real:
A Plan for Procrastinators, Perfectionists, Busy People,
and People Who Would Really Rather Sleep All Day*
by SARK

The Not So Big Life: Making Room for What Really Matters
by Sarah Susanka

*Wisdom 2.0: The New Movement Toward
Purposeful Engagement in Business and in Life*
by Soren Gordhamer

*Most Good, Least Harm:
A Simple Principle for a Better World and a Meaningful Life*
by Zoe Weil

*The Great Work of Your Life:
A Guide for the Journey to Your True Calling*
by Stephen Cope

Merci, Au Revoir



*And the day came when the
risk to remain tight in a bud
was more painful than the
risk it took to blossom.*

~ Anaïs Nin



M*erci beaucoup* for joining *moi* on this DIY journey of *Tranquilologie* this year. I hope the diverse insights into our eight topics assist your ongoing journey to everyday tranquility. The ongoing change of colors and temperatures over the year spark a revolution of transformation, growth, and rest. As you now know, finding tranquility means aligning your daily to-dos with your dreams and indulging in a dollop of self-care while creating a meaningful life . . . in style. *C'est tout!*

I'm honored that we've connected and hope you'll stay in touch with our virtual community through the *Tranquility du Jour* blog and podcast at tranquility-dujour.com, *s'il vous plaît*. Join *moi* for a yoga class in D.C., online e-course, or consider jet-setting to an exotic locale for full-fledged retreat immersion in "tranquilosophy." May I recommend Paris, Tuscany, or good ol' West Virginia?

Tune into kimberlywilson.com/tranquilologie to download mp3s of yoga practices plus additional surprise inspiration and tools. Bloom, sparkle, flourish. Get out and make a mad difference. You are beautiful.

*Bisous,
Kimberly Wilson*



Acknowledgements

Many special beings helped make this book possible, including:

Beau, Tim Mooney, who pulled together and released the monthly e-course PDFs to eager subscribers, has the patience of Job, a witty sense of humor, and is the best supporter this girl could ask for.

Tranquilologie e-course subscribers who cheered this process along over the past year, offered feedback, and created a generously supportive online community.

Mama Wilson, who throws festive book-signing *soirées*, joins *moi* on exotic retreats, and is responsible for sprouting my DIY love.

Pops, who has now read his third women's book (following *Hip Tranquil Chick* and *Tranquilista*), offered oodles of editing input ("comma here, no comma there"), and helped me launch my literary journey on his typewriter at the age of five.

Artist, teacher, and friend Mary Catherine Starr for creating the sweetest watercolors I've ever seen.

Teams at Tranquil Space, TranquiliT, and Tranquil Space Foundation, who keep me inspired with their passion for spreading tranquility.

Mes Amis Heather Haines and Carol Meyers, who generously offered creative support of this manuscript.

Designer Christy Jenkins for her impressive way of bringing my vision to life complete with pink, damask, and chandeliers.

Christine Mason Miller for penning such a generous Foreward, graciously hosting a Tranquility Tour Pop-Up complete with balloons, love notes tucked in tea cups, and a chalkboard welcome sign.

Hosts and participants of the 22 Tranquility Tour Pop-Ups spanning from Brooklyn, NY to Calgary, Canada to San Diego, California to Fletcher, Oklahoma. I bow to your generosity, engagement, and outpouring of love.

Editor Jen Safrey for helping crystallize my message.

Podcast listeners, retreat participants, and blog readers, who inspire me to do more, be more, and give more.

Appendix: Checklists

MONTHLY CHECKLIST

	<i>craft month's dreams</i>	<i>mani/pedi</i>	<i>volunteer</i>	<i>entertain</i>	<i>review budget</i>	<i>read two books</i>	<i>create something</i>	<i>massage</i>
<i>january</i>								
<i>february</i>								
<i>march</i>								
<i>april</i>								
<i>may</i>								
<i>june</i>								
<i>july</i>								
<i>august</i>								
<i>september</i>								
<i>october</i>								
<i>november</i>								
<i>december</i>								

About the Author

Kimberly Wilson is an artist, activist, and author with a passion for pink. She is the founder of Tranquil Space—named among the top 25 yoga studios in the world by *Travel + Leisure*—author of *Hip Tranquil Chick*, *Tranquilista*, and *Tranquility du Jour Anthology*, and designer of the eco-fashion lifestyle line TranquilIT.

She holds master's degrees in women's studies and social work. Kimberly co-launched Tranquil Space Foundation, is a therapist at The Women's Center, and serves as an advocate for global animal welfare.



PHOTO CREDIT:
STEVE WILSON, 1977

When not gallivanting in her vintage RV, you'll find her sipping pots of fragrant tea, practicing yoga on a leopard-print mat, or leading retreats globally. Her work has been featured on Martha Stewart Living Radio, in *Daily Candy*, *Washingtonian*, *Yoga Journal*, *USNews*, and numerous books.

She lives in a *petit* raspberry-colored *maison* in Washington, D.C., with two fancy felines named after French impressionists, a supportive *Beau*, and *le pug* (who rules her world). Indulge in “tranquilosophy” via Kimberly's blog and podcast, *Tranquility du Jour*. Peruse kimberlywilson.com.





Tranquilologie is the study
of living a tranquil life with a
splash of joie de vivre.

“Kimberly Wilson is like a seriously stylish good fairy who not only encourages you to live your best life but more importantly shows you how. Her enthusiasm for all facets of self-care is utterly infectious and every page of this book holds beautifully simple ideas every woman can incorporate into her daily life. I’m already planning my next Bed Day!”

~ SUSANNAH CONWAY, author of *This I Know*



“This delightful guide is the recipe book for your best year ever, repeatable annually to give you a just about perfect life. It’s a treat to read and a glorious adventure to put into practice.”

~ VICTORIA MORAN, author of *Creating a Charmed Life*

“Kimberly Wilson’s *Tranquilologie* is an entertaining, super practical guide to bringing more serene and joyful moments into your daily life. I love Kimberly’s unique and fun approach to mindfulness, self-care, and creating a beautiful life.”

~ TARA MOHR, author of *Playing Big*



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kimberly Wilson is an author, activist, and artist with a penchant for big dreams and simple pleasures. She lives in a petite Pink Palace in Washington, D.C. and dreams of Paris.

KIMBERLYWILSON.COM



@KIMBERLYWILSON
#TRANQUILOLOGIE

Cover design by Christy Y. Jenkins • Illustrations by Mary Catherine Starr
Printed in the United States of America



ISBN 978-0-692-35807-8
\$35.00
53500 >



9 780692 358078