

12-2025

The Giving and the Receiving: Spiritual Traditions and Teaching, AEPL Summer Conference 2025, Estes Park, CO.

Bhushan Aryal

Delaware State University, baryal@desu.edu

Beverly Brannon

University of Cincinnati, beverly.brannan@uc.edu

Geri DeLuca

gerideluca228@gmail.com

Nate Mickelson

New York University, mickelsonjn@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://trace.tennessee.edu/jaepl>

Laurence Musgrove

Part of the [Creative Commons Commons](#), Curriculum and Instruction Commons, Curriculum and Social

Inquiry Commons, Disability and Equity in Education Commons, Educational Methods Commons,

Educational Psychology Commons, English Language and Literature Commons, Instructional Media

See next page for additional authors

Design Commons, Liberal Studies Commons, Other Education Commons, Special Education and Teaching

Commons, and the Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons

Recommended Citation

Aryal, Bhushan; Brannon, Beverly; DeLuca, Geri; Mickelson, Nate; Musgrove, Laurence; Rajan, Kristin B.; and Zytoskee, Adrian Matt (2025) "The Giving and the Receiving: Spiritual Traditions and Teaching, AEPL Summer Conference 2025, Estes Park, CO.," *The Journal of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning*: Vol. 30 , Article 9.

<https://doi.org/10.7290/jaepl308YcQ>

Available at: <https://trace.tennessee.edu/jaepl/vol30/iss1/9>

This article is brought to you freely and openly by Volunteer, Open-access, Library-hosted Journals (VOL Journals), published in partnership with The University of Tennessee (UT) University Libraries. This article has been accepted for inclusion in The Journal of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning by an authorized editor. For more information, please visit <https://trace.tennessee.edu/jaepl>.

The Giving and the Receiving: Spiritual Traditions and Teaching, AEPL Summer Conference 2025, Estes Park, CO.

Authors

Bhushan Aryal, Beverly Brannon, Geri DeLuca, Nate Mickelson, Laurence Musgrove, Kristin B. Rajan, and Adrian Matt Zytoskee

A VIEW FROM THE CONFERENCE

The Giving and the Receiving: Spiritual Traditions and Teaching, AEPL Summer Conference 2025, Estes Park, CO.

Conference Organizers: Laurence Musgrove and Joonna Smitherman Trapp

Writing Our Spiritual Autobiographies



Editor's note: This past year, AEPL held its first full, in-person conference since the pandemic at our beloved Estes Park location in the Rockies. To commemorate the return of this staple event for our organization, here's a snapshot of one of the workshops, led by immediate past AEPL Chair, Geraldine DeLuca, "Writing Our Spiritual Autobiographies," in which DeLuca asked attendees to consider, where and how did we begin, spiritually? What sustains us now? DeLuca provided three prompts by Wallace Stevens, Karen Armstrong, and Audre Lorde to aid attendees in their reflection and writing processes. These prompts appear at the end of this section.

My Dad's Playful God

Bhushan Aryal

In June 2025, on a bright summer morning in Estes Park, Colorado— in the lap of the mountains, like the Himalayas of my childhood— Geraldine DeLuca asked us, the workshop participants, to write our spiritual biographies.

She said,

“Think of a formative spiritual experience you remember, and write about that.”

The assumption was clear: we were all spiritual beings, each holding something tender in the caverns of memory, waiting to be excavated and brought to light.

Everyone began to write— we would soon have to share our stories.

Here is what I wrote:

I remember my father reading *Krishna-Charitra*,
that old, revered family book, a sacred abode for gods.

Inside our hillside house in western Nepal, not far from Resunga, Ruru, and Lumbini— lands long enchanted by seekers and saints— he would read by fire-side on cool evenings after dinner.

My siblings, my mother, and I gathered close, listening as he recited the poetic lines.

Stories of Krishna’s mischievous boyhood, his fearless heart and quiet wisdom— a child-god who danced, teased, and guided.

My father’s unique voice, hovering between epic poetry and village song, held us still in wonder.

Though the stories were serious, the telling was never severe.

Laughter sat beside reverence, like Krishna himself hiding in the reeds.

Now I am a father, with teenage sons and a face that mirrors his.

I’ve devoured books upon books, listened to sacred chants and philosophical debates, read sermons, sutras, songs.

On my bookshelf sit the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Dhammapada*, the *Bible*, and the lyrical Sufi sermons.

They do not argue with one another. Though some may fight in their names, to

me they are not contradictions— only different versions, different degrees of the same longing.

All point to spirit.

All pulse with light.

And perhaps that light comes from the god my father offered— a playful god, and the joyful, loving storyteller who gave him voice.

Books: My Paths to Spirituality

Beverly Brannan

Books were my first path to spirituality. They whisked me with words, images, and ideas to new worlds, new people, and new ways of thinking and being. They allowed me to live in different countries, understand strange cultures, and people; they allowed me to dwell there, dream there, to be alive and breathe there, to touch, smell, hear, and see worlds I had never imagined. They were a spiritual place for me. They transformed me

Peace fills me when I read. I follow paths that lead me to new religions, new ways of thinking about life's big questions, and the small questions as well. I trace new roads to strange worlds both real and fictional. I travel to the past and to the future, to places real and imagined. I am an explorer.

My father recognized my love of reading as a child and he encouraged me. He had bookcases built into by bedroom walls and allowed me unlimited access to any books I wanted to read. Mythology, history, poetry, fairy tales and novels lined my bookcases. As a young girl, I discovered Nancy Drew and joined the Nancy Drew Book Club. I waited excitedly each month for the two new mystery novels to arrive in the mail. Nancy Drew introduced me, a young girl in the early 1960s, to a world where women were self-assured, and adventurous. They didn't follow the mid-century rules about the way that young women were supposed to behave. Nancy Drew introduced me to feminism and to the spirituality of strong and brave women.

I lean into books for peace, strength, and knowledge. They led me to my interest in Buddhism. When I was very young, I read Herman Hesse's *Siddhartha*, and through the years I have read it again and again. It became the first step on a longer path to more books about Buddhism that have changed my way of thinking and being. Those books include *The Art of Happiness* by his Holiness the Dalai Lama and Howard C. Cutler and *The Art of Living* by Thich Nhat Hanh. They led to my implementing Buddhist beliefs into my life.

Although not a traditional book on meditation and Buddhism, Twyla Tharp's *Keep It Moving: Lessons for the Rest of Your Life* has given me wonderful insights on how to use meditation and movement to cure the fear of the aging process. She taught me how to live a life of purpose no matter my age. She taught me that dance is a form of meditation. It liberates the body and mind to experience the joys of being alive. When we dance, we celebrate our bodies and our souls. We become aware of the wondrous gift that living is.

Reading itself is a type of meditation for me. Books take me into a different realm, both physically and mentally, one where my problems fade, where my mind and body relax and become peaceful. Books lead me to understand, sympathize, and experience more love both towards the people I know and those I have never met. They show me that there isn't one universal truth or way to love. They give me self-forgiveness and assist me in forgiving others as well.

If Twyla Tharp taught me to move, Alan Lightman taught me to waste time. A physicist and novelist at MIT, Lightman's books, *In Praise of Wasting Time* and *The Transcendent Brain: Spirituality in the Age of Science*, made me realize that "wasting time" and reconnecting with nature are essential to our mental, emotional, and creative well-being. We need spaces in our day to let our mind wander so that we may make new discoveries about ourselves and the wondrous natural world that surrounds us. He reminds us to take walks and rediscover that nature can heal our minds and souls.

Because of books, I'm never alone in life. They're my beloved friends and guides. They don't judge or condemn me when I make mistakes. Instead, they lead me to become a better person, more understanding of others, more patient, kinder. They teach me always, always to stay open to new people, to grab life and live it, to laugh and dance and make new friends. They teach me not to fear life, but to see it as sacred, a place filled with pages and pages of new adventures, ideas, friends, and to embrace a spirituality of goodness for all.

Tale of an Italian American Buddhist

Geraldine DeLuca

My first memory is of the priest's back. He is facing the altar, wearing an iridescent white vestment and he is holding up the Eucharist. People get up from their seats to kneel at the altar to receive communion. I leave my seat and kneel beside them.

The priest puts the host on my tongue, and I let it dissolve in my mouth. I say to myself, "My Lord and My God."

God was everywhere, I was told, and he knew everything. He was in my head, and he could hear me. Was it God the father or Jesus who was listening? Jesus was certainly the more compassionate of the two, but what must he think of my paltry, shameful thoughts?

The nuns at Wednesday afternoon catechism told us that if our parents didn't go to mass on Sunday, they would burn in hell for all eternity.

"Oh, for crying out loud," said my mother. "Religion is for children," said my father. He was reading Bertrand Russell.

So why was I going to catechism? To church? For the family. *La Famiglia*. For my Italian grandmother, for my father's religious sister. For the girls' white communion dresses and veils, for the boys' tiny blue suits. For the godmothers in their dresses and high heels, for the photographs outside the church where everyone smiled. For the ice cream cake in the afternoon.

All of this had its place, but still, if I embraced it, I would live with the flames of Hell flickering around me. Eventually, at age 15, I let go. I cut mass. My cousin and I went to a soda fountain and drank egg creams. We kept a pack of cigarettes hidden behind a table and smoked together for an hour. One day, my Uncle Tony saw us walking along Bay Parkway when we should have been in church. He told my mother, but what could she say? She wasn't in church either. And my Uncle Tony was a bitter man. He made everybody miserable. My mother knew that.

II

As a young adult, I sat next to people in my department who I knew had a spiritual practice, and I would wonder, how could these smart people believe? What did they believe in? Did they really believe in Jesus, whoever he was?

III

Years later, I discover Karen Armstrong and this passage: "Faith [is] not about belief but about practice. Religion is not about accepting twenty impossible propositions before breakfast but about doing things that change you. It is a moral aesthetic, an ethical alchemy. . ." (*The Spiral Staircase*, 2004). It is taking responsibility for your body, your mind, your behavior. It is "First do no harm."

Eventually, I go to yoga classes. I remember sitting in my yoga class, resting between poses, relaxed in my body, or my "body/heart/mind" as some of my Buddhist friends like to say, and wishing that my students could feel that way: if they could learn to take stock of their physical and spiritual condition; feel their feelings, without being overwhelmed by their families and their teachers and their part-time or even full-time jobs.

At the beginning of yoga class, we meditated for five minutes. At the end of class, we lay on the floor in *Savasana*, resting pose. We bowed to the teacher and to each other and said *Namaste*. With dignity, we rolled up our mats. This was not about God. It was about a community of people committing to caring for themselves and one another, noticing how they felt, respecting their minds, their communities.

From yoga I moved to weekly meditation—and then I became a member of a Buddhist sangha. I learned about the Three Jewels: the *Buddha*—who was not a god but a smart and curious man who left his palace of privilege to discover that we are all subject to sickness, aging, and death. His insights became the *Dharma*, or the teachings; and his followers became the *Sangha*, or the community. “Life,” said the Buddha, “is full of suffering, full of a pervasive sense of dissatisfaction.” And why do we suffer? Because we are subject to greed, hatred, and delusion. We spend our lives battling our desires, burnishing our image, looking for power over others. Over and over, we need to let go. “No self; no problem,” said the monk. Big smile. Let go.

And so I notice: I am jealous, I feel worthless, I resent that other person. But I can let it go. Let it go. All of us in the sangha come to understand this. We don’t always conquer our suffering, but we recognize that there is a path. I learn the *Brahma Viharas*: the “Four Immeasurables”: loving kindness; compassion; joy in the good fortune of others; and equanimity—sitting calmly with what cannot be changed—which doesn’t mean being acquiescent, but just not losing one’s mind.

I learn to meditate. Sometimes I am peaceful; sometimes restless; sometimes I forget what I’m doing there. It’s all part of the experience. I keep sitting. Keep breathing. Ah, how angry I feel; ah, how lonely; how fearful. I send love to those I love and to those I don’t.

I smile at strangers in the street. I have a weekly meeting with other aging people. We talk about illness and death. It is okay to die. I read the newspaper, which is filled with stories of unbearable suffering. The thought of such suffering terrifies and enrages me. I do what I can, which, I understand, will never be enough. I keep sitting. I listen to others.

I have a spiritual life that I can fully embrace. “And it will take me home.”

On Welcome

Nate Mickelson

The Bible I was given on my confirmation included full-color illustrations of Old and New Testament stories. The pictures were printed on thick glossy paper in clusters separated from the stories themselves. I remember one image per story, though they may have been arranged more like short comic

strips. The pictures kept me company during Sunday services, especially during Reverend Miller's sermons, which, as a confirmed member of the congregation, I no longer had permission to bypass downstairs in the nursery. At twelve, fifteen minutes of one person talking seemed endless.

Church was an essential routine in my family. We attended every week, first Sunday school, then the service, then coffee after, at the Berta A. Penny United Methodist Church in Kemmerer, WY (population 3,000 and shrinking; elevation 7,000 feet). My father read from the Gospel and helped make pancakes on Mother's Day. My mother played the piano and organized Vacation Bible School in the summer. We sat in the same pew each week, surrounded by the same people, wearing "sprucy" Sunday clothes, as my mom called them—nice, but not elaborate.

I'll get back to my Bible, but it's important to first explain what it felt like to be part of the church community. There were thirty people on busy Sundays, maybe fifty for the Christmas pageant and Easter egg hunt. Similarly sized groups of Lutherans, Episcopalians, Evangelical Free parishioners and Baptists had their services nearby. A larger group of Catholics and a much larger group of Mormons met across town. Inside our yellow brick sanctuary, we knew one another every which way. No one pried but everyone listened. We smiled a lot. Some of my teachers attended, kids I knew from school but wouldn't have called friends, families that had less than mine and at least one that had a lot more.

All of this is to say that the church was a community. It was always there, and the people who made it up were always there, too. There must have been disagreements and pressures, but they didn't register. There must have been guilt and shame and sin and discomfort, too, but they haven't lasted. Neither has the religion, really, apart from some of the stories and the occasions they provided for people to come together.

I remember the feeling of looking at two pictures in my confirmation Bible, in particular. In one, Joseph is looking up from the well at his brothers plotting and eating around the edge, using his bright coat as a picnic blanket. Joseph's clothes are torn and dirty. He looks scrawny down in the well, but his face is bright. In the other picture, Samson is destroying a temple. He's shirtless, extremely muscular, bleeding from the eyes. He'll die with the rest as soon as the pillars collapse.

Joseph and Samson are the heroes of their stories. Their suffering anticipates Christ's, I've since learned, and their redemptions—Joseph's when he forgives his brothers and Samson's when he sacrifices himself—model human capacities. At twelve, I'm not sure I was so concerned with suffering or redemption or forgiveness. Instead, I was an anxious, husky, gay kid, bored in church, and attracted to pictures of two beautiful men. Joseph and Samson kept me company. My parents must have seen me "reading" their stories while Reverend Miller spoke. Lots of

people in the church must have noticed I was queer, too. But no one asked, and no one drew attention to my weight or anxiety or any other difference, either.

I think it's unlikely that the congregation would have embraced me had I been more open about my desire. As caring as we were, there were limits I was staying within by remaining closeted in the ways I did. I'm sorry for the chances I missed to be more visible. All the same, the church gave me Joseph and Samson when they gave me my Bible. They also gave me the routine of community. To put it more directly, they welcomed me into a practice of being together where everyone's being there, however they were, mattered for everyone else.

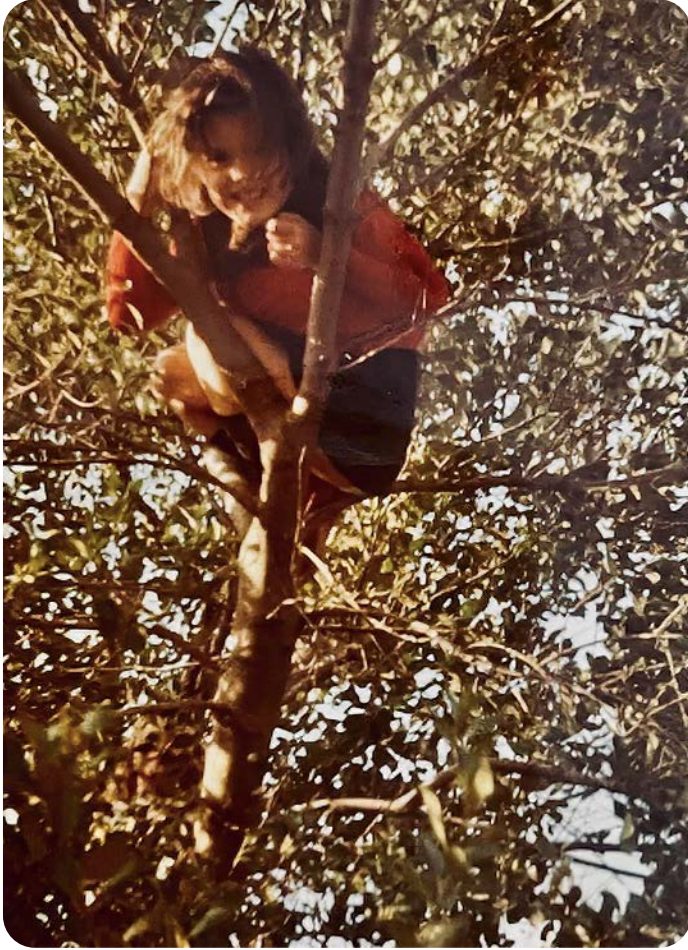
An Anti-Spiritual Autobiography

Laurence Musgrove

I make no claim to originality
in the causes and the effects
of my devotion to fear, but
among the evidence you may
recognize is the comfort I find
in the solo activities of reading,
writing, observing, listening,
standing dark in conversation,
letting others have the floor,
nodding, agreeing, perhaps
offering a joke or wisecrack,
a quick form of ego display
to assure others I'm harmless,
because even fear has a thirst
for ego, big on isolating itself
from conflict and worry,
desirous of safe friendships,
which, while few, can be lasting
because once the fearful know
where safety is and the brave
hang out, they will visit often,
drink in the shine of brighter spirits.

Divinity in Nature: Peace in Presence

Kristin Rajan



For as long as I can remember, I believed in something higher than me, something bigger than me. How could I not? I grew up by the ocean. I visited mountains. I spent a lot of time sitting in trees. I saw butterflies, hummingbirds, cardinals. I would often stare directly into a dragon fly's eyes for what felt to be an infinity. (I do this whenever I can. Try it! It will blow your mind.)

Seeing the beauty surrounding me, nature was where I found the divine.

My parents divorced when I was eight years old, and I spent Sundays with Dad. He would take me to a different place of worship on our day together: churches, synagogues, temples—a myriad of religious gatherings for the year

of Sundays he spent seeking both faith and solace. I think he was looking for something to believe in. I confess (because this seems a safe space for confession), I didn't want to go to those places on our Sundays together. I would have preferred to go to the beach or the woods. But I found a common thread in those religious institutions we visited. Within those different walls, I felt love, compassion, connection.

But I felt these elements most when sitting in a tree, or by a lake, or walking on the seashore. Outside of any walls, I felt most connected to something higher AND connected to everyone, seen and unseen. In nature, I felt peace, love, joy, freedom. Like the tree, I was rooted, yet bending with winds. Nature taught me to flow with change, to release my grasp. Nature comforted me during my parents' divorce and taught me gratitude that my father shared his search for consolation.

Nature consistently sustained me.

Later, as I read about different spiritual traditions, I was drawn to Buddhism. I was not surprised to learn that Siddhartha Gautama found enlightenment beneath a tree. Seeking the peace he felt under the apple tree of his youth, he sought the tree again to find peace from his suffering as an adult. Under the Bodhi tree, he realized that he was not alone in his suffering. He connected to others through his presence with the tree. The tree taught release, detachment, the path to peace.

I believe the tree was key to the Buddha's enlightenment.

I believe nature is key to our enlightenment as well. Nature teaches us release—to let go of fear, anxiety, sadness, depression, which often stem from ego and a movement away from the present, a movement into constructed stories of self and others, many delusory and destructive. I suppose nature teaches us MOST to be present, and in the present there is peace.

Nature is the peace of storylessness.

Now, I think my view on spirituality has moved from believing in something greater than me to believing that greater force is within me, always accessible. I think each moment offers an opportunity to turn within and tap peace, love, connection—all lessons from nature. I feel I am an extension of nature. I am one with the tree. My spirituality is not doctrine or preaching. It's simply being.

This spirituality is about recognizing and respecting life surrounding and within—feeling gratitude for all the gifts of this journey, the beautiful and even the painful, which teach the most.

This spirituality is enriching, not depleting. Accepting, not judging. Loving, not hating.

Nature is my higher force, teaching me again and again to be present. And in this presence, I feel love, compassion, connection. My spirituality is nature—within me, around me. When I am still, I breathe into the divine.

Resiliency vs. Uncertainty

Adrian Matt Zytoskee

In my twenties, I worked a sketchy job with an old leathery man called Hollywood. No one would tell me how he earned this nickname, but they weren't shy in describing him as "son of a bitch" who was "meaner than a wet panther." Apparently, he'd survived a war, a short stint in prison, and the death of his wife. Since that time, he'd pretty much alienated all family and friends with anger and vindictiveness. One evening when Hollywood was over an hour late returning from a task in the forest, the foreman remarked, "I'm not worried. Nothing can kill that guy . . . he's resilient as hell!"

Something about this statement bothered me at the time but, honestly, it wasn't until recently when talking with my friend Bill that I recalled the description of Hollywood as "resilient" and finally understood why I'd been bothered. Bill had said, "You know, people often think of resilience as 'grit' or toughing out hardships in silence. In my opinion, resilience is asking for help and learning to rely on whatever resources are available. It's a practice not a destination." Hollywood hadn't been resilient; he'd been mean, miserable, and stubborn.

After this revelation, I asked myself why resilience has been on my mind? The answer is because I need it right now. Life has felt hard. An emotional grind. Don't get me wrong, I have an abundance of blessings, and my problems are high-end compared to many, but this doesn't change the fact that I'm living beneath a blanket of uncertainty on many levels (personal and global). And, as we know, uncertainty can be incredibly stressful. In fact, research has demonstrated that facing possible pain is far more stressful than facing known pain. So, I've been attempting to practice resilience in a few ways.

First, I share my struggles with people I trust: a counselor (which I recognize is an incredible privilege), a close buddy, my lovely spouse, my parents, even a colleague who I know will understand. I've felt some relief after each of these conversations and, often times, they share their own struggles. As a result, I feel less alone. Less broken.

Another move I've been practicing is acceptance. Before she died from cancer, my friend Emily gave me a bracelet with the words *shikata ga nai* engraved on it. This Japanese expression means, "It cannot be helped" and is used to describe a type of deep acceptance that helps preserve dignity in the face of unavoidable tragedy or injustice. For Emily, it did not mean that she was okay with having cancer. Not at all. But she accepted that it was what it was and that beyond taking measure to treat it, she could not change reality. Though I am in NO way comparing my situation to Emily's, I find acceptance of what is—even when I

greatly dislike it—to be relieving. I don't have to like something to accept that it is what has to be faced . . . that it cannot be helped.

Also in my twenties, I worked for a Jewish woman in her late eighties who'd survived a Nazi concentration camp as a young girl and had gone on to devote her life to helping others heal from trauma. Unlike Hollywood, she seemed always to be laughing, and people adored her. I asked her once how she had managed to stay so grounded. In her slight German accent, she smiled and replied, "First of all, I'm not always grounded. But there are two things I've consistently done that help immensely. I find purpose in helping others, which often keeps the hamsters out of my head. The second is that I've always found ways of blowing off steam and having fun even in tough times." Reflecting back on this conversation, I realize now just how good her advice was—wisdom that's been echoed in a lot of research (e.g., people with purpose tend to live longer). I've discovered that the more oriented I am to being of service to others (whether professionally or personally), the less time I spend worrying about myself.

I've also grown resilience through blowing off steam and having fun. I could tell you about the more traditional ways I go about this such as taking long hikes with my dog, practicing martial arts, and even screaming into a pillow when I reach the red zone. But I'd rather tell you about taking my kids to Tournament of Kings, a Las Vegas dinner show that involved medieval characters battling on horses and an array of fantastic explosions. For over an hour, we ravaged our meals like ruffians and cheered and jeered and laughed. I hadn't expected to enjoy it so much, but as we strolled out afterward—my voice hoarse from taunting—I realized how much I'd needed a break from being a responsible adult. I'm not "prescribing" a Las Vegas show for resilience, but you get the idea.

Another resiliency practice is the one I struggle with most: physical health. When I'm eating cleanly (foods not full of preservatives and that don't destroy my gut), exercising daily, avoiding excesses of (or abstaining from) alcohol, and getting solid sleep, I function better. No doubt. It's a simple concept, yet far from easy to apply, particularly when "having fun" and/or temporarily escaping pain conflicts with "bodily care." Fortunately, every day provides a new opportunity for me to try again.

Last, though far from least, is spirituality. This is a tricky one to discuss because its shape and essence vary so radically from person to person. For me, it's helpful to make spirituality a type of practice through regular meditations (sound healing is my "jam"), prayers, intentional journaling, and even reaching out to people I know could use support. I also write and talk (even out loud sometimes) to people in my life who have passed away. I'm hesitant to share this, but the truth is that it grounds me. A lot.

Another truth is that, on any given day, I might do all these things OR none of them—which is why resilience is a practice and not a “perfect.” It takes effort and sometimes my efforts are far better than others (laughably so).

Ultimately, nothing I do is going to erase uncertainty from my life. It’s part of the human experience. But how I cope with it can improve through practicing resiliency.

Writing Prompts

Wallace Stevens, “The Snow Man,” Poetry Magazine, 1921

One must have a mind of winter
To regard the frost and the boughs
Of the pine-trees crusted with snow;

And have been cold a long me
To behold the junipers shagged with ice,
The spruces rough in the distant glitter

Of the January sun; and not to think
Of any misery in the sound of the wind,
In the sound of a few leaves,

Which is the sound of the land
Full of the same wind
That is blowing in the same bare place

For the listener, who listens in the snow,
And, nothing himself, beholds
Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.

Karen Armstrong, The Spiral Staircase. Anchor Books, 2004

Hyam Maccoby . . . told me that in most traditions, faith was not about belief but about practice. Religion is not about accepting twenty impossible propositions before breakfast, but about doing things that change you. It is a moral aesthetic, an ethical alchemy. If you believe in a certain way, you will be transformed. The myths and laws of religion are not true because they conform

to some metaphysical, scientific, or historical reality but because they are life enhancing. They tell you how human nature functions, but you will not discover their truth unless you apply these myths and doctrines to your own life and put them into practice. The myths of the hero, for example, are not meant to give us historical information about Prometheus or Achilles—or for that matter, about Jesus or the Buddha. Their purpose is to compel us to act in such a way that we bring out our own heroic potential.

Audre Lorde. "Poetry Is Not a Luxury," Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches. 1984; 2007.

As [our feelings and the honest exploration of them] become known and accepted to ourselves, they become sanctuaries and fortresses and spawning grounds for the most radical and daring of ideas, the house of difference so necessary to change. . . . Right now, I could name at least ten ideas I would have once found intolerable or incomprehensible and frightening, except as they came after dreams and poems. This is not idle fantasy but the true meaning of "it feels right to me." We can train ourselves to respect our feelings, and to discipline (transpose) them into a language that matches those feelings, so they can be shared. And where that language does not yet exist, it is our poetry which helps to fashion it. Poetry is not only dream or vision, it is the skeleton architecture of our lives.