



## limitations: notebook activities

1. In your notebook, consider your limitations of your body, mind, feelings and spirit. We all have our limitations. Do you honour yours? Are there times when you push your limits too far? Are there times when it is good to push your limits? When is it healthy? When is it dangerous?
2. Often limitations can create a safe container for our creative and contemplative practices. What containers do you have for your practices? Do you write within time limits? Do you limit your workspace to certain dimensions? Do you make a schedule yourself? How do these constraints and containers help you in their limitations?
3. How do rituals and limitations overlap? Are rituals a way to honour our limitations? Do rituals impose limitations on experience? Do they have the potential to liberate us? How is a routine different from a ritual?

## mindfulness

1. The word "mindfulness" is closely related to the muse of memory. "Mneme" is close etymologically to the word "mind." But "mindfulness" is a word borrowed from the Buddhist tradition. The Sanskrit word is *smṛti*, and it means to recall or to remember. In the Buddhist tradition, "mindfulness" means to remember the dharma through the actions of the body. The dharma is the name for the teachings of the Buddha. Buddhist teachings centre on different principles, but the main ones are the interconnectedness, interdependency and the impermanence of all life. For Buddhists, when we are truly present with experience, the "truth" of impermanence and interdependency arises in each moment in our bodies. Is that true in your experience?
2. How can rituals that work with mindfulness assist you in your contemplative practice? How can present awareness of the interconnection of all life assist us in our creative practice? Observe your states of mind/body. Do different states of mind/body lead to different ways of creating, of creativity? What is mindfulness to you? What is "mind?" In the Buddhist tradition, the "mind" includes the heart and the body. All parts of the self are interdependent, interconnected and interwoven as a single fabric of experience.
3. What are the ways you "limit" yourself? Are there times when you might challenge your own limited perception of yourself? How does a limited perception of yourself affect your day-to-day life? This week's meditation will work with loving kindness in ways that challenge the limited perceptions we have of ourselves.

## notebook activities

1 The videos this week mention “constraints” as one way to work with our limitless potential as creative and contemplative practitioners. Sometimes it helps to follow another’s constraints. For example, in many spiritual traditions, devotees follow a set of rituals ordained for their practice. Christian traditions have prayers, hymns and set patterns of liturgy by which followers ingest the body and blood of Christ in the form of bread and wine. In yogic practices, yogis salute the sun in a ritualistic pattern to give thanks to the star of this galaxy that offers so much life to our daily lives, that is in many ways responsible for life – without the Sun, we wouldn’t be here. In Buddhist traditions, followers prostrate, count beads and circumambulate around sacred buildings and structures.

But it is not necessary to always follow an ancient tradition. My teacher would say that the most important thing is to get a sense of oneself in the practice, of the heart of oneself in the practice, so that the body is an active, conscientious and awake participant in the ritual. In *Big Magic*, Elizabeth Gilbert describes inventing her own rituals around letting go, passages and traditions.

In my practice, I like to invent rituals that play with the ancient and the modern. The course page for this week links you to a performance I did that invokes a ritualized performance of the Buddhist mantra *Om Tara Tuttare Ture Svaha*. I like to combine artistic practices to ancient traditions. For me, it enlivens the act of ritual.

In your notebook make up your own ritualized constraints for a performance, a piece of writing, music or whatever you fancy. Fill the practice with light somehow. Create a container so the light can pour through the cracks and the entry points of whatever container it is that you are using.

2. Check out some of these writing/performance constraints stolen or inspired by the poet Bernadette Meyer. Do a few in your notebook.

- a) Attempt to speak for a day only in questions; write only in questions.
- b) Choose a length of time (anything from nine minutes to nine months). Every day, write a letter to a person that will never be sent. Create a title for each letter. Do not send them. Make them into a book.
- c) Etymological work: Experiment with etymology. Look up a word that interests you. Take a piece of writing you’ve already written and look up every word in the piece of writing. Study the history of the words.
- d) Meditate on a word, sound or list of ideas before beginning to write.
- e) Interpret the following sign in a poem:  
 =====
- f) Count the raindrops in this photo. Write a poem as many lines as the number of raindrops you see about the rain.

