

Your Body's Story

Workbook Part IV

Companion Guide to

NAKED

My Body's Story

by MARCY S. LITTLE

Part IV chapter 10 - Epilogue



MY BODY PRESS
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Chapter 10: Belonging

Before you begin

Take a comfortable seat. Let yourself settle. Bring awareness to your breath. Notice the movement of your thoughts. When you notice yourself getting caught up in a thought, label it “thinking,” and come back to your breath. Now say to yourself, “Right here. Right now,” and notice what happens. Repeat “Right here” inwardly to yourself on the inhale. Repeat, “Right now” inwardly to yourself on the exhale. Continue this until you feel yourself becoming more present.

As you read

As you read, try to notice any changes in how you feel in your body, obvious or subtle. Pause and bring your awareness to your breath any time you notice your body tightening, becoming numb, or your breath becoming shallow. Bring your awareness into your feet or your backside again and invite the pelvis release.

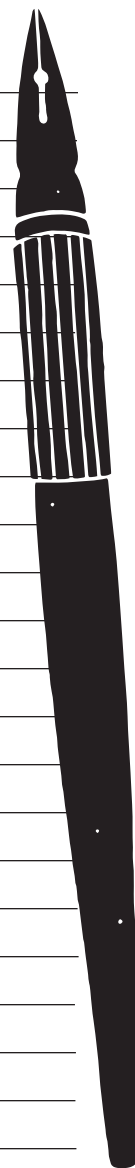
Paying attention

What did you notice in your body as you read (sensations- heat, cold, numbness, pain, contraction, ease, release, relief)? What parts of your body were communicating to you? What images or memories surfaced?

Jot down a few things you noticed.

Journal It

What stood out to you in this chapter? Did any sections speak to you personally? If so, which ones?



Chapter 10: Study questions

Do you have work, a friend or family member, a pastime, a group, or community where you feel you can truly be yourself? What does that feel like in your body?

Is there a place or a group where you don't feel like you belong? Are you in a relationship where you don't feel like you can truly be yourself?

What sensations are you experiencing in your body as you explore these questions? Where are they located? What might they be telling you?

Practice: Creating a Sense of Belonging

Harboring a secret that feels too dangerous to share, keeps us trapped in shame. Shame isolates us and separates us from the tribe of humanity. A tribe we need to survive in this world. It also robs us of feeling that we belong to ourselves.

Go to a place where you feel safe and won't be disrupted. Begin by sitting. Tune in to the breath for several breaths. Notice how your body feels. Turn to the right. Make eye contact with something there and say out loud, "I am safe." Turn to the left. Make eye contact with something there and say out loud, "I am safe." Look up, make eye contact with something there and say "I am safe." Look down at the ground. Make eye contact with something there and say, "I am safe." Come back to center and notice how your body feels. Do this exercise again and say, "This is my body," out loud for each direction. Notice how your body feels. Do this exercise again and say "I belong here," out loud for each direction. Notice how your body feels. (This exercise was adapted from ***My Grandmother's Hands*** by Resmaa Menakem.)

Chapter Eleven: Lessons from Spain

Before you begin

Get comfortable lying down. Let the breath settle and be easy. When you feel quieter, give yourself a body scan. Bring awareness to the top of your head and work your way down slowly through your face, mouth, ears, and neck. Take all the time you need. Then notice your heart space. Move to your shoulders and down the arms, through the wrists and out through the fingertips. Feel tension melting away as you go. Bring awareness to the space between the belly. Then notice the pelvis and hips. Notice the tops of the legs, the knees, the shins, ankles, and feet all the way out through your toes. Come back to your breath and notice how you feel.

As you read

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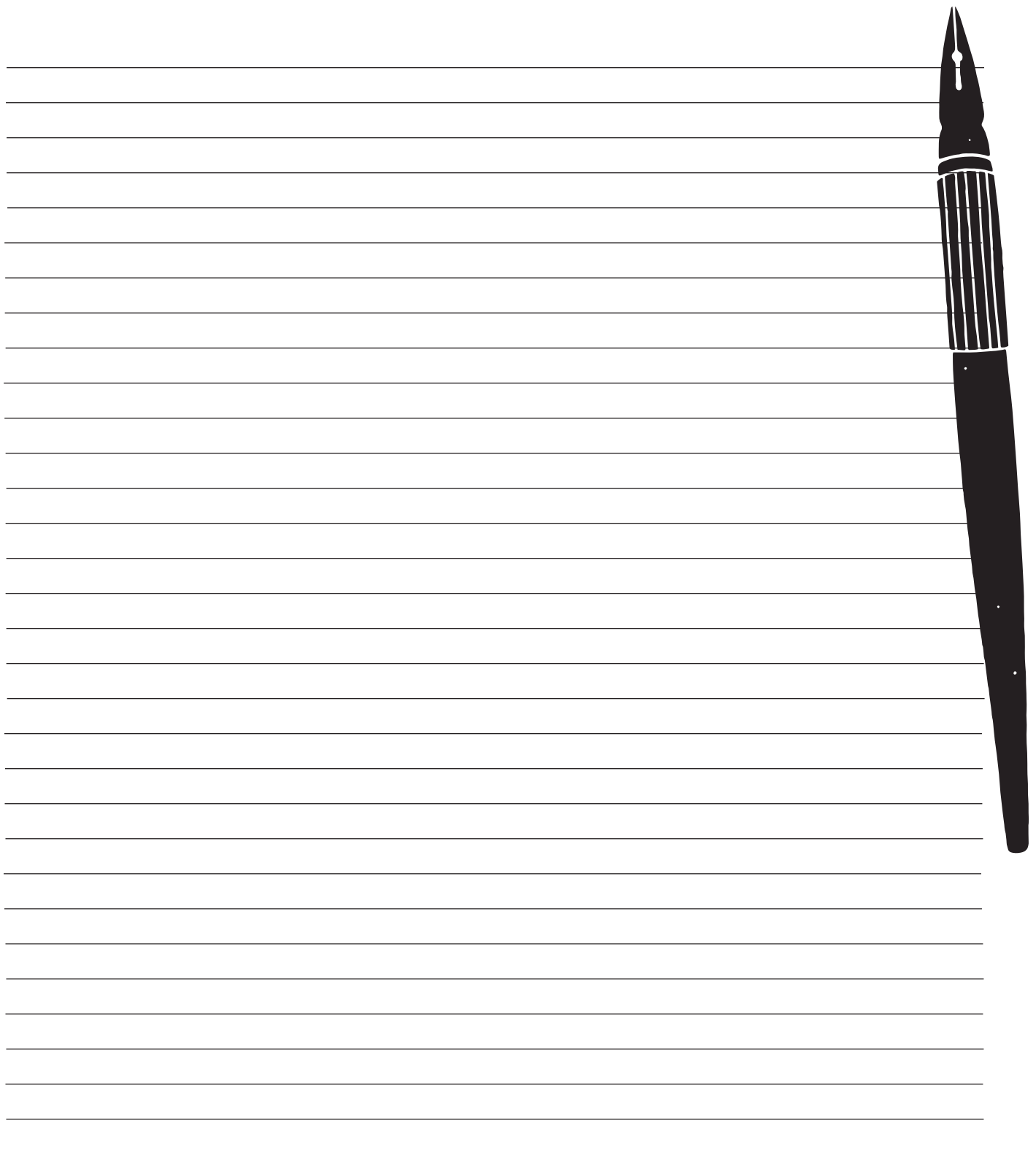
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Chapter Eleven: Study questions

Have you ever been in the middle of lovemaking, and something comes in (a thought, a memory, etc.) that takes you out of your experience? What do you do? Do you ignore what's just happened and just keep going? Do you ever slow down, or ask your partner to stop?

Have you ever been unsure about your sexual orientation? Have you experimented with being sexual with people of different gender orientations? If so, what did you learn about yourself?

What sensations are you experiencing in your body as you explore these questions? Where are they located? What might they be telling you?

Practice: Love Your Vulva

How do you feel about this body you are in? Have you ever looked at your vulva?

Go to a place where you feel safe and won't be disrupted, and you can lie down comfortably. Bring a hand mirror. Take a few moments just to notice the flow of your own breath. When it feels comfortable to do so, take off your pants and underwear. Pause to notice the flow of your breath. Has it changed in any way? Check in with your body. Did anything tighten? Invite any tension in your belly to release. Now use the hand mirror to look at your vulva. Pause to notice any changes in your breath or tension in your body. Notice any thoughts or feelings that arise as you look at this intimate part of your body. Say to yourself, "I am beautiful." Notice what happens. Keep looking at your vulva and repeating "I am beautiful," until you begin to feel how beautiful you are, just as you are. If this doesn't feel accessible on the first try, that's normal. Try it again when you're ready. Then again. Keep at it until it feels real. Feeling beautiful is your birthright.

Chapter Twelve: Love Dance

Before you begin

Take a comfortable seat and align your spine. Invite the pelvis to release down toward the earth, and the spine to be long. Bring your attention to the natural flow of your breath. Bring a hand to rest just below the navel. Notice the rise and fall of the breath here. Take a full breath and forcefully exhale the air in your lungs by quickly drawing the belly toward the spine. This is called **bellows breathing** and it can be deeply cleansing. Allow the breath to exhale forcefully through the nose. Continue this for 15 breaths for the first round. The inhale will happen passively. At the end of your last bellows breath exhale fully. Inhale fully and hold for a moment. Come back to natural breath. Notice how you feel. Repeat 2 more times. Increase the number of bellows breaths each round.

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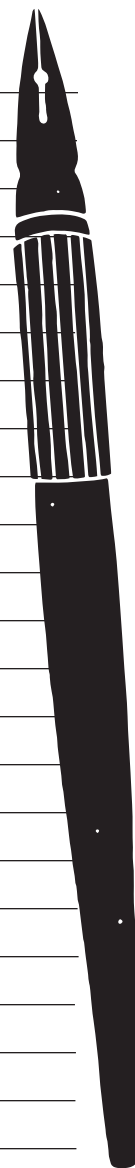
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Chapter Twelve: Study questions

Have you ever felt like what makes you feel sensual, or what gives you sexual pleasure is wrong? Do you ever compare yourself to what you see in the media and feel like you don't measure up? Can you think of an example? How does that feel in your body?

What sensations are you experiencing in your body as you explore these questions? Where are they located? What might they be telling you?

Practice: Get to Know Your Pleasure With Your Partner

If we relied solely on the media to guide us in sex, we would likely rarely feel pleasure when sharing ourselves with our partners. It takes time to learn what feels good in our bodies. Dr Betty Martin, in ***The Wheel of Consent*** teaches a partner game that can really help us, and our partners, get to know our bodies. And it's fun!

Sit opposite your partner in a place where you won't be interrupted. Let yourself settle. Notice the flow of your breath. Take turns doing the following: Set a boundary of where you would like to be touched by your partner (i.e. from the right elbow down to the fingertips). Set a timer for three minutes while your partner explores this part of your body. Now your partner sets the boundary. Now, invite your partner to touch a part of your body that they want to, but it has to be someplace that feels ok to you as well. Set the timer while your partner explores. Switch. Repeat as many times as you would like, changing where you want to be touch and touch. Notice what happens. Do this practice again and again with your partner and see how it evolves.

Chapter Thirteen: And So It Continues...

Before you begin

Take a comfortable seat or lie down. Notice the natural rise and fall of the body with the breath. Bring your awareness to the space of the heart. Notice what is there. Does the heart space feel spacious? Does it feel tight or constricted? Is there a sense of heaviness here? A sense of ease? Now bring both hands to the heart. Invite yourself to feel your own hands as a loving presence to the heart.

As you read

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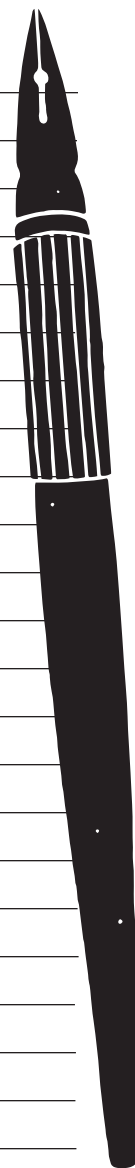
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Chapter Thirteen: Study questions

So many of us carry unexpressed grief in our bodies. Loss is a natural thread in life's intricate fabric. In the experience of trauma, we often lose something precious—an essential part of ourselves. What losses might you be carrying in your heart that still need to be expressed?

Sometimes, before opening our body to our partner, we need to first attend to what is in our hearts. Do unexpressed emotions sometimes stand between you and surrender to pleasure and delight? What helps you to get in touch with and express them?

What sensations are you experiencing in your body as you explore these questions? Where are they located? What might they be telling you?

Practice: Loving Presence

Having a partner whose love you trust is often the very best medicine for our healing.

Sit comfortably across from a partner or person in whose love you trust. Both of you should bring your awareness to the breath. Feel free to close your eyes. Put one hand on your heart and one hand on your belly and notice how that feels. Keep your awareness in the breath. If your eyes are closed, open them now and look into the eyes of the trusted person across from you. Notice any thoughts that arise and watch as they move away. Maintain this gaze. Notice and stay with whatever arises or happens. Tune into your heart and ask it if there is anything it needs to express, if there are any feelings that need to be felt. Give them time to show up if they are not right on the surface. Let them know this is a safe space to feel. Stay with yourself, check in with your partner as needed.

Next Steps

Take a moment to congratulate yourself on taking this journey with yourself. It took tremendous courage. What is next? What in you still feels like it needs care or accompaniment? What next step might you take to continue to support yourself on this healing journey?

Jot a few ideas down here:

Practice: Victory Stance Reclamation

Have you ever noticed how athletes do the victory stance when they have just won at something? Their arms shoot up into the air in a “V” over their heads.

Stand with your feet a little wider than hip width apart and find your breath. Notice what is present in you. Now, raise your hands to a “V” above your head. It is said that you cannot feel sad or depressed when your body takes this shape. Let your heart radiate down through your feet and up through your fingertips. Say, “This is mine.”