

The Whole Self

Awakening The Inner Wisdom
To Live As Yourself

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*For Tobias,
The greatest love I have come to know,
my friend, my love, my Self*

Around me the trees stir in their leaves
and call out, "Stay awhile."
The light flows from their branches.
And they call again, "It's simple," they say,
"and you too have come
into the world to do this, to go easy, to be filled
with light, and to shine."

-*When I Am Among The Trees*
Mary Oliver

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Preface

In a world increasingly shaped by fragmentation—of thought, identity, and experience—it has become both urgent and healing to remember the wholeness that has never truly been lost. This book was written as a gentle invitation back to that wholeness. Not as a concept, but as a living, breathing truth.

What follows is not a manual for self-improvement or another framework for becoming someone new. The program of self-help has only perpetuated the fragmented experience of the modern person. Instead, it is a guide to recognizing what has always been present beneath the layers of conditioning: the undivided awareness that quietly animates every experience.

Through psychological insight, somatic attention, and the language of direct experience, I hope to illuminate a path toward your inherent unity. These chapters explore what it means to see the parts within us—not to fix or fight them—but to listen, understand, and include them in the larger field of awareness.

This work is not theoretical. It is lived. It asks only your openness and curiosity. If anything here resonates, let that be your guide—not the specific suggestions or practices.

You are Reality. You are not separate. And there is nothing to achieve in order to be whole.

This is a journey of remembering and discovery.

Thank you.

Introduction

Wholeness is the basis on which many wisdom traditions rest. Mystics, poets—even physicists—use this word to describe the foundation of who and what we are. Where words fail, religion often agrees, saying we are God’s creation, and that God itself includes everything. How else to call this view than holistic? Even atheists and agnostics agree that the totality of the universe is holistic or inclusive. What could be excluded? This is an obvious yet often overlooked point.

When broadly considering the evolution of thought—apart from the limited realms of blind faith and dogmatic belief—we find that many areas of science and ancient traditions lead us to the same place: the universe seems to be one.

This book is inspired by my own personal journey through trauma, separation, and a sense of dissociation from body, mind, and self that lasted for much of my life. After coming to terms with my inability to solve this deep sense of lack on my own, I found help through community support, therapeutic supervision, and centuries-old wisdom traditions.

Though I first believed therapy and medical attention could save my life, they addressed only the physical results of an overwhelming meaninglessness.

Then came a moment—not prompted by any obvious external or internal circumstances—when a powerful insight struck me like an arrow hitting the center of a target: Come home, it seemed to say. Turn toward yourself.

Deeply influenced by the Buddhist monk and teacher Thich Nhat Hanh, I was familiar with the ideas of mindfulness and awareness. Yet during this dark time, when childhood trauma reverberated through my life, mindfulness felt distant and abstract. Meditation had been my friend, but when depression struck, it became a frightening adversary. I couldn’t bear to sit with myself.

Not long after my glimpse of that arrow-strike moment, I received a serendipitous invitation from a friend. They told me about a method called self-inquiry and a unique meditative structure used for therapeutic work. For a moment, my curiosity outweighed my skepticism.

"Can you tell me more about this?" I asked. "I’ve been doing meditation, but I’m not in a good place."

Instead of explaining, my friend offered to guide me through a self-inquiry session.

My doubtful mind wasn't strong enough to interrupt the process. The protestations of thought fell away the moment I truly looked for what I was asked to find. My friend's question was simple:

"Where is what you have been calling 'I'?"

Before I had an experiential view of awareness as the field of experience, I thought awareness was simply my mind focusing on something other than thoughts. But in that self-inquiry meditation, I experienced awareness as the very field in which all of my experience continually unfolded—flowing and alive.

For those whose identity is rooted in mind or body, awareness may seem like a mental state or a physical relaxation. But for me, it was immediately clear: this was a reality I was inextricably part of, inseparable from—a reality beyond mind and body.

This is the field of experience: the reality of being that we know as awareness.

It is my hope that readers will be inspired to come to their own conclusions through simple, everyday awareness, just as I was when first introduced to self-investigation. This is the science of first-person direct experiencing—and you already have everything you need to begin now.

Chapter 1

Jung, Archetypes, and The Whole Self

Defining Ourselves as Something Limited

There are many misconstrued identities that we take to be ourselves as we go through development in early life. Anyone can see that a newborn or a one-year-old child is unconditioned from identity—the personality. It turns out this person that we shape ourselves to be in development plays a role in the way we suffer in adulthood. When we define ourselves in such rigid and definite ways, we constrain ourselves to a very small space. The idea that we are inside a brain—perhaps the most easily accepted generalization of identity shared around our modern world—demonstrates just how small we believe ourselves to be.

Jung's Archetypes of the Psyche

Carl Gustav Jung, the father of analytic psychology, drew from Platonic ideas to identify common mental forms shared among people. He called these archetypes—universal structures of the psyche. Though these forms share a common architecture, they are expressed uniquely through each individual.

The Persona: The Social Mask

A holistic view of self includes every part. Archetypes are parts of the psyche, and the psyche is a part of the self. The persona is one such archetype identified by Carl Jung. It is the externalized self—the image or mask we present to the world.

The persona helps us function in society, establish roles, perform tasks efficiently, and distinguish ourselves from others. Though others often take the persona at face value, it is common for people to adopt the persona as their core identity, "more or less." While there may be inner thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that remain hidden, the outward-facing mask is frequently mistaken for the whole self.

The Shadow: Hidden Parts

Another key archetype is the shadow. Jung described the shadow as the unclear, indirect aspects of ourselves that we intentionally hide from the world. The shadow often appears in dreams, typically in the form of another person.

It contains traits, thoughts, and beliefs the persona deems unattractive, dangerous, or negative. Though just as integral to the self as the persona, the shadow is harder to confront. Like the persona, it serves a purpose: to bring into conscious awareness the parts of ourselves that have been repressed, rejected, or denied.

A common misconception is that the shadow only contains what is "bad" or shameful, often linked to trauma or past mistakes. In truth, everyone has a shadow. It is not inherently negative, and recognizing it is essential to knowing one's true nature.

Similarly, a major misconception about the persona is that it is the closest representation of who we are. This is dangerous because it appeals to our preference for convenience and our biological inclination to conserve energy.

Duality Blinds Us to the Holistic Self

Biology and its energy-saving tendencies can obscure our experience of wholeness. The body, requiring great energy to maintain, has evolved to generalize perception, thought, and behavior for efficiency. While this serves survival, it can be limiting.

When we move beyond this convenience, we can examine our specific archetypes and discover what obstructs the experience of a unified self. Misidentifying with a fragmented or deficient self leads to a personality built around an emptiness that cannot be resolved.

Exploring Parts: A New Approach

Archetypes reveal common psychological structures that can help us understand ourselves more fully. They merely simplify a vast array of parts into general categories. Some present-day therapies (IFS, Gestalt, SE) explore "parts"—inner subpersonalities with distinct viewpoints and experiences. Just like Jung sorting archetypes, they sort common parts into categories such as “protector,” “pleaser,” and “vulnerable child.” Even without doing parts work, most of us can identify parts that fit these descriptions. A parts-centered approach is especially helpful in processing early life trauma.

Identifying parts is a radical step toward self-realization because it challenges the assumption that we are a singular mind or personality. It also acknowledges the fragmented way many people experience themselves. The goal in this work is to identify more often as a resourceful central-self or access what is called self-energy. This teaches a person that it is possible to keep parts in abeyance while maintaining an open dialogue and willingness to be there for them. Self-energy is a more highly resourced, mature form of oneself. However, this is often still experienced as fragmentary.

The Prevalence of Inner Duality

Inner duality is so common it often goes unnoticed. For example, one part may want to attend a concert and be social, while another part prefers solitude. This internal conflict illustrates how different parts have distinct views and preferences.

The mind often generalizes opposing viewpoints into the illusion of a single, unified personality. But this single inner self doesn't have an existence aside from the idea of it. When we openly observe a presenting part, it's possible to not identify with any aspect of it or any other part. Pure perceiving isn't identified with anything. Instead, we are experiencing from the vantage point of awareness.

Just as each part has a unique perspective, awareness does too—a singular, unifying one. We do not have a single personality inside of us that contains parts; rather, a single, unified awareness contains the whole of experience. In contrast to parts therapy models, this Self is not separate from everything in and around us. It is not an inner-self, but is much vaster and free of any limitation.

Jung's Process of Individuation

Carl Jung's contributions to psychology and human behavior are unparalleled. He spent his life researching culture, the unconscious, and the structure of the psyche. Through both study and countless hours in analysis, he arrived at a profound insight: the process of individuation.

Individuation is the integration of all aspects of the self—conscious and unconscious—into a transformed, unified whole. It is the resolution of inner duality and the realization of wholeness. Individuation is fragmentation coming to know itself as unified in the wholeness of Self. While not explicitly saying that self is not contained in the body, Jung maintained that the psyche is not a process of the brain or the body but is intimately connected with what we call the outer world. His distinction between self and world was not defined by the beliefs held by the general population.

Recognizing inner parts and learning about the authentic Self through the direct experience of awareness is the most straightforward way to participate in the natural movement toward individuation—the unfolding wholeness of life itself.

Chapter 2

Reference Points and the Nature of Awareness

Distinguishing Parts from Awareness

Making a distinction between parts and awareness may be one of the simplest yet most profound things we can do. It begins with recognizing who—or what—is defining a situation. That one is always a fragment: something that stands *a-part* from the whole experience. A part is a lens, a specific viewpoint that interprets reality from a limited angle.

Parts can be identified by the emotions they express, the thoughts that arise, or the actions they prompt. As mentioned earlier, parts can hold contradictory views and preferences. For example, the experience of feeling offended brings a particular posture, inner dialogue, and emotional charge, whereas embarrassment carries its own unique physical and mental signature.

Parts are patterns—habitual responses to familiar situations. While deeply intertwined with experience, they remain separate from it. The narrative implies that this part is *me*. When a part is active, this implication can be extremely subtle— in fact, it rarely declares “*this is me I’m talking about!*” Yet if we can notice something as having a reference point, it is a part. Though it claims to be the whole self, it is blinded to its limits.

Reference points give meaning. Different parts assign different meanings, so we see that we are not one person, but a collection of varying lenses that filter experience and have a vast array of contrasting perspectives.

Awareness Has No Reference Point

Unlike parts, awareness has zero reference point. It is ever-present with and within experience, without qualification or distinction. Awareness cannot be defined by traits or preferences, and its nature only becomes apparent in contrast to the parts that do possess such qualities. Talking about awareness is tricky because words attempt to put limits on what has no limitations.

In this light, the distinction between parts and awareness is surprisingly clear: anything that comes and goes, that begins and ends, is not awareness. The phrase “The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao” is a famous opening line from the Tao Te Ching, a foundational text in Taoism. Awareness is the Tao. Anything with a limit or a distinction is not awareness. As we notice changing experiences, we are also simultaneously in contact with what never changes. Awareness is that constant background—the space in which all experience is known.

When we say awareness has its own point of view, (or that it is space-) we mean this in a quantum sense: it is the simultaneous presence of all possible points of view, unified and indivisible. Simultaneity doesn’t even capture the essence of what awareness is because occurrences that are “simultaneous” only have meaning in time. Awareness is outside of time.

The Futility of Seeking Awareness

Attempting to find awareness as if it were an object or a thing is not only futile, it reinforces separation. Awareness is ever-present, so seeking it is an exercise in redundancy. Still, the very act of openness to awareness can be transformative. When we search for a reference point for awareness we find none, and in doing so we are recognizing awareness.

This exercise, while paradoxical, helps highlight the contrast between the fragmented self and the simplicity of being. Parts are what we can look at. Awareness is what we look from.

Parts Are Dynamic, Awareness Is Constant

Parts are dynamic—they arise and pass in a flowing stream of emotions, thoughts, and impulses. No matter how hard we try to hold on to a state, it changes. This impermanence reveals something essential: that which changes cannot be the whole self. The true self—if it is to be whole—must be something that is not subject to disappearance.

Awareness is that unchanging background. It was present before identity, and it remains even when we forget it. When we recognize it now, in the present moment, there is an immediate shift. This happens when we stop identifying with a part and return to being the wholeness of awareness.

Many of us have spent years—and significant resources—trying to understand our parts. We give them names, histories, and motivations, hoping to change or eliminate them. But parts are constructed in response to need. They are strategies—coping mechanisms that help navigate a world of shifting experiences while preserving energy and a sense of control. This is why it has been said before in this book that parts are habits. They aren't *people*, and in fact what we are dismantling is that very concept.

Though many coping strategies are harmless, some can be deeply disruptive. Addiction, compulsive behavior, emotional avoidance, and chronic distraction (like doom-scrolling) are all examples of negatively adapted parts trying to offer solutions. Even the parts we dislike originally emerged in an attempt to gain something positive.

Understanding that all parts began as a process of solution-seeking and then become habitual is foundational in many therapeutic approaches to parts work. Unraveling the perceived need into a sense of okayness without the automatic pattern (part) allows us to experience wholeness more often than fragmentation.

What Traditional Therapy Often Misses

Parts work invites dialogue between parts, which is a profoundly evocative practice. Many people have never realized this kind of inner conversation is even possible. The shift happens when we stop trying to change these parts and instead begin to listen.

Listening—particularly in an open and undirected way—is a powerful tool. Listening is different from hearing, it is pure sensing. This is a gift we often neglect to offer ourselves. Sensing bypasses mental abstraction and brings us into direct contact with experience. This shift from analysis to pure perceiving allows for more space for whatever wants to be seen.

This listening approach is vastly different than other methods for healing. In traditional talk therapy, thoughts are used to generate better or more helpful thoughts. The focus is to change thinking patterns and gain positivity and an improved outlook. But in sensing-based work, we access a level of being that exists prior to thought. There is no directive to change experience. Use of force is the root of inner division, so taking a different tack is where true integration begins.

Even Parts Work Maintains The Small Self

Parts work such as IFS often miss an essential truth- if we are maintaining any division inside we are not able to live as our full capacity. Though it isn't explicit within the process, parts are often explored with an aim to understand them better, and then left to just *hang out* and stay there. They are often encouraged to rest in an inner place of peace we build for them, able to “come out” and express when they want or need to. The problem is the fact that parts are not anything more than contractions of the nervous system that take energy to maintain. If they are defined and then stored in an idyllic inner-place they are still maintaining pressure in the system.

When these tensions discover they are able to relax into a more spacious capacity than the “place” we imagine for them, we truly get back the energy that has held their particular position so tightly. The challenge with IFS is that even after recognizing there are many parts, the belief that we are a shell with a “me” inside is never challenged. In truth we are much more.

Chapter 3

The Unconscious: A Resource

The Active Unconscious

We live in both conscious and unconscious realms of experience. Yet the unconscious is not absent. It is alive and active, shaping behavior in unseen ways.

Consider the act of driving: at first, every movement is deliberate. Over time, these movements become second nature. Though we no longer think about pressing the pedals or steering, the knowledge hasn't disappeared—it's simply gone unconscious. The ability to drive is present, even when not actively known.

In the same way, parts we don't consciously see still operate beneath the surface. Their patterns are active, and their influence is felt.

Muscle memory is a great example. What is it, really? It isn't something stored in the muscle; it's front and center in experience, taking the form of sensations, impulses, and vague impressions. Jung observed that the psyche includes both conscious and unconscious contents. Unconscious contents are not outside of experience, we simply encounter them differently.

Seeing the Invisible

Some unconscious processes remain hidden for the practical purpose of energy efficiency. Others are actively repressed by parts that are trying to cope. Repression itself is an attempt toward peace—again, the behavior of a part.

One of Jung's greatest contributions was his work on the unconscious. He identified the many ways it expresses itself. The unconscious doesn't speak in words; it speaks in subtle cues—what we might call a *gut feeling*, or a vague emotional impression.

These impressions may seem small, but they impact us strongly. The psyche is inclined toward harmony, so what is not harmonious within makes itself known through discomfort, pain, and the emotional responses of the unconscious. Whether in the form of dream images or bodily sensations, unconscious material reveals itself continuously—not always in the way the mind expects.

Using the Unconscious as a Doorway to Wholeness

Both known and unknown barriers to wholeness must be investigated if we are to make an earnest attempt at being who we are. When we meet these blocks with authentic presence, they can dissolve into the capacity of the Self.

Because unconscious material often presents to us as sensations, working directly with these sensations is a highly effective practice. Thankfully, this doesn't require us to trace beliefs back to their origins. In many cases, there may be no conscious origin to find.

Instead of exhausting ourselves trying to understand everything intellectually, we can recognize the freedom that comes from letting go of that need. This surrender marks a profound maturity.

Before beginning any inner exploration, it can be helpful to consciously set the intellect aside.

Find an invitation that feels right to you. An example may be something like:

This is a space for subtle experience, thought is invited to rest in the background now as I welcome listening and presence for what is here.

This kind invitation clears space for a deeper kind of listening—not listening for anything, but listening in an undirected way. This listening places us at the awake and attentive center of a field of consciousness that hears.

Chapter 4

The Illusion of Separateness

A Shared Origin

All people share the same origin: birth from a womb into experience. When observing a young child—it's clear they experience the world differently than older children and adults. This difference lies in their unconditioned state. Newborn babies interact with their mothers as if she were their own body. For the baby, when a toy leaves the field of view it no longer exists. When a baby explores a color, a texture, another person's face or their own body, we witness wonder and awe—pure awareness.

This total presence is contagious. People love witnessing babies because it reminds us of our infinite capacity. It also gives us insight into what is not present for the infant—namely, separation. This wonderful freedom is our natural state.

Around the age of two, most children begin to express a shift in perspective. They begin to differentiate themselves from their surroundings. The structure of "I" forms around ideas of right and wrong, good and bad, wanted and not wanted.

Though conceiving our environment has many advantages, it is important to recognize that all people share the same origin of pure awareness, not separate from anything. In returning to this origin we're not finding a new self; we are remembering an essential self that has been forgotten. By removing layers of conditioned identity, we find wholeness at the center. Contraction wants to relax into the spaciousness that we are born knowing. This process is merely an invitation for tension to return to its natural state. Integrating the blocks to our whole Self makes it possible to experience unconditioned awareness all the time. This is possible without sacrificing resourcefulness or functionality.

Awareness Is Not Part of Duality

Exploring wholeness begins with recognizing what is fragmented and noticing what is constant. Fragmentation is dualistic. "Dual" means two, implying separation. Anything dual can be defined and measured. Science is a tool designed for measurement and abstraction.

Science, as an extension of our sensory perception, measures the world in values and abstractions for the purpose of predicting outcomes. Science maps objective reality, but it cannot be used to explore subjective experience. Subjective experience is private and directly experienced with no room for abstraction. Unfortunately, many assume that investigating the non-dual is unscientific. On the contrary, it is a form of science—the science of the first person. This approach is the most direct and accessible because it begins with what is closest: direct experience. Awareness can only be known through first-person experiencing.

The Science of the First Person

Just as a map is used to explore a specific region, third-person science explores an objective world. But the map is not the territory. The scientific process is objective and predictive, but subjective exploration is directly perceived and immediate.

The science of first-person experience emphasizes perception over measurement. In self-inquiry, noticing our direct perceptions becomes a kind of map guiding us back to the richness of the territory—our experience. At the core of experience lies the self that is infinite, and we do not need to go somewhere to find it. The territory is closer than close.

Chapter 5

Awareness in Daily Life

Living as Awareness

Some frameworks describe awakening in stages. One such model maps the progression as follows:

Life happens...

1. to me
2. for me
3. by me
4. as me

This last stage can be realized with a simple glimpse of our true nature. Being non-linear, these stages may not happen as the mind expects they will.

Though parts of us may experience awakening as a progression, the truth of life happening "as me" is present at all times—even when parts are unaware of it. Awareness is not limited even by time. Awareness is already here, already whole. We don't need to build or progress toward it. We only recognize it, if and when it wants to be known.

Losing Interest

Living as awareness (life as me) or the true Self doesn't rely on personal advancement. This unfolds according to a natural movement. As noticing continues to occur more often, life wakes up to itself and what we used to think of as a personal self is present to enjoy the ride. Some spiritual traditions offer helpful pointers that sometimes hasten our recognition of this truth. Over time, this recognition becomes preferred—not through effort, but through increased curiosity.

This shift often leads to a gentle loss of interest in limited perspectives. Instead of striving or forcing change, we simply stop caring about the false view. This is effortless, natural, and freeing. Direct experience reveals our completeness and makes this path attractive, easy, and worthwhile.

The sanskrit term for losing interest is *vairagya*, which translates to losing interest in that which is not eternal. Ironically, after losing interest in this way many people report richer depth of feeling, more intimate relationships, and increased joy.

The Final Stage of Maturity

Children are often asked what they want to be when they grow up. They learn to equate self-worth with identities and accomplishments. But what if they were taught to acknowledge and celebrate the simple fact of being?

True maturity goes beyond concepts of self. To reach it, we must recognize and let go of false identities. Conceiving oneself is an abstraction; perceiving the Self is reality. We can walk-back and reverse the algorithm that blinds us to the direct experience of being.

Chapter 6

Life Beyond Concepts

Conceiving Ourselves

Imagine the developing child layering concepts of self like rubber bands forming a ball. The ball seems like a single thing, but it's only layers. Similarly, what we call “me” is just a collection of self-concepts. What remains when the layers fall away?

Tapping into Curiosity

To investigate the true self, curiosity is essential. Zen Buddhism honors “beginner’s mind” as a very high state—looking from a place of not-knowing. If we start with preconceptions about what we are, our looking is clouded right away. We must see as a child does. When seeing as if for the very first time, without firmly held ideas about ourselves we can honestly try to find if there is anything there beyond ideas.

Beyond Concepts

Looking at the self beyond concepts is a rediscovery. We have an innate right to an unburdened existence. Life this way is full of clarity. It is possible to see through false self-images without guilt or judgment, and to just *be*, knowingly. It means flowing with and as life rather than resisting it. This shift has many implications, some big and some small, but it always is known foremost in our private experience. No one can realize the self through someone else’s experience.

The First Turning

Self-inquiry is a process that emphasizes perceiving. It is a qualitative process of sensing and observing. Turning ourselves toward awareness doesn’t require exercises or meditative postures! In fact, it is best when made a simple part of daily life. Sticky note reminders, brief moments of checking in, or simply resting as awareness before falling asleep are all ways to familiarize checking into the presence of awareness throughout the day. The simplest way is to ask, “Am I aware of awareness?” and perceive the capacity of awareness directly.

Misconceptions About Awareness

Awareness doesn’t take special levels of wisdom or experience to reach. A baby is born with awareness and awareness is here for every moment of our lives. Awareness is a fact, and requires no effort. It cannot be gained or lost. It doesn’t need improvement—it already is.

In deep sleep there is awareness in and through the body. Even with zero-memory of deep sleep, we do not cease being. Awareness is the same as being. Some people confuse awareness for thinking, and this is a misconception. Thinking depends on our being aware, while awareness always is—with or without thought. Another confused idea about awareness is that awareness and attention are the same thing. Attention is not necessary for awareness and does not improve it. This is what many types of meditation intend to reveal. Many seekers try to cultivate awareness through effort, but this is based on confused thinking. Practices are for attention, not awareness.

Practices Are Not For Self-Improvement

Awareness is already complete in itself and cannot be improved. Attention, however, can be redirected and trained. Practices help redirect attention inward, which is useful because attention is habitually outward-going. Training attention can be done for reasons other than self-improvement, the motivation can come from a desire to see oneself fully. The idea of self-improvement is a barrier to wholeness. Self-improvement implies a lack, while turning toward oneself completely is an act of total inclusivity, coming from love. Even without the experience of love, there can be a momentum for practices fueled by the desire for truth. When arriving at this truth it is likely that the motivation to improve oneself changes or completely dissolves.

Chapter 7

Reactions and Meta-Reactions

The Deficiency of Fragmentation

A common experience of separateness is the feeling of lack. This sense of insufficiency hurts. Self-inquiry brings us face to face with the personal beliefs that maintain a sense of lack and give reality to a false-self. When those beliefs are exposed and questioned something called backlash can happen. This resistance shows itself in various forms of reactions. Sometimes backlash looks like a sudden return of impulsive or emotional behavior, or old patterns of thinking.

Understanding Reactions

There are two types of reactions: primary and meta-reactions. A primary reaction resists what is happening in the moment. A meta-reaction resists the initial reaction.

For example, during self-inquiry a feeling of tightness in the chest may suddenly arise. This could be followed by a sense of fear or worry. The second feeling is a meta-reaction—it resists the first.

Why Reactions Matter

Avoiding reactions leads to suppression, which is a denial of wholeness. Including reactions is essential for recognizing the nature of who and what we are. Beliefs and reactions reinforce each other. By investigating some things and not others we only maintain inner duality. Inclusion is the direct path to lasting peace.

Chapter 8

Giving Voice to Parts

Parts Speak Through Reactions

Reactions are expressions of parts. Offering them a voice brings unconscious material into awareness. Just as driving becomes unconscious over time, so too can beliefs. Self-inquiry gives us tools to listen and uncover what was hidden.

The Science of Listening

Self-inquiry is both an art and a science. It begins with a question and dissolves into listening. The goal is not to find the “right” answer, but to open space for awareness. Repetition is key.

Questions for Inquiry

Here are some questions you might explore. Remember, exploring is not seeking any result.

Am I aware?

What is the size of awareness?

Has awareness ever been affected by an emotion? A thought?

Is awareness full or empty?

Listening To Parts

To listen to a part, begin by locating it in the body. Often a part is a sensation that is felt associated with a sense of “me,” “I” or “my.” It may also arise with a specific thought.

Ask:

What are you experiencing?

What is your view of the world, me, and life?

What is the belief underneath this feeling?

What are you missing?

What are you believing is true?

Don't seek answers or attempt to understand or form a narrative; just be the space of listening.

Any reaction that arises is included. The point of asking questions to parts is to experience them without any motivation other than to recognize their perspective. Recognizing this from the perspective of awareness, is a profound practice. This is the dance of inquiry—being the space where unconscious parts meet the harmonizing presence of awareness.

Over time, the limited perspectives of parts dissolve into that which is larger and freer. This happens not by force but by nature. With perseverance and motivation for greater truth this practice can unveil a lightness that draws everything we've longer for to the experiential center. This is the harmonizing nature of wholeness itself.

Chapter 9

The Body Narrative—Somatic Inquiry

When Language Isn't the Way In

Any reaction, part, or difficult emotion can be approached in two primary ways: through inquiry that uses language, and through inquiry that does not. Both are valid paths toward presence.

Somatic styles of inquiry are a form of parts work, with the only difference being that they use sensation—not words—as the bridge to awareness. In this way we could say that any sensation is approached as a part. As we explored in chapter 2, parts are habits of the nervous system.

Responding to patterns in a new way, (by perceiving them as awareness ourselves,) relieves tension that has been held in the nervous system—releasing the charge.

The Effort-Less Approach

Because awareness has a limitless capacity, it is common for these patterns to dissolve completely once they have been processed with somatic inquiry. However, using inquiry as a way to make something go away is a misguided approach. Striving toward an outcome will not bring us to the whole Self—striving is a form of denial. Instead, it is worth celebrating that an effortless approach is the most effective.

Using sensation as a doorway to wholeness requires simply the willingness to notice what is experienced. We begin this by exploring the body. Sensations are always qualitative, meaning they have an immediate quality of experience that is present when noticed.

The following page lists examples of **sensation qualities**.

It feels...

fuzzy
vibrating
static
dense
heavy
warm
prickly
diffuse
humid
noisy
silent
cool
light
etc.

There may be **visual aspects** that are also sensation qualities.

It looks...

rough
cavernous
itchy
scratchy
sparkly
bright
dark
fuzzy
shiny
woven
metallic

Setting Aside Interpretation

Somatic styles of inquiry are easiest when checking into the quality rather than the interpretation that may arise with it. If a narrative emerges during inquiry about a sensation, such as *it's scared*, simply check for the sensation that is experienced in the location that was called scared.

This type of inquiry is especially useful when stress is high, thoughts are overwhelming, or language feels like too much effort. The sensory path simply takes noticing. Whenever there is a story or narrative there is no need to judge it or deny it. Simply return to noticing. There is always the option of exploring what is happening as a sensation.

Practicing Somatic Inquiry

Somatic inquiry begins with the most basic turning—inward. Whatever is in your present experience is the right place to begin. There are no special requirements—no need to be in a calm mood or specific posture. You can practice this while sitting in your car, standing in line, or lying in bed.

Start by **inviting** stillness, and follow by **pausing** any activity. Close your eyes. This isn't required by can support inward attention. Next, **notice** any sensation in or around the body that stands out. It might be a tension in the chest, a flutter in the belly, or a vague contraction. You don't need to name it or analyze it—just notice it.

If the top layer of experience is a thought, turn toward where the thought it experienced. Now notice the words or images (the sensation) that arrives with it.

This simple shift of attention is called direct-experiencing. This is really what somatic-inquiry is. It is all about inclusion. Proceeding with a gentle spirit of curiosity greatly supports noticing what is happening directly.

Exploring the Body Like a Story

The identity we believe in is like a living narrative. Just as stories have characters, settings, and plots, our lived experience carries familiar elements: the recurring roles we play (the persona), the conflicting ones (shadows), the external setting of our lives, and the active narration through time (the 'inner voice'/ memories).

Just like stories, our internal experience contains:

Who: what we call "I", the fragmented self

What: the perceptions related to identity

Where: the places fragmentation is experienced

When/How: the beliefs that are stored

Why: the instinctual or habitual process of fragmentation

A Layered, Step-by-Step Approach

In dismantling false ideas of self, somatic inquiry is a useful practice. Only a partial image can be reached by the mind, so exploring identity on a deeper level is necessary. By using a structured approach, layers of the limited-self can be dissolved one at a time and this story can be integrated into a full experience of Self. Taking the layers listed above one-by-one, we can integrate what seems distinct and therefore separate—not to fix something, but to recognize these layers as parts of a whole, the unfolding narrative of an infinite and fundamental Self.

Dissolving As Awareness

The final and crucial step of somatic inquiry is inviting and allowing sensations to return to the field of presence or awareness that is available. This happens by noticing and including what the sensation is experienced in, a certain **capacity**.

Once attention includes this field of awareness, contractions can be invited to return to their natural state. Once this possibility is offered **integration** can happen in a variety of ways.

Integration is different for everyone. It may feel like awareness meets the sensation and merges as one with it. The experience of capacity may flow to the sensation, fully filling it and dissolving distinction. Some people experience awareness present within, through, and as the sensation itself. There may be a sense of the sensation being *alive as awareness*, or shining as itself. Do not try for any specific results. Once the possibility for integration with and as awareness is given—release any attempt to follow what happens.

Chapter 10

Awareness As The Self

Awareness

Unfolding the personal narrative is about dissolving lesser truths into a higher or more fundamental truth. This is the role of awareness. Notice awareness now and see if you can find a size to it. Do you find another awareness to compare it to? No. Go ahead and try. Can you find where your awareness ends and another awareness begins?

Now, notice the depth or the breadth of awareness—does it start at a specific point in you and reach out to a specific point where it finally stops? What is the boundary of awareness? There isn't an edge.

Capacity

Now, notice the capacity to notice awareness. From your capacity to notice awareness, see if you can find where you begin and awareness ends. Checking this out now, do you find another thing apart from awareness that can *see* it? Even if it isn't *seeing* with the eyes- when the eyes are shut, the looking can still happen. Look for awareness with your eyes closed and appreciate the capacity for looking that is here. This looking has a capacity—see if you can find the edge. This is your capacity, and it is one with awareness.

Notice the sounds that are happening now, some may be louder and some may be faint. Notice the silence in which all sounds occur. Notice the size of this silence. How big is it? Can you find another to compare it to? This is the capacity in which sound can be noticed.

Now, notice the taste in your mouth. Some of this may be sweet, or sour, or very faint. The taste there now may be indescribable. There may be the remains of a flavor that seems larger than other tastes. Now, outside of any particular taste check for the tasteless capacity that is here, the emptiness that tastes fill. Notice the capacity for tasting. This is a capacity—your capacity.

All together, the experiencing capacity is here. It is one single capacity. Notice the vast field of possibility that this capacity is. The whole field of experience is full of what is able to be noticed and also complete in itself- a capacity that is *not full* of anything at all.

This capacity is natural, and it is your Self. This capacity does not have a boundary and it is open. This is not a separate capacity from you, noticing it. This capacity and awareness are the same. When we invite a content of experience to merge with awareness or integrate, we are including this capacity and the infinite field that it is.

The Natural State

The false self is a misunderstanding that anything happening in this capacity is who we are. Any content of the capacity is a fragment— it isn't the whole self. We mistake ourselves for a limited piece of the whole, instead of the capacity itself.

The good news is that a misunderstanding doesn't have any substance to it, it is just an idea.

Releasing Tension With Awareness

Some people play a joke where they tap the opposite shoulder of a person in front of them. When the person turns around—they see nobody there. Realizing the person who did the tapping was on their *other* side, the one who has been fooled sees the joke!

If we slow down this scenario we can observe tension held in the moment of misunderstanding. As the situation unfolds, awareness meets confusion and the tension naturally is released.

Because misunderstanding has no substance, when misunderstanding clears up nothing has changed or been affected. It is simply an illusion that has been seen through to the truth behind it. What dissolves the illusion is awareness, which happens because awareness is a “larger” or *more true* capacity. Illusion cannot maintain itself when awareness meets it.

Seeing again from the example, the one fooled doesn't use effort to clear the misunderstanding. Awareness naturally dissolves illusion into itself.

No Wrong Turns

This framework for self-investigative processes is to help you recognize the truth that you are. None of this is a requirement for coming to wholeness, but as useful tools that helped me understand a profound shift, and coming from my experience only. If there is one thing I have learned most through guiding others in self-inquiry, it is different for every single person! Which practices and which questions support your seeing the best can only be found by trying for yourself and seeing what resonates. Please take this one message above all else: be yourself. When motivated by nothing other than your own inner turning- it is impossible to go wrong on the path to Self discovery.

Chapter 11

A Supported Path

The Way To Unlearn Is Varied

There is no prescriptive path to awakening to your whole Self, because you already are you, which is limitless awareness. Coming to see this has no impact on your already being that. The benefits that come from acknowledging who you really are are worth mentioning. Attention will likely return to illusion because it is the habit to do so. It is up to you to pursue this topic in the way that fits you. It is recommended from my own experience and from working with others that support on the path is extremely helpful and encouraging. Unfortunately, although wholeness is *what is* and all of reality is that...this is not common or acceptable conversation in the culture today.

Utilizing the help of others doesn't only support your self recognition, it's fun! People who have seen their true nature are more likely to be relaxed, vulnerable, and open to talk about challenges along the way. Intimacy is a beautiful experience, and it is likely to happen more often when both parties know the truth: what we are cannot be harmed because the Self is whole. Deeper relationships are possible as this seeing becomes more alive in one's day-to-day.

No Fireworks

If this doesn't seem like a remarkable answer or a quick fix to the problems in your life, this is normal. It is because this topic both is and isn't remarkable. Who we are is the entire capacity of experience—wow! Finding out we don't need to become something other than our self can also feel a little disappointing for parts that are used to doing. Simply put, there isn't anything to do. What a relief!

At the same time, knowing that there is nothing to fix *is* remarkable! We can relax and simply be as our infinite capacity at any time!

If the goal is to become our real self, which we are already—the arrival point is just being.

When any obstacle to being shows up, this can dissolve into awareness through various attention-guiding practices. Still, with the knowing that we already are whole, this “problem” can also simply be seen as a part of the whole capacity that is awareness. Returning to the experience of awareness naturally dissolves the misunderstanding of separation.

Being oneself knowingly as awareness is the easy and natural way to be the infinite Self. Already being this open capacity, the next step is to simply be, enjoy, and enjoy being

Resources

Support for this work can be pursued in various ways. I offer resources here for a continuation on this path to wholeness that may appeal to different levels of interest, understanding, and different personality types.

Wholeness Work and **Core Transformation** are deeper practices of Parts Work and Somatic Inquiry that investigate specific challenges and reveal the core of wholeness in each session. The author is a seasoned guide in both methods and much of the information in this book is informed by insights gathered through this work.

Facebook Page: [Connect Create Wholeness](#) (for articles, discussion and groups)

Books:

Celebrating Who We Are by Richard Lang

Coming To Wholeness and
Core Transformation by Connirae Andreas Ph.D.

Youtube discussion:

[Helen Hamilton Satsang](#)

and

[The Wholeness Wisdom Podcast](#) with Erin E. Brown

Wholeness and Core Transformation Process Zoom support
[Wholeness Wisdom Ego Dissolving with Practitioner & Coach](#) Erin E. Brown

[The Wheel of Wholeness: Waking Up To Your Infinite Self](#) A self-paced online course with group support **Starting January 6th, 2026- An Online Course**

About The Author



Erin Brown is a guide in the integrative processes of Wholeness Work and Core Transformation. Since 2022 she has been working with people around the world and inviting them to recognize their essential wholeness. Coming from addiction and recovery, Erin's own realization has brought forth a life that is rich, celebrated, and lends itself to sharing.

She lives in Western North Carolina, sharing being with her life partner, and their two dogs and three cats.

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Thank You!

It is my innermost pleasure and honor to share with you and be together on this path alongside you. Please leave a review or contact me if you have found this material significant, helpful, or if you have experience to share. Your experience is encouraging for others in an all too fragmented world. Thank you for being true to yourself!

The greatest service you can render the world is your own self-realization.

-Ramana Maharshi

Erin E. Brown

August, 2025

Asheville, North Carolina

Glossary

Awareness

The ever-present, unified field in which all experiences unfold—distinct from thoughts, sensations, and identities.

Parts

Inner subpersonalities or lenses through which we experience life; each with its own feelings, thoughts, and viewpoints.

The Persona

A social mask or image presented to the world; often mistaken for the whole self.

The Shadow

The repressed or hidden aspects of the self that are not consciously acknowledged but remain active in the psyche.

Individuation

Jung's term for the process of integrating all aspects of the self into a unified whole.

Self-Inquiry

A method of exploring identity by questioning and observing internal experience to reveal awareness.

Somatic Inquiry

A body-based approach to self-exploration that focuses on sensation rather than thought or language.

Meta-Reaction

A reaction to a reaction; for example, feeling anxious about being angry.

Repression

A coping strategy where parts of experience are pushed out of conscious awareness for protection.

Direct Experiencing

A mode of sensing reality through present-moment awareness without conceptual overlay.

Wholeness

The natural, undivided state of being that underlies all fragmentation and identity structures.

Fragmentation

The perception or experience of being divided or broken into parts; often a result of trauma or conditioning.

Muscle Memory

An example of unconscious knowledge that is expressed through bodily sensation and habit.

Beginner's Mind

A Zen concept of approaching life without preconceptions, allowing openness to truth and presence.