



Anniversary of the COVID-19 Pandemic, March 11, 2021
A Ritual for Reflection and Remembrance

Intention

To pause from daily activity and spend time quietly reflecting is one way to connect with the thoughts and feelings we experience. Some people find it very helpful to spend time in this way. Some people pause and reflect while they walk their dog, fold laundry, do dishes or even walk from the car to work or home again. Personal reflection is one way in which we care for ourselves.

If you are at a place in your day or in your heart where you would like to take some time to reflect, consider doing this personal practice. It can be done on your own or with someone else. It is important that during this practice you feel safe and well supported.

To engage in this reflection all you need to do is sit quietly, but it may be more meaningful for you to gather a few items such as a candle, some pebbles, and a pen and piece of paper. Find a quiet place, perhaps in your home, where you can sit for about 15 minutes. Light a candle if you wish and it is safe to do so.





Personal Invitation to Reflection

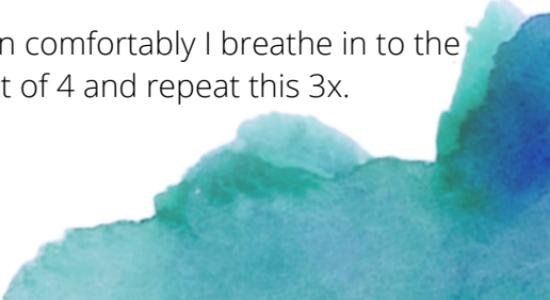
It is March 2021, and the world is pausing to reflect that one year ago our lives were upended by the news of a worldwide pandemic. Since then we have experienced innumerable losses and have become more aware of a deep uncertainty that grips us, and of our many ways of responding to it. For most people it has been difficult to hold a sense of normality this year, let alone make plans for the future.

Some people want to call today a day of mourning and remembrance, saying that we cannot go forward into healing if we do not mourn our losses first. Today, I give myself permission to take time to name and reflect on those losses, acknowledge them, hold them, and bravely lay them down for a time, knowing that eventually I can let go of them on my personal journey.

Invitation to Ritual

As I begin this practice, I turn my thoughts to what I have lost this past year. I start by anchoring myself in this moment.

Sitting or standing or lying down comfortably I breathe in to the count of 3, and out to the count of 4 and repeat this 3x.





I commit to noticing and gently honouring my feelings, body sensations, emotions and memories of what I have lost and experienced. If I begin to feel overwhelmed, I can take a break and ground myself through a mindful breathing exercise again.

Feelings may arise as I enumerate my losses. I can allow these feelings, welcoming them, breathing through them, knowing that all feelings eventually change and depart.

I offer myself gentleness and compassion as I reflect. I recognize I have never lived through a pandemic before. I am a beginner, but I am also a survivor. Perhaps I offer myself a gentle hug or place a hand on my heart as I reflect and remember.

When I am ready, I can take a piece of paper and draw a line down its centre. On one side of the paper I begin to write the losses I have experienced this year, one by one. Or, I may lay a pebble down on the ground for each loss. Or I may simply sit, pause and reflect, remembering my losses.

When I have finished writing or remembering my losses and feel ready to transition, I pause to consider:



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- During this past year, what has helped me and sustained me?
 - What am I thankful for?
 - Who am I thankful for?
 - How have I been a help to someone else?
 - How have I grown wiser or stronger this year?
 - What has transformed in my life and world?
 - What is the lesson COVID has taught me that I want to carry with me?

Reflecting on these questions, I chose one or two or maybe more and I write down my responses on the other side of the paper, or place a pebble next to the first set of pebbles.

Now I can spend time reflecting on what I have become aware of through this ritual of remembrance. I see how it may offer me deeper awareness or insight as I recall the ups and downs, gains and losses of this year. I see how I can both grieve and celebrate as I reflect on this very difficult year.

Closing:

When I feel ready to close this practice, I can blow out the candle and set the paper and pebbles on a shelf or on a table where I can easily pick them up again if I wish.





I thank myself for taking the time to care for myself, to reflect and grieve and remember, knowing that reflecting is an essential part of healing and renewing.

Helen Keller once wrote:

*What we have once enjoyed
we can never lose.
All that we love deeply
becomes part of us.*

Consider what support may be most beneficial to you right now. Perhaps taking a walk or calling a friend or doing some gentle stretches.

At times, the work of mourning is more complicated than we anticipate and it takes time and patience. You do not have to be alone in the process, so we encourage and invite you to reach out to the supports available to you.

If you feel that through this practice you connected with some surprising emotions, and you would find it helpful to have support processing them, please connect with the resources on the **[HHS Resilience page.](#)**

