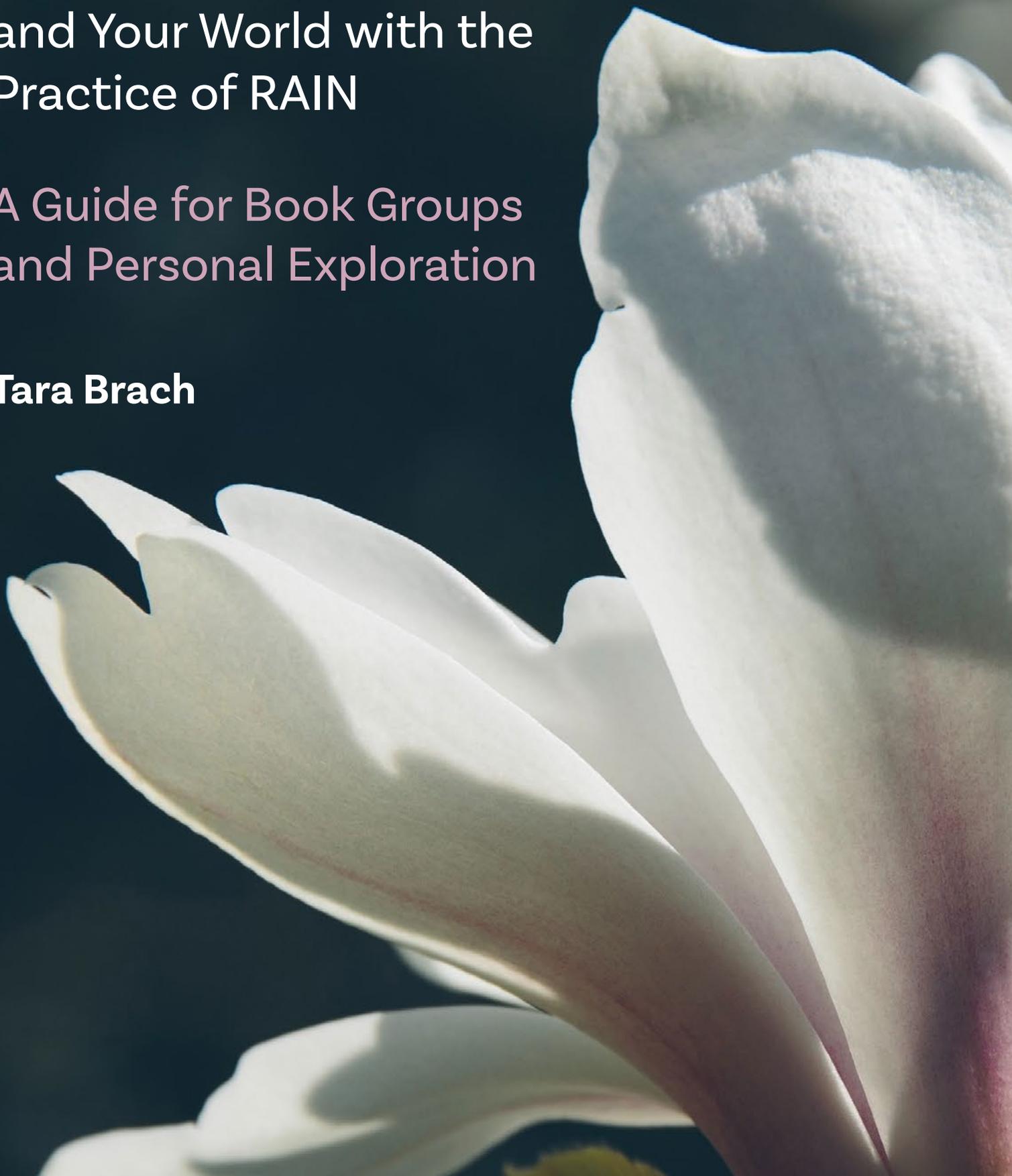


Radical Compassion:

Learning to Love Yourself
and Your World with the
Practice of RAIN

A Guide for Book Groups
and Personal Exploration

Tara Brach



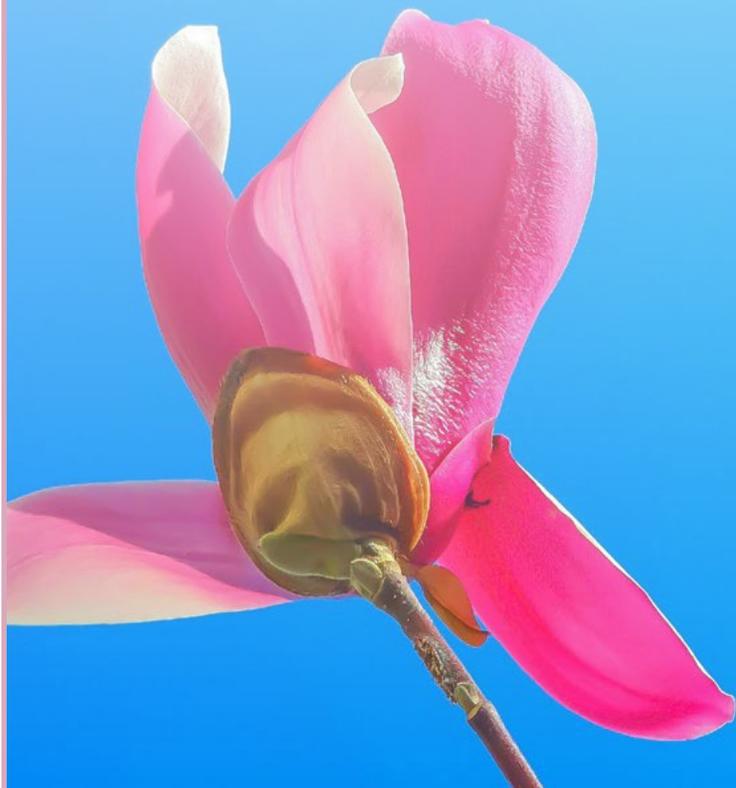
Compassion is the medicine we most need as individuals and as a species to heal suffering and free our spirits. And while we each have the capacity for love and compassion, it is by intentional practice that we develop a truly wise and caring hearts.

Radical Compassion introduces the RAIN meditation as a powerful spiritual technology for cultivating compassion in the face of difficult emotions, limiting beliefs and conflicts with others. Through the acronym RAIN (Recognize-Allow-Investigate-Nurture) we can awaken the qualities of mature compassion—an embodied, mindful presence, active caring, and all-inclusive heart.

I'm excited to offer this resource to guide you as you explore *Radical Compassion*, and my hope is that these inquiries will enrich your path of healing and awakening!

With Loving Blessings,

Tara



Part I. How Attention Heals

CHAPTER 1: RAIN Creates a Clearing

1. What are the trancelike “forests” of limiting beliefs you habitually get lost in?
2. How do you know you are in trance? (see *Flags of Trance* on page 10) How does getting lost in trance impact you in your life - what do you forget about yourself when you are in trance?
3. Take a few moments to practice the U-Turn with the guided reflection below. Bring to mind one of your standard trances and take some time to explore the story behind it. Then, take a breath and shift your attention to your bodily sensations and any emotions that arise. Notice what happens when you make this shift. Discuss or journal. [Guided Reflection: From “If Only” Trance to Open Hearted Presence](#)
4. What gets in the way of making this U-Turn in your daily life? What might help (or has helped) you to make the U-Turn back to your present moment experience?
5. What are some instances where you “touched presence” in your life? What was your experience of presence? How does it differ from being in trance?
6. Take a moment to reflect on your deepest intention as you begin your journey with *Radical Compassion*. You might write this down in your journal or on a post-it (or even create some art around the theme) and put it somewhere visible as a reminder. When you see it, pause and take 30 seconds to remember and reflect on this aspiration. [Guided Practice: What Does Your Heart Most Long For?](#)

CHAPTER 2: RAIN Says Yes to Life

1. Please share a few ways (physically, emotionally or behaviorally) that you say “no” to your inner and/or outer life.
2. How has saying “no” perpetuated your limiting beliefs?
3. Tara asks you to imagine inviting Mara to tea when he appears in your life. Explore and discuss the ways Mara shows up in your life, and what it might be like to invite him to tea.
4. Revisit the reflection on page 29, and listen to the short talk and guided practice below (11:23 min). What was your experience? What might it be like to try this in your daily life?
[Short Talk & Guided Reflection: Saying Yes to Our Life](#)
5. Take some moments to Recognize and Allow right now. As you say “yes” to what is arising, notice any changes in your body and any emotions that arise.

CHAPTER 3: RAIN Reveals Your True Self

1. What are the strategies and defenses that make up your protective coverings, the “ego space suit?” How has your spacesuit been

an effort (even if unsuccessful) to meet your basic needs for safety, approval and love (pages 35-36)?

2. Take some time to practice with the *Calling on Your Future Self* meditation found on page 46, or with the guided practice below. What images, feelings and qualities of being arise in this practice? [Guided Practice: Calling on Your Future Self](#)

3. Do you relate to the idea of a future self as your wisest, kindest self? When and how have you experienced this part of yourself? Who are you when you are living from this place? (see “Calling on Your Future Self” on pages 46-47).

4. Use the guided RAIN meditation to practice on your own, or together with your group. Spend some intentional moments to notice what you are experiencing “After the RAIN”. What, if anything, has shifted or changed? Pay particular attention to your sense of identity, your sense of who you really are. Journal or discuss with your group. [Guided Meditation: The Practice of RAIN](#)

5. What do you find difficult about doing the RAIN meditation? What emotions, thoughts or doubts seem challenging? How might you work with them? (pages 47-50).



PART II. Bringing RAIN to Your Inner Life

CHAPTER 4: Releasing Negative Self-Beliefs

1. What is your case against yourself, your argument that you are deficient or flawed? How old are these beliefs? What might be the origins of these beliefs?

2. How is your inner dialogue influenced by negativity and confirmation biases? In what ways do these fuel the trance of unworthiness in your life?

3. What stops you from letting go of self-limiting beliefs? What is frightening about releasing them?

4. Consider one limiting belief that you feel holds you back from living and loving fully. Take a moment to explore it. Are you certain that this belief is actually true? Is it possible that it is “real but not true” (page 61)? Who would you be if you didn’t believe this about yourself?

5. Practice: Spend some time over the next few days practicing RAIN with 2 or 3 of the limiting beliefs that arise most often in your life. You might use the meditation on pages 68-69, which emphasizes the Inquiry step of RAIN, or try this guided practice: [Guided Reflection: The Power of Inquiry](#)

What do you notice when you practice RAIN? What shifts or changes in your practice and/or as you move into the other activities in your day? Journal and/or share in next week’s group.

CHAPTER 5: Freeing Yourself from Shame

1. What are some examples of toxic (“I’m bad”) shame and healthy shame (impetus for improvement) in your life?

2. Reflect on the story of the prodigal son... the grasping younger brother, the blaming older brother and the nurturing, loving father. In what ways do you identify (or not) with each? Which do you identify with most? Why?

3. Reflect on your practice of RAIN. What challenges do you encounter with the N of RAIN? What gets in the way of self-nurturing?

4. Let’s begin now to build your inner resource of nurturing. Review the Resource Anchors on pages 79-80 and reflect on what would help you to access your internal source of nurturing. What words, images or touch that might help awaken a sense of safety and love?

5. Practice the meditation on Letting in Love on page 84-85. What message did you receive from the heartspace of loving presence? How can you keep that alive in your daily life? You might also enjoy the short guided practice below. What most reminds you of the sacred loving presence that shines through us all? [Guided Practice: Blessings of Love](#)



CHAPTER 6: Awakening from the Grip of Fear

1. Reflect on what you are unwilling or afraid to feel in your life - it could be related to your career, a loved one, a concern about how you are living your life, a worry about the world or the future. Bring a specific situation to mind and explore how your resistance to exploring this emotional terrain has impacted your life.
2. How have you experienced “emotional hijack” in your daily life? Identify one or more particular scenarios that repeatedly trigger your limbic system and hijack your prefrontal cortex.
3. Choose one of the situations from Question #2 and take some moments to practice RAIN. When you get to the N of RAIN, you might ask “what does this place inside me need most”? Journal or share about what you learned.
4. Review the three meditation pathways on pages 107 - 108. Choose one to practice. Think back to a recent time when you have been hijacked by your emotional brain - where intense emotions have taken over and you have felt overwhelmed, unsafe, out of control. If this is not alive for you in the moment, go through the R-A-I of RAIN to awaken these emotions. Take some time to bring to bear your resource of kind presence. Share or journal about this experience.

For further exploration on strategies for safety when working with fear and trauma, download this free guide: [Mindfulness Strategies for Working with Trauma and Strong Fear](#)

CHAPTER 7: Discovering Your Deepest Longing

1. How do you experience FOMO in your life? How does the fixation on living fully and/or pleasure keep you hooked? Discuss your sense of “if only” and chronic dissatisfaction with life as it is, right now.
2. Take a few moments to become present with yourself and notice what is happening inside. Try on this phrase: “Life is enough in this moment. You don’t have to change things. This is it!” What do you notice? Share your experience or journal.
3. Take a few moments to look back over your life. What are the most critical unmet needs? What has left you feeling “a hole in the soul”? How have you coped with these? What is the connection between these attachment wounds and any addictive behaviors you might have (food, alcohol, drugs, social media, exercise, work, worry). Journal or discuss what you discover.
4. Listen to the audio meditation below. Describe your experience. What did you notice? What would it be like to receive what your heart most longs for? [Guided Practice: Bringing RAIN to the Wanting Mind](#)



PART III: RAIN and Your Relationships

CHAPTER 8: A Forgiving RAIN

1. In what way do you find in yourself “blame ready to happen”? Are there particular repeat stories that fan this blame - how you or someone you love has been treated by a friend, family member, a work colleague, a stranger? Or perhaps it comes when you look at what is happening in the world - to particular people or to the environment. Journal or discuss.
2. Using the reflection on Unreal Other and Unreal Self (page 146), find an example in your life where you have cut off another person or group of people. Notice what happens in your body when you hone in on this blame. How have you made this person or these people “Unreal Other(s)” and diminished yourself to an “Unreal Self”? What qualities of goodness are you missing about yourself and others when you do this?
3. Using the person or people identified in Question 2, reflect on what happens when you consider the idea of letting go of blaming them, forgiving them? What is under the blame - what would you need to feel if you stopped blaming them?
4. Review the misconceptions about forgiveness on pages 149 - 152. Discuss how some or any of these ring true for you and have gotten in the way of forgiving.
5. Looking again to a particular target of your blame, how do you see yourself as a victim of that person or people? How does this keep you in the pain of blame?

6. Thinking of someone you feel some willingness or intention to forgive (pages 153-154), practice the RAIN of Forgiveness guided meditation below. Remember that this is often a life process, forgiving yourself for any ideas of falling short, or not achieving perfect forgiveness. Journal and/or discuss how this practice impacted you. [RAIN on Blame: A Guided Meditation](#)

CHAPTER 9: Seeing the Goodness

1. Journal about or discuss the inner gold of a few people close to you, starting with the line: *I see the goodness when...* Use this line repeatedly to draw out your awareness, using different evocative situations or events. Notice how seeing the goodness in another awakens your own heart. Choose one person who came to mind, and share what you wrote with them.
2. Reflect on how you get caught in the trance of unworthiness, and how this impacts both how you see yourself and others. Choose one recent event that triggered this trance, something that happened at work, at home, with friends or colleagues, with your family or alone. Starting with a body deep sense of these feelings, practice RAIN or bring to bear the prompts in the reflection “Recalling your Goodness at Difficult Times” on page 180. Notice any shifts in consciousness - how did this help you become aware of your goodness or change your perspective?
3. Who are the people in your life who have mirrored your goodness? What have they helped you believe about yourself? Take some time to allow yourself to absorb this nurturing and to appreciate the people who mirrored your gold. Choose one of these people and, in your journal, write them a thank you note.

****Alternate practice:** If you are in a group, find a partner, and take 2 minutes each to share what you love and appreciate about them.

4. Recall actions you have taken that have helped you to see and feel your own goodness - perhaps a time when you helped someone else out, expressed love or caring, or appreciated beauty in any of its forms. Notice how this cracks the shell of your conditioned ego beliefs about yourself. Who are you, really, behind the armoring? Write down a few notes to help you remember when you forget.

5. Choose one or two of the Ten Ways to Bring Loving-Kindness Alive in your Daily Life (pages 188-189) to practice over the next week. At the end of the week, journal or discuss how this impacted your daily experience.

6. Explore the lovingkindness practice on page 191 or using the short guided meditation below. What happens when you recognize the secret beauty in others? How does this help you connect to the gold of your own being? What, if anything, shifts or changes when you practice? Journal or share with the group. [Heart Meditation: Taking in the Goodness](#)

CHAPTER 10: The RAIN of Compassion

1. Bearing in mind how our ancestral brains perpetuate the idea of the Unreal Other, take some time to practice the reflection “Bringing Implicit Bias Above the Line” (pages 200 - 201). Laying aside any self-judgement or blame (please!), consider what you learned about your hidden or unseen biases. What was new or surprising? Discuss with the group or journal about what came up for you.

2. Reflect on the questions posed by Valarie Kaur that reflect the I-N of RAIN: *Whom have we not yet tried to love? Can we wonder about and tend to their wounds? Who are the people against whom you’ve hardened your heart? What would it be like to let them in, to think of them as we experience ourselves, a human who has lived a life with the same fears, pains and joys?*

3. Take some moments to reflect on the difference between empathy and compassion, and review the box on page 215. In what areas of your life, if any, do you find yourself experiencing empathy fatigue? (Past or present...this could include caregiving for elderly or ill family members, working with challenging clients, interacting with your partner or child, engaging as an activist in the face of the many injustices in the world, etc.) How might you apply the RAIN practice to create more mindfulness, spaciousness and resilience in relating to these situations? Journal or discuss with the group.

4. Consider how the RAIN process can help us move from pure empathy to the compassionate presence of “After the RAIN”. When you practice, what do you notice? What shifts or changes? If nothing has changed, what might be in the way of resting in natural, compassionate awareness?

5. Drawing from an experience that you reflected on in Question 3, practice with the audio meditation: [The RAIN of Compassion, What is it Like to Be You?](#) As you begin to widen the circles of compassion, what feels most challenging? What feels easy?

6. Every day, most of us encounter suffering, in our own lives, our family...even in the news. These are opportunities for practice! Over the next week, try “On the Streets Compassion”, following the guidelines on page 220. If you get stuck, remember

that self-compassion is at the center of compassion for others. Notice what comes up. What, if anything shifts or changes with the practice. Journal or discuss with your group at the next meeting.

7. There is much discussion in this chapter about racism and white privilege. What was your experience in reading about racism in the context of the Unreal Other? Discuss or journal about your experience of racism and White privilege. If you'd like to take a deeper dive into this topic, you'll find helpful talks, meditations and suggested readings on my website's [Anti-Racism Resource Page](#).

CHAPTER 11: The Four Remembrances

Take a moment to review the Four Remembrances on page 229, and then:

1. Reflect on a recent time when you've found yourself lost in trance (busyness, distraction, blame), and not attending to your loved ones the way you would like. This is the R of RAIN. What are specific ways that you might remind yourself to take an intentional pause?

Practice: *Remembrance: Pause for Presence* (p. 231-232)

2. Allowing whatever is arising in this moment is at the core of the R-A of RAIN. In the boxed reflection on page 235, you will find several suggestions for saying yes to the reality of each moment. Spend some time practicing. Which of these resonate for you? What are other ways that you might say yes to your inner life? Journal or discuss with the group.

Practice: *Remembrance: Say Yes to What is Here* (p. 235)

3. To cultivate, embody, and express lovingkindness, we must practice turning toward love many times a day. This is the N of RAIN...in some way turning toward that which brings nurturing and healing. In the boxed reflection on page 238, you will find many suggestions for *Turning Toward Love*. Spend some time practicing. Which of these resonate for you? How might you personalize these to fit your own experience? Journal or discuss with the group.

Practice: *Remembrance: Turning Toward Love* (p. 238)

4. Resting in Awareness ("After the RAIN") is a sweet opportunity to reap the rewards of RAIN, as it deepens familiarity with loving awareness as the truth of who you are, more than any story you tell about yourself. Journal and/or discuss with the group whatever you are discovering about your true essence.

Practice: *Rest in Awareness* (p. 241)

5. What might you do, in your life, to increasingly bring your practice of wisdom and compassion to your own heart, and to the world? How can you widen the circles to touch the suffering of the earth, non-human beings and those struggling with poverty, social injustice, oppression and/or dis-ease? It can be a big undertaking! Identify one thing that you can do this week to get started.