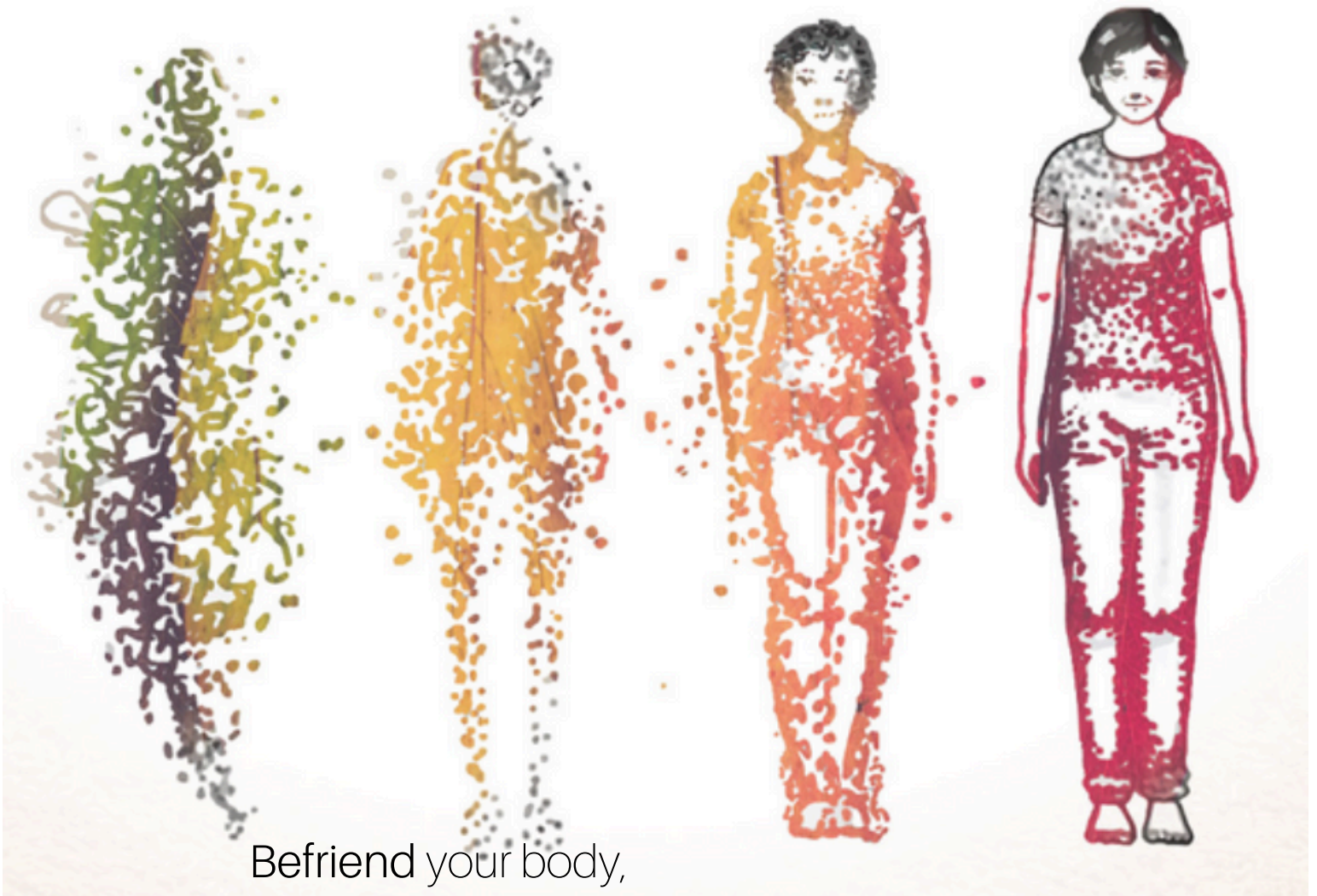


The Safe Guide to Heal Trauma & Attachment

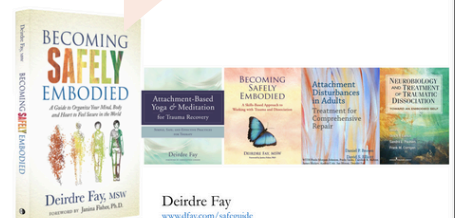


Befriend your body,
discover how to become safely embodied,
and experience the relief with
fewer triggers

author of
"Becoming
Safely
Embodied"
and other books & chapters



Deirdre Fay, MSW
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Safely Embodied Network



WELCOME!

It's always a pleasure to share
The Safe Guide with people



The joy comes from seeing people consistently develop new, more positive ways to interact with their life, calming their bodies, easing their minds, and gently opening their hearts.

That's what can happen when you learn the simple, practical skills that organize your inner world.

Katherine, one of our long term Becoming Safely Embodied practitioners and expressive arts therapist said, *"What I've noticed as I practiced with lower level triggers over and over and over again I slowly began to deal with the super tsunami triggers much more easily. It's like an embodied vocabulary had to be built up inside of me before I could make any sort of headway with the tsunami triggers."*

She continued, *"Then I was able to track through my body signals when a trigger was starting to take off (for me it's brain fog, dizziness, tightness in my jaw, pain in my throat, heart racing, not feeling my feet/legs, no energy in my arms/hands, body starts to collapse inward, can't sit or stand up straight and then the rise of emotions along with confusion). If I could notice any of those signs then telling myself a trigger was on the way and I need to slow down or get off the trigger train sometimes would avert the full blown tsunami."*

This how life begins to make more sense. That's when we're no longer struggling with overwhelm, shut down, or confused about life.

This is what I want for you!

Here's to you growing, developing and flourishing in your life.

Deirdre Fay
Deirdre Fay, MSW

Introduction

Every one of us has the inherent capacity to be who we've always wanted to be – even with any traumatic or life difficulty that has happened.

That's the beauty – and the truth of nature. Just as an acorn is designed to become an oak tree you are to become the fullness of YOU.

The YOU that is inside, wanting to grow, develop and flourish.

This happens as the natural outgrowth of learning steps to skillfully navigating the complications and difficulties of life.

It's what happens when we discover how the hurdles of our life can be the exact ingredients to be challenged by, fostering growth and instigating practical ways to develop.

Implementing these simple principles can have you feeling more secure, solid and steady in the face of life's complications. Being safely embodied happens when you can live in your own skin and listen to the inner guidance that urges you to become who you were always meant to be.



THIS IS FOR YOU!



The Signposts of the Safe Journey

Befriending the body can be a complicated task whenever we're triggered, especially if there has been trauma or attachment wounding. After over thirty years of working with people to become more safely embodied I wanted to offer some signposts I've discovered to guide you in your journey. ...

Safety / Being Present

One of the most complicated issues for people is what it means to be safe. That sounds so simple. Yet it's something many people struggle with.

What does it mean to feel safe?

How do you know when you feel safe physically? How about emotionally? Psychologically?

Do you know what that would feel like?

The fundamental component of healing trauma is being able to create and live safely in this moment, in this body.

I remember being in graduate school during a difficult conversation the professor was having with the class.

Unfortunately, the professor had gotten herself into a philosophical corner and the students were rebelling - angry at her for not providing safety. They were angry that they had gotten triggered.

I sat with that situation, and the inquiry it raised for me -- for a long while.

What creates safety?

Who creates safety?

The horrible reality is that life isn't always safe.

We will - you will - get triggered.

We can't depend on the outside world making "it" safe for us.

That can be hard to hear. Yet, there's enormous opportunity in that.

As we learn to create safety for ourselves, collaborating with others around us, we begin to build what attachment theory calls an internally solid and secure internal foundation for ourselves.

As we develop this inner security it becomes easier to be with the uncertainty of life.

We find out we can count on ourselves when the going gets tough.

**That's the basis for all healing:
learning to feel solid, learning to feel
secure despite the uncertainty or
disruption we encounter.**



Learning to be "embodied" is a process

It takes learning to be inside your own skin — aware of shifting thoughts, feelings, and sensations. Then you have access to a feedback loop that you can begin to trust, over time.

One very good way to help you establish this kind of awareness is through simple practices that let you identify what safety is and how to get there.

Over the years I've suggested different practices that have helped many hundreds of people.

It's all about trying on different practices as you explore ways to listen to yourself, supporting yourself in discriminating between what is working and what is not.



This comes from shifting the patterns that make us feel stuck

Bottom line, that means safety for any one of us exists when we're present, in this very moment.

When you're here, now, the entire weight of your history, the unknown nature of the future, is not constantly bearing down on you.

So... do you know what makes you feel safe?

How do you define safety for yourself?

What are the external indicators?

Once we can define external safety the next question is how do we know what emotional or psychological safety is?

This is something many people have never had.

So many people "build" a functioning self on top of an internally shaky or uncertain or fluid foundation.

And then....it starts to feel impossible to ever have safety.



Being safe we learn that mistakes arise as wisdom

Once we know the rudimentary experiences of feeling safe, the natural outgrowth is an inclination for our heart and body to naturally ease, allowing us to be receptive, caring, and self-compassionate. This happens when we learn, and know deep in ourselves, that mistakes don't make us wrong.

Mistakes are a natural byproduct of trying something and learning what the next step is. It's not about being perfect, it's about being curious about what didn't work and what will work better.

It's about being willing to try things, staying connected to yourself as you learn from the mistakes you'll inevitably make. Here in the Safe Guide, as well in my Becoming Safely Embodied Skills book and course, you learn that mistakes arise to guide you toward where you want to go.

This is often a completely confusing idea for most people who have been shamed or made wrong when making mistakes. Yet, with time, you can learn to shift this pattern, welcoming missteps as information on finding a better direction.

Missteps are guidance to where you want to go!

NEUROSCIENCE

A HOPEFUL PERSPECTIVE HELPS IMMENSELY

The best news is we're not stuck.

Recent neuroscience research gives us concrete evidence that our perspective can make the path easier. When we learn to cultivate a more optimistic perspective the difficulties of life are held in a greater frame of reference.

Research consistently shows whatever we focus on for any period of time our brain learns and encodes. This is especially true when we link thought with feelings and linger on body sensations.

We're doing this all the time.

Over time we are sculpting neural structures.

The underlying neural connections signal each other through synapses, the space between cells.

The more activated the neural network is the more sensitive it is to growing, in fact, (I've found this even more mind-boggling) this signals and turns genes on and off.

The good news is -- we can change.
But... there's also some bad news...

EXPERIENCE DEPENDENT NEUROPLASTICITY

The "bad" news (unfortunately) means when we feel stuck and we focus on that, our brain learns that pattern, encodes that, and repeats it.

It also means, that the less attention we pay to something, the less connections are made, and those connections begin to wither away.

Either way, the key is the intensity of the experience that happens for any prolonged period and how often that connection is repeated.

This is especially true if we're conscious of what we're doing, which heightens the imprinting process.

Neuroscientists call this process 'experience dependent neuroplasticity.'

Not only does this process change our brain, but get this, we're literally changing how our genes operate.

Practically, what does this mean about change?

Three things to remember

The more we ruminate about pain and suffering, the more we rail against it, the more we linger in our unfortunate circumstances, well then, the more we stay stuck in that very cycle we're trying to avoid.

Remember:

Intense
Prolonged
Repeated

experiences carve out our future

If, however, we start deliberately shifting our attention, training our body, mind and heart to experience more nourishing states, the more we change our neural structure – this primes us for even more nourishment. We change our life in a more positive direction.



What does this tell us?

Three things:

- We're in control of our experience (at least, we can learn those skills)
- What we focus on matters -- a LOT
- This is especially important because of the lasting traces we imprint in our brain. If we focus on what's negative, that's unfortunately going to grow. If we focus on more fulfilling and nourishing experiences, that grows as well. Research tells us that's why gratitude works so well. It lays the groundwork for better feeling states.

This is what we focus on in the *Becoming Safely Embodied* book and course. Everything is about shifting these imprinted neural states.

Knowing what is important to you, what you value, and learning ways to embody those qualities will make an enormous difference. Any time you contact what you value will guide you toward a life built on a sense of strength and realistic hope. Only you can know what framework works for you.

Bottom line

*There's no way
to do this right.*

And....

*There's no way
to do this wrong.*



Our attitudes on life make all the difference in our experience.

Perhaps the most helpful attitude is an experimental one. In an experiment, there's plenty of room to modify strategies and directions, depending on what you find. Holding this attitude lets you off the hook of doing it right; there is no grading system, and there's no way to do it wrong.

There is just pure exploration.

Regarding the Becoming Safely Embodied skills, I know that if you give these practices a try and see what happens, you'll learn something.

You'll find out something that will help you. If something doesn't work, discard it or modify it so it does work for you. Give me feedback! It helps help me provide new solutions and tailor the skills to your situation.

One thing that's certain, old habits of blaming, shaming, and humiliating don't work. If we encourage ourselves to maintain curiosity, we can hold open the door to discover what is fresh and new and untainted by the past.

*Each step takes us
to the next*



Coming out of isolation

Over the years I continue to see the important value of realizing we're not alone.

When we come out of isolation to find connection and community something dissolves in our body, mind, and heart.

So much trauma happens/happened when people are kept secluded from each other or don't feel safe to interact.

You might have family or friends that have been supportive and kind. If so, wonderful! I'm very glad for you. Many people don't. Or, they haven't learned to cultivate relationships that feel safe.

Here's what's possible

It IS possible to find safe relationships and to cultivate safe relationships around you.

If you don't have safe connections, watch the mental tendency to swing into despair or negative thinking that there's something wrong with you because you don't have this.



*The Becoming Safely Embodied Skills
create this basis,
allowing you to stretch into connection.*



*This happens naturally when
you feel safe and when your
confusing inner world gets
organized into a coherent whole.*



Grounded on the foundation of safety

Finding safe ways to be in relationship is one of the key pieces of the Becoming Safely Embodied skills. But many people have been wounded by people and groups who have been insensitive, shaming, and or critical. This pattern becomes so ingrained it feels impossible to change.

Yet it is. Learning to change these embedded patterns is one of the keys of the BSE Skills.

Frankly, this is grounded on the foundation of safety.

Coming out of isolation and separation is,
in and of itself, healing.

Group experiences that are built on safety and connection are inspiring in part because a larger wisdom emerges. When you practice with others who have similar wounds, you discover you are not alone...you'll experience kinship.

All my books, courses, and coaching groups emphasize finding the safety in self-connection and connection with others.

You are not alone

Having a roadmap

We all need a roadmap – and it helps to have a real person be the guide to the journey. In the Becoming Safely Embodied book and course, the added benefit is that you are walking a path that is well traveled. Over the past twenty five years thousands of people have used these skills to make a difference in their lives.

Here's what Jackie wrote:

“... one word to describe my experience with the class is... amazing....! I was hesitant to believe that this could work because I did not want to be disappointed. From a very stuck place I found myself wondering if there was anything I had not tried that could help. This is absolutely right now and made all the difference.

I can't thank you enough for this experience.”



“Dear Deirdre,

I am very thankful that I have taken this class. I do practice daily. I find it has given me more options in dealing with everyday life. I was never taught these things.

I just learned how to survive and plow forward. It worked most of the time for me. I have been worn down. I can't keep the lid on as tight as I once could. It is time to deal with the history.

You have provided logical steps that I can work on and try to incorporate into my daily existence. I listen to the mp3s daily. Each time I listen, I learn something new, it reinforces what you are teaching us or it reminds me what I must try to do.” *Jeffrey*

As for the class - I LOVE IT!!! I am not in [all] the calls but I listen on Sunday afternoons and I THINK IT IS SUPER!!!
Thanks for doing this Deirdre. You are a super teacher and have developed BSE into a really nice community. Thanks so much!!!”
(therapist/client in UK)





"Facilitating the Becoming Safely Embodied groups has been a very moving experience for me as a therapist. It is very powerful to be present with a group of women and share part of their journey of healing. People experience a sense of safety that they have often not been able to experience in the past.

Group members have reported that 'even after the group was over, I continued to learn from the skills we practiced.'"

Amy Zajakowski Uhl - therapist and clinic manager, Chicago

"I wanted to share some feedback from the BSE group I am running. I am thrilled that the clients are getting so much out of it. Today they practiced the Metta Meditation and surprised themselves by their ability to concentrate and reduce their symptoms in just five minutes.

You should have seen the look on their faces!

Here are some of their comments:

"This is the first time I have felt good in months."

"I didn't realize that I have been so tense & was amazed when my shoulders relaxed."

"I know this will help me when I have urges to pick up."

"I never got the Mindfulness stuff until now. It is possible to change my negative thoughts."

These groups have been a great addition to our program. I am always excited to run them. Thanks Deirdre for your insight, creativity and efforts in designing these groups. Just wanted you to know how much they are appreciated."

Annie Guillette, LICSW, Boston, MA

Build a foundation to navigate your internal world

Being mindful

Mindfulness practices engage you in being with something inside or outside, without judgment, criticism, evaluation or story making. It allows you to notice, observe and drop the content and the interpretations of what is happening. For most of us, this takes practice since we're so prone to adding in layers of concepts, stories, and interpretations on top of what we observe.

Learn to concentrate

Concentration practices involve focusing your attention where you want it to go and holding it there. Imagine how critical this is for trauma survivors in the middle of a flashback.

That's where you get a clear-cut example of concentration's usefulness. As you learn to concentrate on something in the present (such as your breathing, or the sensory experience of seeing or touching something), you'll learn to stem the tide of dysregulation that threatens when a flashback pulls you toward the emotional experience of earlier trauma.



*Practicing
self-compassion*

This might be the most important of all.

We can be so hard on ourselves.

Yet, as we practice self-compassion we can build an inner reservoir of kindness and goodness buffering the negativity, criticism, self-judgement

Simple things that help being in a body

Becoming curious

When we're in the middle of something new or intense, we can become blinded by our fear of the unknown.

Learning to stay open and become curious about what's going on creates the opportunity to explore what's happening and to learn from it.

Breathing

So often you'll hear the suggestion to take deep breaths.

If you've experienced trauma, you may find that difficult, because taking full, deep breaths may sometimes expand the range and/or intensity of what you're feeling.

And that may not be exactly what you want to happen!

Some breathing patterns are better for calming, some for energizing.

Experiment with different breathing patterns to see what happens.

One breath at a time

Breathing
Harnesses
the
Life Force



Try these breathing practices...

Little sips of breath

So often you'll hear the suggestion to take deep breaths. If you've experienced trauma, you may find that difficult, because taking full, deep breaths may sometimes expand the range and/or intensity of what you're feeling. And that may not be exactly what you want to happen! Some breathing patterns are better for calming, some for energizing. Experiment with different breathing patterns to see what happens.

Three part breath

Imagine filling your lungs up completely till it feels right. Begin by taking a deep gentle breath, so your belly gradually stretches out without force; it's more a matter of opening and allowing. Next time when you breathe into your belly, take some more breath in and feel your chest expand. On the third breath, top it off with some breath into the collarbone area. You'll also want to see what it's like to expel your breath in three parts too—first from the collarbone area, then from your chest, and then from your stomach. You might think of it like emptying a glass. Practice this for a few cycles.

Holding - Pausing

Yogis practice many different kinds of breathing. The variation that includes holding the breath on the in-breath or the out-breath is called kumbhaka or kumbach.

When you feel anxious, try taking a breath in and holding the breath for a brief second, then exhale slowly and hold the breath out for a brief second.

Don't do too many cycles, which could intensify your experience instead of calming you.

Try breathing one cycle of inhalation and exhalation; breathe normally and see how you are.

If you're comfortable, try again: breathing in, holding, exhaling and then holding.

Some people find it helps to only hold the inhalation, or only the exhalation.

See what works for you.

Relaxing the body:



When we get upset our muscles tighten and contract.

Letting go of that tension allows you to relax more fully.

But for some who have experienced trauma, relaxing may feel dangerous.

Try letting your body relax when you are in a safe place, and invite yourself to mindfully experience what's happening in the process, rather than close yourself off to your own experience.

Use your breath to stay focused on the here and now, and to help observe (rather than identify with) your experience.

Go slowly

Discriminating Experience

What do you feel when you focus your attention inside yourself?

What's the experience you are having right now?

Is it happening because of thoughts you're having, or feelings, or body sensations?

You might not know, or you might not yet be able to distinguish one sensation or feeling from other.

In time, you will be able to differentiate more easily among the various internal states.

Right now, just begin to notice what's happening without trying to change anything. You might want to start a journal and record what you discover.

See if you can use the ideas listed on the next page to help you.

There's always a way



Externalizing

Often there is so much going on inside it's hard to be really aware of each and every element of your internal experience.

It may help to externalize something that seems overwhelming—that is, to imagine what you feel inside as if it existed independently outside yourself. Give it a name, a shape, or a character, and engage in a dialogue with that part of you. Write or draw that aspect of your experience.

By externalizing an aspect of your experience, you may be able to stay in touch with it, without getting lost in it.

And you may begin to discover something about it that had remained hidden or unarticulated.

Noticing and Naming

Learn to become aware of what is going on in and around you.

For example, walking across the street you might be so caught up in what's going on inside that you aren't aware of the light changing, the people around you, the scent of flora, or the touch of a soft breeze.

Practicing noticing and naming opens you up to what is—inside and out. Try it out. Notice what's going on around you right now, but don't get caught up in a story about it. Just notice, name, and let go.

Try a new way of being

*Catching yourself being
unaware is already a
victory!*

I can't stress this enough.

So what if you were spaced out or obsessing about something? Now is the perfect time to start noticing what you were filtering out of awareness. Coming back is all it takes.

Dis-identifying:

Practicing naming what is there allows you to be more fully aware of an experience without getting caught up in it. Dis-identifying from something is different from dissociating from it.

When you dissociate, you leave yourself behind; dis-identifying from something reminds you that you are very much present, without getting lost in whatever it is you are experiencing.



Harnessing & Directing Energy

Noticing

Once you notice, you can make changes.

It's hard to change things when you don't notice what's going on or can't pinpoint precisely what is happening. It's empowering to direct your attention where you want to go and find out you can change your experience.

You'll find you're no longer trapped in experiences you don't like having.

Compassion

In order to shift your negative mind states, most of us need to cultivate compassion for ourselves and others.

Unfortunately, our world, and often our internal experience, is inundated with harsh criticism and judgments.

Caring and kindness can often be in short supply.

Since these qualities tend to be rare, consider yourself a pioneer every time you embrace them.



Practice makes perfect

We've all heard this. (maybe too much!)

Yet, the disciplines of doing something over and over and over and over again can get boring.

We lose interest.

We lose focus.

Whenever we get engrossed in something our attention focuses completely and totally on the object we're focusing on. If we do focus over a period of time, whatever we've been focusing on becomes the subject of our thoughts and feelings over the ensuing minutes/days/weeks.

I see this a lot when I've been on a meditation retreat. The hours of practice change the background noise in my mind. There's a tipping point when I start meditating in my dreams or chanting is happening in the background or the stillness I've been cultivating rests my mind and the chatter is negligible.



Other arenas bring this out as well.

Say you've been skiing for a couple days. At night when you're ready to sleep, your muscles are still participating in the sport, small muscle twitches and shifts.

Conditioning is happening.

It happens to me as well when I watch the all-consuming three week-long Tour de France.

Certainly, I'm not a participant!

But watching and engaging with the material day after day, I find myself thinking about the riders, the race at various times of the day. I can even dream about it.

*The more engrossing
the experience is
the more it changes us*



The background of the slide is a close-up photograph of blue water with concentric ripples emanating from a central point, creating a sense of depth and movement. The ripples are most prominent in the lower half of the image, fading into a lighter blue gradient towards the top.

What we focus on,
what we concentrate on
alters internal experience.

Turn Possibilities into Probabilities

One of the things that will make a difference – for all of us - is how often you put what you’re reading and hearing about into practice.

Let safe others know what you’re exploring, what is opening up for you, and what insights you have.

The possibilities are always there. As you've been reading, what’s your response inside?

How is your heart resonating? Once we resonate, once our heart quickens in response to knowing what’s possible, then it’s all about implementing - turning what’s possible into probability.

The question, of course, is HOW?



When I was first doing my healing in the 1990s there was very little information on integrating using meditation and yoga with trauma.

When I first did my research then there were two articles written on the subject.

When I gave a workshop at a yoga conference to a sold out crowd I was surprised the next year when the organizers said there wasn't any interest.



*Times have changed since then
(thank goodness!)*

I'm now teaching around the world sharing how to turn the possibility of transformation into transformational PROBABILITY.

People are more able and willing to deal with the complications of trauma.

Interest in the intersection of meditation and trauma has exploded, to the benefit of all of us.

Questions & Next Steps

Someone once asked me:

“What’s the best practice to deal with trauma?”

My answer was simple.

Can you guess?

It's whatever practice you practice

There are many healing modalities and many of them work. Some of them work for some, some for others. And if you're anything like me, you'll want everything to change instantly, including yourself!

I've found from working with many, many people that it's only by practicing one thing frequently that you master the skills so that they're available when life gets challenging. When the heat is turned up, you need to have these skills so well developed that they function almost automatically.

That means practice, practice, practice



It's essential to practice what you hope to learn.

When you practice any of these skills they'll become more familiar and easier to remember.

Eventually they become part of procedural (habitual) memory and begin to replace old dysfunctional habits.

Actively practicing every day

It shifts the "wisdom" from someone outside you to finding your own inner wisdom. And that's the most important part of all!

I'll keep encouraging you to practice the same skill every day for a while so that it becomes as old and familiar as the patterns you are trying to shift. Many people also find it helpful to keep a journal of their experience and re-read it at those times when using the skills is difficult.

Wherever you may be on your healing journey...whether you're dipping your toe in...you've been on your own healing journey for a while...and/or you have clients who you serve...I hope this Safe Guide has something useful, even if its just a tidbit that sheds light on something, or nourishes your heart ever so slightly.

And please know I have dozens of hours of content free online as well, through my website, dfay.com, as well as through my [YouTube](#) and [Facebook](#) pages.

...After having read this pdf, many people write me with questions and comments. I thought I'd respond here to some of them. They might be similar to ones you have.

The questions behind the question

Underneath the questions people ask is a deeper question:

Is it possible for ME?

Can I change?

Is it possible for me to shift these painful patterns into a more fulfilling life?

Can I organize this crazy inner world?

The simple answer is yes.

And it takes some work. It requires patience, practice, and believing in the possibility.

It means listening to your heart.

Like when you were reading this
and something inside quickened.

Give room for hope to arise

It means nurturing the hope, giving it room to flourish.

It means turning toward hope, toward the possibility of what you know deep inside should be different.

I've seen people make incredible changes in their lives.

I've had therapists from all over the world tell me how their clients have changed.

It happens step by step.

In many cases it happens inch by inch! Millimeter by millimeter. And you know what? That's the best way.

When we go too fast sometimes we miss putting the tiny underlying bits into place.

I'm going to be following up on this with a series of emails going even more deeply into the subject.

I even have a couple of surprises for you.

So, watch your inbox! I can't wait to be with you.

Sending goodness,

Deirdre Fay

