

HEART MINDED

HOW TO HOLD
YOURSELF
AND OTHERS
IN LOVE

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PART 1

LOVING OWNERSHIP



With great difficulty advancing by millimeters each year, I carve a road out of rock. For millenniums my teeth have wasted and my nails broken to get there, to the other side, to the light and to the open air. And now that my hands bleed and my teeth tremble, unsure in a cavity cracked by thirst and dust, I pause and contemplate my work. I have spent the second part of my life breaking stones, drilling the walls, smashing the doors, removing the obstacles I placed between the light and myself in the first part of my life.

OCTAVIO PAZ, *EAGLE OR SUN?*



In order to harmonize with our hearts, we need to reclaim and retrieve our feeling sensitivities. In part 1, our aim is to do just that. I'll help you work through certain defenses, conflicts, and issues that are blocking you from being heart minded. I will guide you through specific practices to help you work through these obstacles. The practices are simple, gentle, and deeply loving. Little by little, you will be setting in motion a powerful unfolding as you learn to live from the generous clarity of your heart.

1

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HEART

You already know what it feels like to be in your heart. Though you may feel disconnected from it and at times doubt yourself, some very primal part of you knows exactly what it is to be in the seat of your heart. No matter when you made the separation and began living from your head, you know what it is to be in your heart. You do. It is a feeling, not something easily described or put into words. So, I'll ask you to reflect for a moment: What do you know about how it *feels* to arrive in your heart? Get curious. Become porous and listen inside yourself for answers.

The heart is still very much alive and awake within us. And most often, all we need to do to awaken it is to become still and quiet and it will do the rest. When we draw our attention inward and focus on our heart center, it will calm and reassure us, often instantly.

With it comes a softening of our bodies. We let down our guard. We feel a renewal of trust in ourselves, others, and the unfolding of our journey.

Fear begins to fall away. We become more open and peaceful. Thoughts muffle and we begin to *feel*. We are no longer preoccupied

by problems and are filled with a sense of ease. Space opens up within us. Solutions to challenges we may be facing start to reveal themselves without much effort; we fall into harmony with ourselves and our lives.

This may sound too good to be true, but this is exactly what happens when we invite and allow it.

When we inhabit the heart, we awaken to our aliveness. We spontaneously arrive like a bolt of lightning in the present moment, and all our arguments against ourselves and life go quiet. Goodness pushes up through the chaos of our internal world, and we feel lit from within by a light we had no idea was there.

At any time, no matter where you are, no matter what you are doing, you can touch this place in yourself and activate the benefits of the heart space.

It is that simple. It's about shifting and moving yourself into this place of love and acceptance, allowing yourself to be infused with grace.

If we look within, most of us can identify a vision we have, an image of who we want to become, an enhanced version of ourselves—something like You 2.0. This image is often kinder, more loving, openhearted, accepting, inspired, and creative; it's often less self-conscious and more gallant. This self doesn't succumb to fear, anger, or hardship and rises above everything with grace and ease. This vision we have in our mind's eye is what I consider to be the best representation of our heart-minded selves. It is the call of our heart.

Unfortunately, the problem with this fantasy image is that we tend to misuse it. It often becomes something we use to belittle ourselves rather than inspire ourselves. We measure who we are against this fantasy self and feel failure and incompetence when we should be grateful for being gifted this vision of a more loving and able self.

When we see this version as our potential, rather than a reminder of our shortcomings, we can use it as a way—a tool—to help us move in the direction of our light. We can use it to inspire and motivate us to make choices that bring us closer to embodying and personifying this ideation. With each heart-led choice, we move toward our idealized vision; we become more and more heart minded.

The unharnessed mind will keep trying to get in the way of our heart-centered, heart-minded self. Because the mind is fundamentally concerned with keeping us safe, it will keep trying to prevent us from making choices that open us up to the world. And so, we have to keep overriding the mind; we have to keep choosing the heart.

As one of my listeners so beautifully said: “We are all connected and capable of incredible things when we simply allow the flow of this connection, this Love, when we learn how important it is to think with our heart.” And, as Bob Marley says in *Redemption Song* while quoting the great Marcus Garvey, “Emancipate yourself from mental slavery; none but ourselves can free our minds.”

It’s time we undo what stands in our way and unblock what is restricting the flow of our true nature.

2

MIND, MEET HEART

*How can we drop what we are holding on to,
if we do not first look for the hand that is
grasping so tightly?*

Have you ever noticed that you have two distinctly different personae and tend to vacillate between them?

One is very rigid and concerned with the outcome of everything. It worries and frets, its gaze mostly downcast. It doesn't rest easily, even keeps you up at night sometimes. It acts almost like a dog chasing its tail. It circles obsessively over every detail and unknowable outcome, chasing the same things in a constant repeated pattern. It is cunning, convincing, and tyrannical in nature. It is feverish and ungrounded. Changing, morphing, and flopping from one story or idea to the next. This is your unharassed mind. The persona you take on when your mind is not connected to the compass of the heart.

For most of us, that's the dominant persona. But the other aspect of you, as if by some divine intervention, will from time to time slip past the censor of the mind and cheerfully take over your being with its boundless and uninhibited spirit. This personality doesn't worry. Its face is often lifted, looking in wonder

at the shifting sky and swollen moon. Lips curled into a slight smile. It is fluid and flowing, as if it's on a river of unending joy. It acts like water and reflects light. You feel buoyant. This is your heart-centered self, your true self.

Because most of us moved into our mind long, long ago as a way of protecting our hearts, we now live most of our time in that rigid, concerned first persona. Without even realizing it, we allow our minds to stand between us and our true nature. We have no (conscious) idea how much our minds are acting as a defensive block against our soft and tender core, constantly at work trying to find ways to keep us from feeling, from hurt, from heartache. The price we are paying, however, is that we are also kept from accessing source.

Now, each time we feel vulnerable or tender, our mind intervenes, shooing us away from our feelings. Even when we are feeling joy, it stands worrying at the borders, ensuring our pleasure doesn't last. Until we can deal effectively with how our mind responds to our feelings and emotions, we will continue the cycle of rejecting our heart and our freedom.

This rejecting of the heart looks different for everyone. For some, it may mean they close themselves off entirely from loving anyone or hide in judgmental thoughts that create a buffer between themselves and the world. For others, it is manifested in bursts of hurtful anger or in convincing themselves that they are incapable of both feeling and loving. For me, it was revealed through patterns of depression and despairing thoughts. Instead of facing my pain, I would revert to believing I was powerless. These tendencies are symptoms of a mind not in alignment with the heart; they are symptoms of being stuck in a fearful mind that's repeating the same self-deprecating thoughts.

In order to be heart minded, we need to bring the heart and mind into harmony and partnership with one another. For this

to happen, we have to train the mind not to fear and close off from the heart, and instead, serve our heart and implement its wishes. In order to do this, we have to undo our mind's association of feelings of the heart with hurt and harm. In situations that would ordinarily have us retreat or retaliate, we need to remain conscious of what's happening and choose to soften and lean into our heart's center. Each time we practice this softening, we send a new message to the mind that signals that we are safe, willing, and *wanting* to live in this more open, more sensitive way.

Over time, if we are resolute in our intention to step into our heart, our mind will become less rigid in its defenses against feelings and tenderness, and gradually we will become more heart centered.

Remember, we are not trying to pit the heart and mind against one another; we are trying to marry their aptitudes.

Perhaps it would help to spell out how I see their differences:

The mind attaches; the heart lets go.

The mind operates out of fear and distrust;
the heart operates on faith and ease.

The mind is frantic in its functioning; the
heart is slow, deliberate, and peaceful.

The mind thrives on and enjoys problem seeking
and solving; the heart thrives on acceptance of all
things and labels nothing as “wrong” or “right.”

As an example, say you are having a conflict with someone you love. First, your mind attaches to the problem and frantically begins to collect evidence against the other person. Fear and distrust surge through your body. What is hurting and sore

within you gets covered over with anger and reactivity. You create a wall of defense around this soreness by shutting out the other person or trying to punish them. No one gets heard.

The hurt is left unresolved and a chasm begins to open between you and your beloved. The mind gets justified in its defensiveness; the heart of both parties is ignored.

But let's say a conflict ignites between you and your loved one and instead of reacting, you choose to calm yourself. You let go of that frantic, panicked, needing-to-be-right part of you and take a deep breath. You bring your attention into your heart. Let's say you slow down and sit in front of the other person and look into their eyes. You listen, you let them be heard. Let's say you defend nothing and instead choose compassion and deep listening. You don't try to make the other person wrong, but genuinely try to understand. You speak the feelings of your heart. You admit you are hurting, but you do not blame; you soften and express your needs.

What happens then?

Your heart takes over. Your mind in turn comes to meet the heart and begins to work at coming up with loving solutions. Both people benefit and bloom. The relationship strengthens and the love deepens.

Or, as another example, let's say a wave of anxiety washes through you. You notice your mind begin to race and attach to fearful thoughts. The anxiety then morphs into panic, which courses through you and makes you feel like jumping out of your skin. You begin reaching for an escape, resorting to some form of substance or distraction that can act as a numbing balm.

What just happened? Because you avoided your distress, you are only slightly comforted. A part of you remains braced under the distraction, in fear of the next time this could happen. Your mind's instinct to protect and defend has been confirmed.

Your heart is neglected and still aching.

But let's say a wave of anxiety washes through you and instead of looking for an escape route, you go to a quiet room to confront the feeling. You let go of the notion that something is wrong and respond as if something very *right* is taking place. You know some part of you is calling out for your love and attention.

Let's say you close your eyes and open your heart to the bigness of the feeling. You create space around it simply by looking without resistance at its contours. You know the only antidote is self-love and hospitality. The mind stops racing away from the distress, which makes room for the heart to begin healing and soothing the body. Your mind learns a new route. You are gifted with courage and resilience.

The only difference between these scenarios was one simple choice: to remain a bystander as the mind continues to ignore the call of the body and heart or to *act* in ways that support leading from the heart, so the mind can follow.

The two can be wonderful allies if we let them.

As we become heart minded, we begin transforming our human experience from something out of our hands to something very much *in* them. We begin to cultivate joy instead of haphazardly stumbling upon it when we are willing.

Each moment, our bodies are counseling us to make choices that bring us closer to love. The wisdom of the heart and body is there for us, always, if we listen and let it lead.

So, we need to choose to act from the heart. Seems simple enough, right? But there are tremendous barriers stopping us from being able to do this.

Over a lifetime, we have built a huge resistance to surrendering our defenses. So huge, in fact, that we can't even see it. Or we refuse to.

My four-year-old son once said to me, “Mamma, peace never wants to go first.” He was explaining to me his inner struggle in choosing his heart. This inner struggle is present within each of us, starting for most of us when we are as young as two years old. It is hard for us to be in peace, to choose peace, to live in the peace of the heart. Choosing peace requires more than just saying it; we have to learn how it *feels* to live this way.

But before this can happen, we have to tend to the many fractured and injured relationships we have with our body. When we heal the disharmony within, we are free to let go of our suffering and enter the door to our true and at-peace being-ness. When we learn how good it feels, it becomes increasingly easy to choose it.

We start the healing process with a practice I call *Mind, Meet Heart*, which brings the heart and mind into our loving awareness.



PRACTICE Mind, Meet Heart

(Listen to this audio meditation at sarahblondin.com/heart-minded-meditations)

I want you to close your eyes for a moment and move into a state of calm receptivity. I am going to guide you through a short prayer to the mind. Even if you have access to the download, I'd suggest recording yourself reading this practice aloud — or simply read it aloud. I want you to hear these words as your own, allowing them to soak into your being.

Now, place one hand on your heart and another on your forehead; this makes a bridge between your heart and mind.

Dear mind, I bow to you and honor your great powers and the tireless work you do for me. You are a part of me, and I love you. But I wish for you not to continue to look for the things that hurt me and hurt us.