

Creating the Space, Inside and Out.

I'm writing this from my "nook chair," a small leather recliner tucked safely into the corner of our home office. There are bookshelves on either side of me, our peaceful patio is behind me, through the sliding doors, and on the wall straight ahead in my gaze, a framed Georgia O'Keeffe poster of a purple peony. Deep, deep purple, with that glimmer of light from beyond reflected softly on the inner petals.

I look at that picture, and my breathing changes. I feel the silence and the vitality around me: plants, books, salt lamps, even the printer glowing in the corner. I am settled in comfortably in my chair and as my breath deepens I feel my hips and belly relax. Then my shoulders drop with relief, and my eyeballs soften. Safe in my space, tucked in at the usual morning time, I can inhale into my belly and let my body and brain get organized for the day.

This is where we start. Pick the time of day, pick the comfortable spot, feel the safety and reliability of this corner, this moment. This is where we reboot our own circuits, where we begin our journey of body<>brain alignment.

Maybe it's the couch in your living room. Maybe it's a corner of your bedroom. Maybe it's a chair out on your patio. Wherever it is, let it beckon and show you how it can be your own safe little nook.

When we are learning to land in our own breath and body, the particular external space of where we are is important. So many of us came into this world without a safe landing in our bodies or in our immediate environment; how would we know we have been missing a critical piece of our own vital presence?

So now, as we bring body and brain to a new beginning, we are going to be very deliberate in what might seem to be obvious aspects of the moment. Trust me, being this deliberate now means getting a reliable, safe foundation going, and that will give us the trust and certainty to use the new skills we will be acquiring in the greater world.

There's a neurological reason for this deliberate approach. Our brain's survival wiring has been unconsciously imprinting "patterns" of safety vs danger in our external environment since we were in the womb. You have already felt this, in that un-nameable way. You know how it is, some places that you walk into feel comfortable, safe, inviting. You step in and exhale with relief. Some places leave you on guard, unsure of where you are, wary of what lurks around you. You unconsciously scan for some signal that will indicate familiar safe (or not-safe) spaces. Some places are so immediately unsafe that you consciously clench up and remain guarded.

And this doesn't necessarily correlate to traditional, obvious signals of "safe" vs "unsafe." If you endured an unsafe situation in your childhood home environment,

your nervous system was busy imprinting danger signals, ranging from the obvious threatening triggers to the far more unconscious patterns (wallpaper patterns, smells of dinner cooking, sounds of the TV, doors slamming, water running...). Normally innocuous elements get patterned for danger signals in our unconscious radar, and then put us on alert in ways that our frontal lobes can't figure out.

So, now we have the opportunity to create the best space for us in this moment. It may be a tumultuous environment that you live in now, but somewhere there is a safe corner to tuck in and begin breathing. It may take a few tries to let the best spot show you where it is. But go, start exploring!

What did you learn? After too big, too noisy, too open, what was just right? Where is your safe nook?

Tell me more. Door open or closed? Music playing or silent? iPod in sound dock or with earbuds? Visual input (poster, picture, figurine) to trigger visual > body response? Scented candle or incense nearby?

At first, you may not have language for this. It may just "feel right." That's great, start there. The rest of the details will fill in over time.

Now, settle into your new "nook" for just a few minutes of breathing. Get your belly breath going, let your bottom unclench and your shoulders drop, make squishy eyeballs. Breathe. Here's a 7-minute track to follow:

<https://s3.amazonaws.com/drcathyholwayNVI/NVI+PN+med+1.wav>

Breathe It, Feel It, Name It, and Welcome to your "nook."

What's the Naming? What's your Word?

Let's explore that naming a little more.

Practicing Presence #1.

Three things about the structure of my "nook" environment that make it feel like a safe space are:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

When I am in my safe "nook" environment, that lets me feel * ____ * in my body.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Living Presence #1.

Here you will find a chart to help you “stick the landing” in your new routine. You will have a chance to explore the patterns that work best for you. Think of it as detective work: as you track times, days, elements and responses, you are actually building new wiring in for your body and brain, and discovering what routines empower you.

Living Presence Worksheet

Day/Date	Time	Input (music, candle, etc)	Starting Word	Breathing Time	Completion Word	Comment

Extra Observations: