

Empower Your Magical Self

with a

One-Month Habit Break

A Handbook for

Reclaiming Sovereignty in 30 Days

Acknowledgments & Gratitude

This book, along with my life, would not be possible without my mother, Sheryl. I'm infinitely grateful to her.

I'd also like to thank all the guests who've been on my podcast, Empower Your Magical Self, and all those who will be guests in the future. Each of them has been instrumental in helping me craft an empowered, magical life, and I'm grateful to them for that and for taking time to talk with me about magic and its role in their lives.

My hope is to help others empower their magical selves in the way my guests have helped me empower mine.

Introduction

“We don’t do compulsive behaviors because we lack willpower. We do them because it’s the only way we know to self-soothe. Soothing is an instinctual behavior, not a moral one.” — Dr. Nicole Lepera

If you’re reading these words, you probably have a habit you’d prefer was no longer part of your life. Or maybe you’d just like to feel as if that habit wasn’t an absolutely compulsory part of your life.

Empower Your Magical Self With a One Month Habit Break (which I’ll refer to from here on as “the Project”), is for you.

It doesn’t matter what time of year it is. It doesn’t matter what your habit is, or whether you want to break the habit utterly or simply take a month-long break from it. Whatever your motivations and goals are, you deserve a LOT of credit for taking the first steps. Realizing that a habit is interfering with your joy and potential personal evolution is huge.

The Project exists to support your effort to empower yourself by breaking a habit that’s holding you back from your potential.

Making Changes For Your Well-Being is Magic

Though I maintain that one-size-fits-all is a lie, I do believe there are changes all of us can make that will help us live happier lives that are more in alignment with our values. Changing our habits is possibly the most powerful thing we can do to improve the

quality of our lives and empower our magical selves. I hope my experiences can help you.

So, What's the "Magical Self" Part About?

I think and write about magic a lot, but it's not necessary that you "believe in magic" to benefit from the Project.

I have a podcast called **Empower Your Magical Self**, and in each episode I talk with a guest who has helped me empower my own magical self in some way. They're writers and psychics and healers and witches and musicians of all stripes, and during our conversations I ask each of them for their personal definition of magic. It's been fascinating to hear their answers.

One thing all their definitions have in common? They all say magic is something that's available to every one of us, not just a select few with the right DNA or bank account figures.

To me, my "Magical Self" is that part of me that has overcome or somehow escaped being programmed by the larger culture as to how to be and how to think. My magical self is the part of me that wonders about the world and my place in it with a sense of awe and joy, but doesn't presume to have all the answers - and doesn't necessarily want all the answers. It's the part of me that loves the mystery of it all. It's the part of me that's not world-weary and doesn't immediately ask about everything's monetary worth then snark "must be nice" under my breath.

Honestly, it's the eternal part of me, that part that's connected to the Divine. That's my Magical Self, and my mission in this lifetime (and likely beyond) is to empower that Magical Self in whatever way I can, and to help others do the same.

And What Do You Mean by “Sovereignty”?

“Sovereignty” is a concept I’d never given much thought until I started to seriously address the problems in my life in a comprehensive way - and that’s actually kind of telling. I was making my perceived victimhood the main storyline of my life, so “sovereignty” never entered my mind.

In fact, I’d sometimes see it used in the way I’m using it now and be baffled, and frankly a little annoyed.

So I’ll explain what it means to me, and ask that you hear me out.

As I mean it, being sovereign is the opposite of being a victim. It’s knowing that you are the ruler of your own world and accepting your fate as the hero of your own story - it’s knowing that ultimately no one’s coming to save you, and coming to a place where that’s actually totally ok with you. It’s knowing that bad things have blindsided you in the past and will again, but you’ve got what it takes to deal with whatever happens. It means not outsourcing your emotions and not relying on the outer world for approval and satisfaction.

Being sovereign of your own life in no way negates the necessity of help and community and alliances - all rulers need those! But in the end, I am the Queen and this is my Queendom. I’ll make of it what I will.

Once I started living my life mindfully, it became pretty easy to see what habits were contributing to my sovereignty (getting plenty of exercise and fresh air, carefully

monitoring what I consume on all fronts, etc) and which were not (gossiping, watching cable news all day, drinking coffee and booze, just to name a few).

Why do the Project?

There are as many reasons to take a break from a habit as there are habits that impede someone's sovereignty. Maybe your motivation is to improve your health, or save money, or get more control over your life. Regardless of the reason, deciding to take a Habit Break for a month (whether it's January or four random weeks in spring or any other time) is an excellent way to empower yourself for a fresh start.

Quick fixes are almost always temporary, despite what popular culture wants us to believe. Depending on your perspective, a month can seem like eternity or the blink of an eye. Either way, a month is a good length of time to get a bit of distance from a habit and better understand its place in your life. It's also a good length of time to give yourself a running start at ending your attachment to a habit permanently - if that's what you want to do.

Who Is the Project for?

This Habit Break Project was created for anyone who wants to stop - or take a temporary break from - a habit that is in some way diminishing their joy.

More accurately, it's for all the *disparate selves* within anyone who wants to take a Habit Break.

Quick question: How's your relationship with yourself? How about with all the different parts of yourself - physical self included? Do you ever find yourself thinking or saying, "I

hate my *fill in the blank* (hair/stomach/eyes/thighs/etc)" or "I hate how I *fill in the blank* (am so lazy/laugh so loudly/always assume the worst/etc)"?

What if that hated part of you was a human family member? Would it be ok, in the scheme of things, to go around declaring how you hate your sister, and your mom's ok, but really your brother is your favorite? Because, on some level, each part of you that you pit against every other part is as much an entity as your "actual" family members.

Consider all the different parts of yourself as a family for a moment. Then ask yourself the question: which type of family is happier and stronger - the one where the members are all gossiping about and saying hateful things about one another constantly and always pitting one against the other, or the one where the members are direct with one another about their needs and problems, and seek to be supportive of one another? Which family would you want to be a member of?

Words have power, and in this project we're seeking to empower, not to disempower ourselves, ourselves. When we speak ill of (parts of) ourselves, we're undermining our cohesion as a sovereign, self-determining entity.

When it comes to stopping a habit, there's usually (at least one) disconnect within ourselves. So often it comes down to miscommunication between disparate parts of ourselves that hold fundamentally different beliefs about the habit in question (for example, the inner teenager who resists giving up smoking because she feels so cool with a cigarette in her hand vs your highest self who just wants you to be healthy and not die over a teenager's "cool" fetish).

So one of our main tasks for the project is to bring those parts to some sort of agreement. It doesn't have to be blissful enthusiasm, but we want all your parts to at least be on the same team, metaphorically speaking.

Here's an example from my life.

Last year, when I was 50, I decided to (re)learn how to rollerskate. I hadn't been good at it as a kid, but I had enjoyed it. When I put on those skates as a grown-up, one of the first things I noticed was how incredibly uncoordinated I was. But "uncoordinated" doesn't really carry the weight of the experience - it was as if all my parts (mental included) were at odds with one another, arguing about who should do what and when and how and then criticizing each other about their performance. It was rather like every dysfunctional group I've ever been part of.

As within, so without.

Wow. It was exhausting. And enlightening. It inspired a dedication to harmonizing all my disparate parts and to addressing their constant interstitial bickering. It's been one of the most fruitful endeavors I've ever undertaken. For the first time in my life, I'm experiencing peace as a state of being most of the time.

As you begin this month-long project to break a habit, I'm asking you to treat every part of yourself with respect. You don't have any "bad" parts. I encourage you to refrain even from ranking parts of yourself as "better" or "worse" than others, as comparison truly is the thief of joy.

Let's even extend that to habits - at least for the sake of the Project. Whatever habit you're endeavoring to break, try to refrain from calling it "bad". Some part of you started that behavior (and may very well still cling to it and NOT WANT TO STOP AT ALL) in an attempt to fill some need of yours. And the habit DID fill a need of yours, at least for a while, in a way, or you wouldn't have trouble breaking from it now.

The approach here is not "beat the habit into submission" but "figure out what made the habit appealing to part of you and redirect that part to something that's preferable for ALL your parts."

So a huge part of our Project here is getting ALL your selves on board. Thus the Project is for all of your disparate selves (even if - no, *especially if* - they're reluctant).

Who Created the Project?

My name is Leah Welborn, and I'm known as the Mystic Autistic (more on that in a moment). My struggle with mental illness was the central theme of the first five decades of my life. Symptomatic of that struggle was a host of "bad" habits - like drinking booze daily.

I put "bad" in quotes because, again, I don't want to label my habits as "good" or "bad" as those words have such moralistic implications. It simply came to a point that my drinking habit was no longer sustainable. It was in no way compatible with the person I wanted to be.

My life lurched along in a generally unpleasant way until 2020 when, around the time the pandemic began, I was touched by grace and made the decision to truly live rather

than just survive for spite. My recovery has been challenging, but it's yielded positive changes beyond belief. I would not have believed it possible that I could be as happy as I am today, and I attribute a lot of that happiness to my habits; both those I have now and those I left behind.

The first big daily habit I quit was coffee. I'd been drinking coffee daily since I was 16 so there had been decades of dependence. Quitting was a lot easier than I expected (and the benefits were far greater), so it bolstered my confidence about kicking booze.

When I did Dry January for the first time in 2022, it was because I didn't think I could. The fact that I wasn't sure if I'd be able to go 30 days without a drink worried me. I was a daily (heavy) drinker, and had been for decades. I went back to drinking after my first Dry January, but it was with a lessened urgency - I know longer felt like, no questions asked, I must be drinking every day by 6pm and must tailor my life to accommodate that. It was a huge relief, and gave me my first big taste of sovereignty.

By the end of 2023, I'd stopped drinking entirely. I gave myself the space I needed to make the change gradually, and that method worked for me.

As I loosened my grip on my habits, I began to be able to see my life more clearly. And the more I came to understand myself and my nervous system, the more shadow work and honest reckoning I did, the easier it was for me to let go of the dysfunctional habits that had sustained me for so long.

Suddenly I wasn't quitting drinking as a punishment for my errant ways or to please something or someone outside of myself. Instead, I was quitting to embrace an opportunity for a new way of living. It wasn't until I was able to see things from that perspective that I could make the changes I wanted to.

There have been some major “Empowerment Milestones” along my path since my personal renaissance in 2020, and most of them were utterly unforeseen. One of those was my autism diagnosis in 2022 (when I was 48).

While I fully embrace the label of autistic, I also love the term “*neurospicy*.” It captures that sense I’ve always had of myself as operating a bit differently than others - and of definitely being too much for a lot of people.

Whether or not you identify as “neurospicy,” I know that my “*different*” perspective can help you in your effort to stop or stem your habit. My quirky brain helps me see patterns, links, and missing pieces where others don’t.

In putting this book together, I drew on the vast fields of knowledge I’ve studied in trying to understand myself and why I’m “this way.” All that labor is here for your benefit as you endeavor to sculpt your own life into something that suits you better.

If you’re neurodivergent, you may find this book organized in a way that reflects your needs. If you’re not, I think you’ll be pleasantly surprised by my neurodivergent spin on taking a break from a habit.

In retrospect, my diagnosis made my entire life so much more understandable. Perhaps most importantly, it gave me permission to fully love and embrace myself and all my quirks. I wish I hadn't needed that permission. I wish I hadn't withheld that love from myself for decades, I wish I hadn't spent all those years sneering at myself for not fitting into a box that was never intended for me. But if I can spare even one person some of that pain, it will all have been worth it.

When to do the Project?

Empower Your Magical Self with a One Month Habit Break can be started at any time - not just January 1st. So go ahead and start the project after January first. Or in mid-June. Whenever you're ready to make a shift in your life.

What the Project Is

Empower Your Magical Self with a One Month Habit Break is a Project created to help you take a temporary or permanent break from any habit. It's based on my own experiences and rooted in neuroscience, somatics, polyvagal theory, and energy work. It can easily be adjusted to work with any habit you'd like to cut back on, as it's all about growing toward the reality you want, not beating yourself up for something you "can't stop". Want to eat less junk? Quit smoking? Spend less cash on stuff you don't need? Stop gossiping or gambling? Just adjust the Project to fit your needs.

In this handbook, you'll find all the self-empowerment tools you need to succeed in your One Month Habit Break Project.

How the Project Works

The Project is divided into four weeks, each of which is broken into Daily Offerings. At the end of each Daily Offering there's either a Prompt or an Exercise to support the idea presented that day.

- **Week 1: Excavation**

- Each Daily Offering of Week 1 consists of a prompt to help you get clarity on your relationship with your habit. You'll be asked to probe into why the habit started and why taking a break is in order for your well-being. On Day 6 of Week 1, you'll use what you discover to write an oath to yourself regarding the habit - just for the length of this project. You'll re-examine your intention for the habit at the end of the month.

- **Week 2: Tools**

- Week 2 offers a new physical practice each day to support your Habit Break. These are quick actions that can be practiced immediately and easily incorporated into your life, today. The idea here is that the second week might be a bit of a grind in terms of dealing with the habit you're working with, so each day offers a tool to use if/when you're triggered or have a craving.

- **Week 3: Strategies**

- Each Daily Offering of Week 3 delves a bit deeper into the psychology and energy behind habits, and offers ideas to help you shift your perspective during the Project and beyond.

- **Week 4: Going Deep**

- Week 4's Daily Offerings deal with what may be considered more "alternative" ideas and methodologies, including Tarot cards and astrology. Whether these ideas are exciting to you or off-putting, whether they're brand new to you or something you're steeped in, I ask that you keep an open mind to these ideas and the way they're presented. A seed you pick up here may grow into a plant that nourishes you down the road.

Everything I offer in this Project is something that has benefited me in my own Habit Break Projects and in my life, across all areas. That's one thing all of these ideas and tools have in common.

Another thing they all have in common is that they can be grouped together under a few larger ideas/philosophies or methodologies.

The Methods We'll Be Using

Each day in Weeks 2 - 4. I'll present an "offering" and a prompt/exercise that falls into one of the following categories. Often, the day's offering and prompt could be said to fall under several of these categories, which makes sense. They're all vehicles headed in the same direction - your liberation and sovereignty.

In no particular order, they are:

Mindfulness/Intentionality

Most of us live the majority of our lives on autopilot. That's the "habit" of it all, and bringing more mindful intentionality to our lives is the solution.

How many times have you gotten to a destination (to which you drove!) and have little to no memory of how you got there? It's kind of unsettling, isn't it?

Or maybe someone says something offhandedly that lands in a hurtful way for you. "I didn't mean it like that!" they protest. Well, how did they mean it?

When we endeavor to only say things we mean, thoughtfully, and with intention, we avoid unnecessarily hurting people - maybe especially ourselves - by acting in hurtful ways simply because we're not paying attention.

Often, our habits can be disrupted by a dose of intentionality. Throughout the Project, I'll present prompts and exercises to help you build your mindfulness and intentionality.

Somatics

"Soma" is the Greek word for "body," and "somatics" deals with the body, particularly as distinct from what we generally think of as the soul or the mind. Somatic techniques are tools for working on your inner world through your body - your soma.

A lot of us are very disconnected from our bodies, and tend to think of them as dumb machines to do with as we like.

But the body, as they say, keeps the score.

Whatever unresolved trauma or other grinding issue we hold (regardless of when it happened and how disconnected it seems from the body) is carried in the body, and it manifests in pain and illness and inflammation and so many other things that we tend to think of as utterly distinct from our mental lives.

Somatic techniques aim to release that trauma gently through physical exercises that work on our inner world through the outside.

Throughout this book, I'll be presenting somatic practices to help with your Habit Break. Ideally, you'll carry the ones that work for you into the rest of your life.

Polyvagal theory

The vagus (pronounced like Las Vegas) nerve is the longest nerve in the body, and it makes up the bulk of the parasympathetic nervous system. It touches every organ in the body (thus "vagus" from the same root as "vagrant" - it wanders around touching everything), and when it's dysregulated, havoc can and usually will ensue throughout the body that reverberates throughout one's life.

Polyvagal theory investigates the cause and effect relationship at the root of the aforementioned havoc. It does that by looking at the human nervous system, particularly the autonomic nervous system (ANS), as a key factor in how people respond (or react) to cues from both within and without themselves.

For our purposes here, let's think of the nervous system as two branches. There's the sympathetic branch, which sounds very nice and friendly, but is really the branch that's responsible for keeping us alive in emergencies. It's the "fight or flight" branch, and it's crucial to survival, but it's the home of stress and anxiety. Not a comfy place to dwell.

On the other hand, we have the parasympathetic branch, which is really the place to be. That's where we "rest & digest," and it's where we're meant to live when we're not actively engaged in mortal combat.

The problem comes when the two branches get out of whack, or "dysregulated," which for some of us becomes sort of a standard state of being. Considering that we have the same brain & nervous system as our distant cavepeople ancestors, getting out of whack is easily done — the world we now reside in simply doesn't match the one that humans

succeeded in for hundreds of thousands of years. This modern life is extremely new, in the scale of time. It's freaking a lot of us out. A lot.

A huge part of my personal recovery has been learning how to self-regulate. I'll share a lot of those methods here.

Self-Directed Neuroplasticity

Neuroplasticity refers to the fact that our brains and the information they store are not set in stone - even when we're adults. Self-directed neuroplasticity is what we're doing here in the Project - taking charge of rewiring the neural channels for our benefit.

Actively changing the way we do things, or even think about things, literally changes the structure of our brains. There are billions of neurons in your brain, and when you take in new information or change up the way you do things, you're changing the shape of your brain.

Throughout the Project, I'll be sharing tips to reshape your brain in a way that better fits your intentions.

Energy Work/Metaphysics

Everything is energy. Matter is simply energy that's been slowed down to the degree that its movement is imperceptible to our human eyes. That's not (just) a bunch of woo woo - it's also the word of eminent scientific minds like Albert Einstein and Nikola Tesla.

And that's the philosophy behind my personal use - and inclusion here - of this category of thought: it's all energy, it's all subtly (or not so subtly) connected, and we don't understand it all, but that doesn't mean it doesn't work.

Think of it this way: we didn't understand electricity until fairly recently in human history, but that doesn't mean that it didn't work exactly as it does now before we understood it.

This work of becoming the person you want to be is difficult. It may be the most difficult and worthwhile work you ever undertake. Why not try every possible method and technique, then keep using the ones that work?

I'll be presenting a smattering of metaphysical topics throughout the Project, and I ask you to keep an open mind about them, especially if that's not your inclination. But I'll remind you that you certainly don't have to understand something in order for it to work. By the same token, you don't necessarily have to "believe in" something for it to be somehow helpful to you, do you?

Jungian Psychology

Carl Jung was a Swiss philosopher who is considered one of the fathers of modern psychology. He was responsible for a lot of groundbreaking ideas, and I encourage you to look further into his work if you're intrigued.

Two of his major ideas are at play in the Project.

One of them is the idea of "the shadow" as the repressed parts of the psyche - as opposed to the persona, which is the mask we show to the public.

The other is his notion of the role of archetypes (the hero, the mother, the teacher, etc) in shaping our psyches and worldviews.

We'll be specifically working with his ideas when we talk about Shadow Work on Day 19 and the Tarot on Day 23.

Supplies You'll Need

The supplies you need really depend on you and how you best learn and integrate knowledge. You'll need a dedicated notebook of some sort where you can write out an oath to yourself, somewhere you can reference it often. It should also be a place where you can record your thoughts and responses to each day's prompt/exercise - whether that's a ruled spiral notebook or an aesthetically pleasing journal or digital notes or anything else is up to you.

You'll also need some sort of calendar dedicated solely to this project. For me, that meant a grid of 30 boxes I drew on an index card. You can check one off each day or if you're a bit *extra* like me, place a sticker on each day once you've completed it.

I do highly recommend, if at all possible, that you hand write the pledge to yourself that you take on Day 6 of the program, and keep the document near you, even on your person, during the month of the challenge.

There's just something about the solemnity of a handwritten oath - especially one that bears our signature - that carries weight in our psyche. You can't really shrug off or "forget" a written pledge you've made to yourself.

For the rest of the prompts and exercises, a digital notebook might work better for you, as it does for me (I have hyperhidrosis, meaning my hands sweat a lot of the time, making writing on paper impractical). The important thing is to actually write out answers to each prompt, whether that means typing or in long hand.

Something to consider: Habit Tracking apps

Have you ever gotten a gold star for doing something? I'm talking about a literal gold star sticker on a chart that you earned by doing a particular task? If not, I'm really sorry, and it's time we fix that. If you did, I bet you can remember in a visceral way the way it felt to look at that star on that chart.

Habit tracking apps work on the same principle. We can use them to keep track of the days that we completed habits we want to cultivate, and/or the days that we didn't engage in a habit we're trying to break.

I do both.

I track my days without a drink on one free app, and that's why I can tell you at any moment the precise number of days that it's been since I had a drink.

I use another free app to track the habits I've built that empower me and my magical self. These habits form the basis of what I call my Soul-Lit (we'll talk about that on Day 20), and they take just enough of my time and energy to keep me from being easily distracted by things that bring my energy down.

I track six habits daily on a free habit tracker on my phone:

1. Drink at least 80 ounces of water daily
2. Meditate for at least 10 minutes twice daily
3. Eat at least 5 servings of fruits/veggies daily
4. Write for at least half an hour daily
5. Read something that helps me in some way daily
6. Exercise for at least 20 minutes twice daily

I don't always get all of them done, but I usually get most of them done. And I can see all the stars I've earned for my efforts shine digitally anytime I want to remind myself how far I've come.

And lastly, my advice to you is trust yourself, trust the process, and don't give up. If you "mess up" and pick up your habit again, oh well. That's just one day. Don't start over and don't beat yourself up. The Empower Your Magical Self With a Habit Break Project is a process in self-knowledge, love and compassion. Just keep going. You're exactly where you need to be.

The Program

Week 1: Excavation

“As long as our masks and habits and defenses close us off from self-knowledge so that we neer know why we act, then all the things we do remain meaningless.” - Rachel Pollack

This week focuses on getting clarity on your goals and motivations and committing to yourself. Sounds easy, right? Think again, Love! This work is gonna ask you to probe into some places you’ve maybe not been in years - maybe ever, at least not consciously. The deeper you dig, the more likely you’ll be able to get the results you want with the Program, so get that mental trowel ready.

On the first day, you’ll engage with an oath template, and the exercises for the rest of the week are intended to help you refine that oath by getting to the motivations both for engaging in the habit and for taking a break from it.

On Day 6, you’ll rewrite the oath with the new knowledge you’ve gained over the week.

Like anything worth the effort, the more you put into this project, and thus yourself, the more you’ll gain.

I recommend treating your efforts sincerely and respectfully - in other words, don't half-ass this! Sure, you could just skim the journaling prompts and skip writing down your answers, but is that really doing your best to support yourself?

Whether you prefer to journal by hand or digitally, choose a dedicated space to respond to the prompts (where they'll all be together and accessible when you want to look back) and really put thought into your answers.

Compulsive behaviors (like drinking more than you'd prefer or thoughtlessly spending money) come down to habit, which comes down to neural wiring in your brain. A lot of that stuff is hidden in our subconscious, but we can bring it out into the light and deal with it if we're willing to do a little digging.

So find a time and place when and where you won't be interrupted for a while. If it suits you, light some candles and/or maybe incense. Take some nice, deep diaphragmatic breaths to arrive in the moment and get your nervous system regulated.

Then begin the first week of your Habit Break, where you'll build a firm foundation on which to build your month.

TIP: When a prompt asks you to describe how you feel about something, don't just write "good" or "bad". This isn't a test, and you're not cheating anyone but yourself by giving one-word answers to these questions. Try to be specific: when you say "good" do you mean "Relaxed"? "Powerful"? "Charismatic?" When you say "bad" do you mean "Angry"? "Powerless"? "Hopeless"? They're all different shades of the same color, but they help you paint a much more vivid portrait of your personal landscape.

Day 1: Committing to Yourself

Here we go! I hope you're excited. You're committing to yourself and your sovereignty over your life. This is big.

Wherever you've decided to record your efforts for this month, copy out this template pledge, filling in the details as appropriate to you.

From (date to date), I pledge to myself that (xxxx). I'll use every tool available to keep my promise to myself and finish this project 100% successfully. But however the project ends, whatever happens, I'm proud of myself and my efforts at bettering myself and I completely love and accept myself as I am.

signed:

date:

We'll be building on that over this first week, but that's the core of your oath.

For best results, read it aloud to yourself in the mirror. If it feels silly, that's ok! Laugh!

But don't laugh *at* yourself. Laugh *with* yourself and celebrate your boldness. You're choosing your well-being in a world that screams at you continually to do otherwise.

Today and every day, I urge you to remember that you are the only one you're going to be in constant relationship with every second for the rest of your life. And you're the only one who can make that relationship a healthy one

Day 2: Clarity on Your Motivation to Stop

Over the next four days, we'll be looking for clarity and deep honesty. This is the most intense part of the program, in terms of exercises, because you're looking deep into areas that may be uncomfortable. Stick with the excavation process and you'll get treasure. I promise.

Our goal for today is to get some clarity on your motivation to take a habit break. With that in mind, get ready to journal in response to this prompt:

Prompt:

“I am making the choice (*not to drink/to drink less/shop less/scroll social media less*) for a month (or more) because...”

- **What's the first thing that comes to your mind in response to the prompt? You might be surprised by it...maybe you've been thinking it's to lose weight but your first thought is “I want to get control of my life.” Write down whatever your first thought is as a bullet point.**
- **Now close your eyes and give yourself a few minutes to really explore that prompt. How does the question feel in your body? Without passing judgment, where do you feel that question and the answers that present themselves? Do you feel dread in the pit of your stomach? Elation in the front of your head? What images and memories come up? Write everything down as bullet points and expand on any of the feelings and thoughts that come up...maybe your**

first answer is “to get control of my life” and a bullet point beneath is “to get healthier”. You can expand on that by saying something like “lose some weight and get rid of the brain fog.” Try not to edit yourself (or your selves).

- **When you write your answers, what do you feel in your body? Be very specific about the quality of the feeling, its texture, and location (ex I feel a tight knot like a fist in my stomach).**

Sit with your answers without judgment. Allow them to tell you truths that may have previously gone undetected.

We’ll build on this tomorrow.

Day 3: Clarity on Why You Started Your Habit

Our goal for today is to get some clarity on why this activity became a habit in the first place. With that in mind, get ready to journal in response to the following two prompts:

Prompt 1:

“The first few times I (*drank booze/overspent on junk/gossiped/etc*), I was xx years old and it made me feel (xxx)...”

- **What’s the first thing that comes to your mind, in terms of how you felt? You might be surprised by it. Again, challenge yourself to go beyond words like “good” and “bad” (for me, the answer is “ the first few times I drank booze I was 15 years-old and it made me feel very wild and rebellious”). Write your own answer down as a bullet point.**
- **Now close your eyes and give yourself a few minutes to really explore that question and its answer. How does the question feel in your body? Without passing judgment, where do you feel that question and the answers that present themselves? Do you feel laughter bubble up in your throat? A sense of danger in your belly? What images and memories come up? Write those down as bullet points. Expand on any of the feelings and thoughts that come up. What else comes up? Write everything down and try not to edit.**

Prompt 2:

“Now when I (drink booze/gamble/etc), I feel XXXXXXXX emotionally and XXXXX physically.”

- **What’s the first thing that comes to your mind, in terms of how you actually feel, both emotionally and physically? You might be surprised by it. Again, challenge yourself to go beyond words like “good” and “bad”. Write your answers down as bullet points.**
- **Now close your eyes and give yourself a few minutes to really explore the prompt. How does the question feel in your body? Without passing judgment, where do you feel that question and the answers that present themselves? Do you feel nausea rise up? Do your muscles tense to fight? Does tightness grip your shoulders? What images and memories come up? Write those down as bullet points. Expand on any of the feelings and thoughts that come up. What else comes up? Write everything down and try not to edit.**

Sit with your answers without judgment. Allow them to tell you truths that may have previously gone undetected.

We’ll build on this tomorrow.

Day 4 Clarity on Goals: Setting Yourself Up for Success

Our goal for today is to get clarity on your goals for your Habit-Break Project.

With that in mind, we'll be looking at mindset, and how best to support yourself throughout this project. You'll finalize your goals for the month (whether to stop your habitual behavior entirely for a month, or just to cut back for the term of the project) and carefully consider the obstacles you're likely to face in completing your Habit-Break project.

Prompt:

“My truest, deepest goal for embarking on this Habit-Break Project is to *(stop drinking forever/be able to only drink on weekends/stop gambling/etc).*”

- **What's the first thing that comes to your mind? You might be surprised by it. Write that down as a bullet point.**
- **Now close your eyes and give yourself a few minutes to really explore the prompt. How does the question feel in your body? Without passing judgment, where do you feel that question and the answers that present themselves? What images and memories come up? Write those down as bullet points. Expand on any of the feelings and thoughts that come up. What else comes up? Write everything down and try not to edit.**

Now consider what you've learned about your goal. Does it differ from the preliminary goal you set on Day 1? It's good to feel challenged, but don't make your goal unrealistic or you're bound to fail.

Day 5: Clarity on Triggers: Protecting Your Energy

Our goal for today is to get clarity on the triggers that are likely to come up for you during your Habit-Break Project. With that in mind, get ready to journal in response to the following prompt:

Prompt:

“I’m likely to be most tempted to (*drink excessively/mindlessly scroll social media/binge shop/etc*) when ...”

- **What’s the first thing that comes to your mind? You might be surprised by it. Write that down as a bullet point.**
- **Now close your eyes and give yourself a few minutes to really explore the prompt. How does the question feel in your body? Without passing judgment, where do you feel that question and the answers that present themselves? What images and memories come up? Write those down as bullet points. Expand on any of the feelings and thoughts that come up. What else comes up? Write everything down and try not to edit.**

When you’ve finished all the prompts, consider what you’ve learned about your triggers. What can you do to prepare yourself to stay the course with your Habit Break Project when you’re triggered?

If you don’t have a lot of tools with which to meet your triggers, never fear. The next three weeks of the Project are filled with methods and ideas that

have helped me (and countless others) overcome habits with which they'd wrestled.

Day 6: Revised Oath

First, let me congratulate you for making it this far. The first week of taking a Habit

Break can be challenging. How do you feel?

If you've completed the journal prompts and exercises for each day, you have a much deeper understanding of the breadth of the habit you're breaking - and probably a better understanding of yourself.

You'll use what you've learned to write an oath to yourself next.

Oath to Myself: Perfect Love and Perfect Trust

Prompt:

Using what you learned over the last few days of the Program, rewrite the pledge to yourself, promising to do your utmost to complete the project and reach your goals. ALSO (this is important) promise to love yourself unconditionally, however the project ends. Then sign and date the oath.

EXAMPLE: From January 1 to January 31, 2024, I promise myself that I will not drink any alcoholic beverages. I'm doing this because I want to know that I can go a month without drinking and I want to lose 5 pounds. I've been drinking since I was 15, and I started drinking because I wanted to feel cool and rebellious. Now when I drink I want to feel sparkly and fun but I feel bloated and weepy. I may be triggered on weekends when I want to celebrate, but I'll try every tool presented to keep my promise to myself and finish this project 100% successfully. However the project ends, whatever happens, I'm proud of myself and my efforts at bettering myself.

signed: Leah Welborn

date: 1/1/24

Day 7: Morning Ritual

How do you treat the first half hour of your day?

Is it your least favorite time, filled with dread and rush and general resentment until you've procured the vices that make your life (at least by your estimation) liveable?

For too many of us, that's become the norm, and it sets the tone for the entire day...which sets the tone for our entire life.

One of the first concrete steps toward joy I took in 2020 when I decided to find a way to actually live and be happy was to create a morning ritual for myself. It's evolved and will continue to evolve to fit my needs, but it's the cornerstone of my life now.

It's an oath I make to myself every day, and rather than setting a tone of hostility, rush, and resentment, it sets a tone of gratitude, inspiration, and alignment with my values.

Sure, you could do a similar ritual at any time of your day, but those first few moments of waking are so crucial. That's because hypnagogia, or the transitional state between sleep and wakefulness, is a time when the brain is more open to creative ideas and problem-solving.

While you're engaging in the Program, I highly recommend you create and observe a morning ritual, even if it's just two minutes of silent affirmations before you get out of bed.

If you can, engage with each day's material for the Habit Break Program in the morning so it can percolate throughout your day.

Prompt:

How do you feel about the first moments of the day? Do you dread them, or do they make you feel hopeful? What sort of morning ritual would sustain you and give you a positive start to your day? Are you willing to experiment with different rituals for the length of this program in order to find what best works for you? Also...are you willing to commit to not looking at your phone until the ritual is completed?

Week 2: Tools

“Thoughts are causative...the sustained act of mental focus changes things; we see physical proof of this in the field of neuroplasticity, which uses brain scans to demonstrate how habitual thought alters neural pathways.” - Mitch Horowitz

You’re entering Week 2 of the Habit Break. My hope for you is that you learned a lot during Week 1, and that you’re honoring yourself where you are, regardless of what happened last week.

You’ve completed your pledge to yourself. You know why your habit started and why it’s time to take a break. You’ve got clarity on your goals and what’s likely to trigger you and when. The rest of the program is about building a veritable treasure chest of tools to help you - not just for the next 21 days, but for the rest of your days.

Each day explores something - either a method or process - that has been helpful for me and many, many others in overcoming challenges (including habits we’d rather not have). In a perfect world, every single method would resonate for you and you’d have the basis for a lifelong practice at the end of this month.

In any case, I hope that you’ll keep an open mind about what each day has to offer. Some days might present ideas that are old hat to you - I ask that you endeavor, in the interest of neuroplasticity, to consider them anew.

Some of the ideas presented might seem silly or downright ridiculous. That's fine, but I ask that you read each day's offering with an open mind, and remember that others have found help and comfort in the idea.

Day 8: Meditation

I used to roll my eyes when people expounded on the benefits of meditation, so if that's where you are, I get it. I had determined that meditation "wasn't for me" because I had tried it a few times and found it alarmingly difficult. Frighteningly so.

The truth is that it's very, very challenging to just be with yourself without some kind of program or agenda running. But ironically, it's really hard to discern what's programmed and what is your innate intelligence until you sit in the quiet room of your mind with all that makes you you and just observe how it all plays out.

If you'd like to start (or re-start) a meditation practice, I strongly recommend starting slow and low and keeping your mind open.

By that I mean set yourself up for success with attainable goals that won't sink your efforts in the first few days.

A great way to start a meditation practice is to set a timer for 2 to 5 minutes first thing in the morning and just sit and breath. Don't condemn your (inevitable) thoughts that arise, but don't engage with them. They're just clouds floating by.

Also, don't limit yourself by thinking you MUST meditate Zen style, cross-legged on the floor in silence.

In meditation, as in everything else, One-Size-Fits-All is a lie.

Powerful meditation can be done while the practitioner is walking or dancing, for example. I also recommend guided meditations. Some people deride them as "not real."

I strongly disagree, but instead of arguing, let me proffer this: is guided meditation better than no meditation? I think the answer is clearly yes.

There are several great apps that offer more meditations than one could ever use. I like (and teach for) Insight Timer, which has an excellent free option.

Meditation is an excellent tool for developing neuroplasticity and maintaining a healthy nervous system.

Prompt:

What's your relationship with meditation? Is it part of your life? Has it ever been? Are you interested in starting (continuing/strengthening) a meditation practice? If so, what steps will you take to make that a reality?

Day 9: Breathwork

How often do you think about your breath? Breathing is the one fundamental difference between life and death, and yet most of us rarely consider it - until we're having difficulty with it. Then it's all we can think about.

There have been volumes written about breathwork and the role it can play in transforming our lives. If it's something that intrigues you, I encourage you to explore breathwork online, as there are some truly remarkable free resources available on YouTube and other platforms.

For our purposes today, I'll say that our breath is integral to maintaining a calm central nervous system.

Shallow, rapid breath is a natural response to a perceived threat, and it starts a feedback loop that includes a fight or flight response: your body readies itself quite literally to either flee a predator or fight that predator to the death. It's not an optimal way to operate the majority of the time, as it keeps you on edge and unable to truly enjoy anything.

Deep, relaxed breathing that presses the diaphragm muscle down in an action like a bellows, on the other hand, starts a feedback loop of rest and digest. That's the place to stay in order to optimize your joy.

For me, getting into a habit of "checking in" with my breathing a few times a day was key. I'd tune in to how I was breathing and discover it was up in my chest and quick, with my shoulders hunched around my ears. Or it had just stopped entirely until I finally gasped for breath. All of this was sending "DANGER" signals to my body, which

in return was attempting to protect me with surges of flight or fight...which I would quell by drinking.

There are lots of ways to work with your breath, and a great way to start is simply spending a few minutes each day being mindful of it.

Exercise:

Sit quietly and close your eyes (if that feels safe and comfortable for you).

Begin to notice the breath moving in and out of your body. What is the quality of the movement? Is it fitful and ragged? Is it easy and spacious?

See if you can make the inhale a bit deeper, a little slower. Hold the breath for just a moment at the top of the breath and then let it go, exhaling through your mouth, slowly. Try to make the exhale longer than the inhale. Imagine every bit of air leaving your body. Hold at the bottom of the breath. Repeat.

Day 10: Bilateral Stimulation

This is probably the easiest, most instantly accessible tool offered in this Program, and it's the one that likely would have served me most had I known about it decades ago.

Bilateral stimulation (BLS) is, very simply, a technique of alternating stimulation to the left and right sides of the brain to help process trauma and to build new neural pathways.

Practicing BLS is as simple as tossing something from one hand to the other repeatedly. It can be tapping your feet in alternating rhythms. It can be listening to audio (especially through headphones) that was recorded in such a way that the sound moves from one ear to the other.

The reason why BLS is so effective is not entirely understood, but it's used widely in clinical settings (I've been fortunate to experience EMDR, which is a form of bilateral stimulation that involves eye movement and is facilitated by a mental health clinician). It can often offer relief in moments of discomfort (like craving something you're trying to abstain from), and that's why I've included it here as an important and easily accessible tool.

Exercise:

Try a few different methods like the ones mentioned above to see how they feel to you. Next time you're experiencing mental discomfort, try one out.

One great thing about the first two above (tossing an object from hand to hand or tapping your feet in alternating rhythms) is that you can do them in

virtually any situation without calling too much if any attention to yourself.

Here's another one that I find effective:

Cross your arms across your chest so that each hand lands on the opposing collarbone. Tap your hands (gently) in an alternating rhythm against your collarbones for 30 seconds to a minute. You may find yourself rocking a bit as you do, don't fight it. Your nervous system is regulating itself.

Day 11: Shaking & Humming

Involuntary shaking has plagued me my entire life. My (previously) chronically disordered nervous system tends to respond to any big emotion with trembling (think of the way a nervous chihuahua shakes).

Fear would make me shake, as would (even slight) anger. But so would big joy. And big resonance - and it still happens! When I encounter something to which my whole body and soul respond “SAME!” I tend to start to tremble. On the other hand, when something (like cruelty and racism) make me flash with rage...well, that’s liable to set me to trembling, too.

But as so often happens, there’s wisdom in what my body was trying to tell me. Shaking is a quick method that most mammals use to “switch gears” from one activity to another.

Following that natural lead, somatic shaking is a method of deliberately shaking your body to discharge excess energy and calm the nervous system.

Shaking on purpose feels great, and can help you release emotion, stress and generally reset. Instead of the poor nervous chihuahua, think of virtually any animal when it changes from one situation (being asleep, playing, or eating, for example) to another. The animal will tend to give itself a vigorous shake as a sort of transition.

Similarly, humming stimulates the vagus nerve in a way that signals the nervous system to switch to rest and digest from flight or fight.

There are quite a few well-documented reasons to try both shaking and humming as tools to help regulate your nervous system and thus have the best possible experience with the Project (and your life). It's definitely worth a Google if you're interested.

In the meantime, today's exercise is pretty straight-forward, and I hope you'll give it a whole-hearted try. It may be helpful sometime down the road, even if it doesn't seem so now.

Exercise:

Stand up (if you're able. If not, you can do this seated) and begin to deliberately shake your body. Shake your hands, your feet, your head...let the shaking spread into your core and shake from the middle out. Imagine that any negative or stale energy that's sticking to your person is just being shaken off.

Simultaneously, start humming. You can hum any song that you like, or you can just hum in a sort of random way - whatever you prefer. The important thing here is to really feel it in the back of your throat and in your sinuses - a vibration that lets you know your vagus nerve is being activated.

Shake and hum for as long as feels comfortable/helpful for you - at least 30 seconds and up to 2 minutes to start.

Day 12 Tapping

Have you heard of tapping? It's one of those mysterious things that science doesn't quite understand yet, and it's akin to acupuncture. It's deceptively simple, and it's been useful in treating most everything - literally.

It involves tapping (with your fingers) at specific points of your body, often while speaking a positive message about yourself.

It works on largely the same principles as bilateral stimulation and shaking - it's direct intervention in the neural pathways and nervous system.

Although you don't have to use verbal affirmations as you tap, I find it helpful to underscore the message that I'm attempting to send to my nervous system.

Here's an example of a script I've used to help myself when I was quitting my daily drinking habit.

"Even though I'm craving a drink, I completely love & accept myself."

That could be the primary affirmation you use. You could just stick with that, or you could elaborate:

"Even though my boss yelled at me and it made me want to drink, I completely love & accept myself." etc.

Exercise:

First, write a script with this formula:

"Even though (insert thing that's bugging you), I completely love & accept myself."

You can just stick with that one phrase, or you can generate a whole list of phrases with that formula.

Then you tap, with the fingertips of one or both hands, at the following body points and repeat the phrase(s), one at each point:

TAPPING POINTS

- **Crown of your head**
- **Third eye at the center of your forehead**
- **Outside corners of the eyes**
- **Under the eyes**
- **Upper lip, in the area where a mustache would grow**
- **On the chin**
- **On the clavicles (collarbones)**
- **Side(s) of your body, just beneath the armpit**
- **Karate chop (outsides of hands, beneath the pinkies)**

And that's it! Just continue the series (tapping and repeating the script) until the symptoms begin to lessen.

Day 13: Dancing as Release

Do you dance? Notice I asked “do you dance?” not “can you dance?”

I’m not a naturally very coordinated person. Perhaps it’s because I’m autistic, but I’m unable to follow choreography. It feels exactly like math in my head, and I have pronounced dyscalculia (a learning disorder that affects a person’s ability to understand and do math).

As a result, I mourned my “inability to dance” for years. Now I know better.

Dancing is my birthright, as it’s yours. And just as I don’t require a government in order to live a good life, I don’t require choreography in order to dance. I simply hear music and let my body react. It’s an immense source of somatic joy for me now.

Even when I was temporarily unable to walk due to an injury, I made an effort to dance in a chair as often as possible, just letting myself sway to the music. It felt so good to have that connection with the energy of music.

A daily freestyle dancing habit can yield lots of surprising benefits in your life, and it’s a practice I highly recommend.

Exercise:

What music makes you feel like dancing? Think of just one song that always gets you moving. Put it on. Dance to it (trying not to edit your moves or even consider how you look) for the whole song.

Day 14: Week 2 Review

We've covered a lot of ground this week, and we've surveyed a lot of methods to help you with your Habit Break. My hope is that some of them (or all, or at least one of them!) will benefit you enough that you can further investigate those that may intrigue you.

Prompt:

What were your experiences during Week 2? Have you maintained your initial goal? Has it been easy or difficult? Have any of the practices presented here been particularly helpful for you?

Week 3: Ideas

During Week 2, you got concrete tools to use when things get dicey. I hope that one or more of them have proved helpful for you, and that you're starting to use them to help you regulate your nervous system over the rough patches of life.

This week is about introducing big ideas that have been wildly helpful for me in revamping my life - but introducing them in bite-sized chunks.

These are concepts that people have spent their lives studying and writing about, so please keep in mind that what I'm offering are just the briefest of introductions in the hope that something will resonate with you and be helpful.

Take what serves your needs and leave the rest, but as in the previous weeks, I urge you to consider any given idea carefully before you discard it.

Onward we go.

Day 15: Who's in charge here? Multiple Selves

“All human beings, including those who are healthiest and most successful, are composed of more than one self. When things are going well, each plays its rightful role as part of a harmonious symphony.” - from Symphony of Selves

We fool ourselves when we believe or behave as if the “SELF” is one monolithic identity with a definite, unified aim. Being human would probably be a lot easier if that were the case!

How many times have you thought “I’d like to do that, but I can’t make myself do it”? Who’s talking there? Who’s being obstinate? Or maybe you’re “of two minds” about a person or an issue, and you can’t reconcile them to figure out what **you** really think...but both minds are you, right?

The truth is that the vast majority (in not all) of us live as many fractional selves, and there’s often great disharmony among those selves. And that’s the crux of a lot of our problems.

Take this Habit Break Project, for instance. There’s likely a part of you that’s resistant to the break. Maybe that part of you has been pouting or otherwise “acting out” in protest of your efforts to improve your life. Who is that self? Do they have a name? What’s their deal?

For me, she’s Lola, and she’s an angry handful. But she’s also dramatic and entertaining and fiercely protective of the rest of my “selves”.

“I” saw Lola as my nemesis for years - but oddly, those were the same years when she was in charge of my life.

Being my tender, goofy, emotional, undiagnosed autistic self through childhood had painful results - so Lola emerged like a bat out of hell to take over while “I” cowered somewhere within. I’m grateful to her for protecting me so ferociously for so long, but when I began to get well, I (Leah, the person who is aligned with Source and is who I want to continue to become) began to emerge and heal and give Lola a much-needed break.

All of this is pertinent because there’s no way I would have ever stopped drinking if Lola was still in charge. She’s still there (and when I broke my leg recently she came howling back into first-chair like a banshee!), but when I’m healthy and operating in right relationship with Source and the world, she’s no longer in charge.

As I write this, I’m aware of her rolling her eyes at me and telling me to “just get a drink, dammit!” Lola thinks “inner work” is bunk. But she and I have an amicable relationship. It would be easy for me to loathe her and rail against her (believe me, I used to), blame her for my inability to get healthy. That would perpetuate the old battle within, and battles are entities that are happy to rage forever.

Over the course of the last few years, I’ve come to deeply understand Lola and her motivations. I don’t want her in charge, but I respect her. Just as she teases me about my “woo woo,” I giggle about her dramatic histrionics.

And she lets ME, Leah, get on with things.

This is a bit of Shadow Work, which we’ll get into more on Day 19.

Prompt:

Who's in charge in your inner world (at the moment)? Do you have a mischievous, contrary character who is making the Habit Break difficult for you? If so, who are they? What's their name? How can you wage peace with them?

Day 16 Reiki Principles

My experience with Reiki has been one of the most positively impactful things that has occurred in my life. Reiki is Universal Healing Energy and it can be directed by Reiki practitioners to help heal all sorts of ailments. I am a Reiki healer, and my life has been utterly transformed by the practice.

There is so much I could write about the profound effect Reiki has had on my life. For our purposes, though, I'd simply like to introduce the "5 Principles of Reiki."

Regardless of your belief system or lack thereof, if you dedicate yourself to following these principles in your life, you're on the right track.

The 5 Principles of Reiki

Just for today, I will not engage in anger.

Just for today, I will not worry.

Just for today, I will be grateful.

Just for today, I will do my life's work honestly.

Just for today, I will be kind to every living being.

Prompt:

What's your reaction to the 5 Reiki principles? Would any of them be particularly difficult for you to follow, even for a day? If they appeal to you, try to follow them for one day, then write about your experience.

Day 17: Build an Altar

“Altars don’t need to be religious or spiritual in any way if that isn’t a framework that resonates with you. They are spaces where we do psychological and emotional healing, and should be specific to your needs, style, culture, and level of commitment.” - Chani Nicholas

Having an altar in your home might sound awkward, but it certainly doesn’t have to be.

An altar can be a shelf or a corner of a dresser - the point is your intention. An altar serves as a focal point for a practice, and it's a physical manifestation of an intention that can help to rewire our neural pathways.

As for what to include on your altar, that depends on what’s meaningful to you. You may want to include a representative symbol of each of the four elements (fire, water, earth, and air) to help realize your goals. Perhaps an image or photo of something or someone who inspires courage and trust in your own abilities would be helpful to you. Are crystals meaningful to you? Herbs or other plants? There are no right or wrong items to place on your altar, nor any right or wrong area to place your altar. If it feels right to you, it’s right.

The same principle applies to how you use your altar. You can make a point of spending time at your altar praying, journaling, chanting, or anything else every day (or more!) or just let it be, standing where it is as a visible reminder of your dedication to your intention.

Prompt/Exercise:

If you don't have an altar already set up in your home, is that an idea that appeals to you? If so, what would you include on your altar, and how would you use it? If it seems helpful, create an altar. Don't worry about "getting it right," as it just needs to reflect you and your intentions. It can - and should - evolve as you do.

Day 18: Housebreaking Your Ego

What's your relationship with your own ego?

And how does that question make you feel? Does it make you bristle with anger? Flush with embarrassment? Swell with pride?

Most people have problematic relationships with their own egos, and so of course they have trouble with the egos of other people.

Just to be clear: Your ego is not necessarily, and in fact usually is not, the voice in your head that says "I'm absolutely awesome." What our ego more often equates to is that snide voice in our head that comments on the actions of strangers going (harmlessly) about their business in a way that's different than our own and saying "why would they do that? That's so stupid. Nobody with any sense would do that." That's the classic voice of ego.

Our egos are partially inborn, an innate part of the human experience, and are partially constructed of the scar tissue we've grown over old wounds. Our egos intend (at least subconsciously) to protect us from the slings and arrows of everyday life. But like a clumsy, untrained dog, they often do just the opposite.

Instead of an enemy to be slain, I propose you view your ego as a guard dog - perhaps one that's been utterly untrained, but a guard dog nonetheless.

As you may have experienced, a dog bred to be a guard dog and treated like a guard dog can be quite a menace if they're not trained by someone who knows what they're doing.

They'll bark and snarl at any passing sound, regardless of the actual threat it poses.

Kind of like an untrained ego.

Prompt:

Does the idea of ego as guard dog resonate with you? Are you able to see some ways that your ego functions against you (even though “it thinks” it’s helping)? What are some ways that you could lovingly train your guard dog ego to be a better canine citizen in your life?

Day 19: Shadow Work

Doing one's shadow work is, to my mind, a huge and necessary step on the path to become a liberated and realized individual. But it's not easy and it never ends, so most people elect to skip it.

What shadow work means, simply put, is getting comfortable with the parts of yourself that make you cringe. Those parts of you (like we discussed on Day 15) that you keep locked up, for fear they'd get you ostracized or arrested or both.

It's easy to look at those shadowy parts as "demonic" entities that take you over, foes who you very definitely are not.

But the difficult truth is that they are you, just as much you as the part you choose to show the world.

The shadow is often the very opposite of the public persona.

Think of it this way: if a person's self-esteem resides in their perception of themselves as "kind and generous," the worst, most upsetting thing that could happen to them would be that they're "found out" to truly be miserly and cruel. And certainly, there is a part of them that is miserly and cruel. They may deny it ("I don't have a mean bone in my body!"), but that will only make them more ashamed and hateful toward that part, making that part even more cruel and miserly.

It's like the family analogy we used earlier. If a family identifies as "good, kind, law-abiding people" and one son is a car-stealing, meth-cooking ball of anger, it causes a bit of an identity crisis for the family, doesn't it ("We're good but he's bad, so if he's one of us, what does that say about us?")?

It may be “easier” or more “seemly” to ostracize the son and publicly state that a demon got into the family line than to figure out what’s at the root of his troubles and close ranks around him, but a truly well-lived life is often difficult and unseemly, isn’t it?

So what to do about your own car-stealing sons, your own shadows?

First, don’t deny they exist. Talk to them like a kind counselor, don’t interrogate them like a cop.

There’s a good chance that this habit you’re breaking is the beloved invention/possession of one or more of your shadows. Ask them why it’s important to them and listen. Don’t judge their answer, even if it sounds silly to you. We’re working on building trust here, not resentment.

Prompt:

What’s your relationship with your shadow? Does it hold you in its thrall because you know it can bring you to your knees with shame in an instant?

Where does your shadow fit, in terms of your guard dog ego and what we discussed on Day 15 about the different parts that compose you? How can you become more comfortable with your shadow?

Day 20: Soul-Lit

There are a couple of common definitions of the word “diet” (according to the Oxford dictionary).

One is very general: “the kinds of food that a person, animal, or community habitually eats.” That’s largely a descriptive term, and I have no problem with it. I eat a plant-based diet, for example.

But then there’s the more specific definition that we usually think of when someone refers to their diet: “a special course of food to which one restricts oneself...to lose weight.”

That kind of diet has been shown to be largely ineffective, and even counterproductive, in the long term.

We’re not talking about losing weight here in this Project, but we are talking about changing the hold that a habit has over you. Some might recommend a restrictive, diet-like approach that emphasizes rigor and self-denial. Obviously that’s not what the One Month Habit Break Project is about.

In my effort to live the most joyful, liberated, and healthy life I possibly can, I follow what I call a Soul-Lit. If something doesn’t light my soul on fire, I stay away from it. That applies to everything I consume, across the board. If something I’m regularly consuming makes me feel bad, it’s got to go. No matter what. I’m not here to incorporate things that make me feel bad into my life, I’m here to eliminate or at least mitigate their presence in my life.

The “high-vibe” music genre has become a big part of my Soul-Lit, because for me and so many others, music plays a huge role in our lives.

Music can easily set the tone of my day, and listening to (and singing along with) upsetting lyrics that detail bad, painful situations often put me in a bad mental place regardless of what was happening otherwise.

Though I still enjoy the occasional listen to a wide variety of music, I’m very intentional about what I listen to now. The work of high-vibe artists has come to feature prominently in my mental landscape - so much so that I’ve had several as guests on my podcast, Empower Your Magical Self.

I encourage you to take a look at what you regularly consume, and what it does to your energy. Being more intentional about what you take into your mental and physical reality can make a huge difference in your life.

Prompt:

How could changing what you consume (and I don’t just mean food and beverage - but I do also mean food and beverage) give you more sovereignty and joy in your life?

Day 21: Week 3 Review

However you're doing in this Project, whether you're sticking to the plan and completing every exercise or deviating wildly from the plan and barely checking in, I'm proud of you. I hope that you're proud of yourself.

This week was a bit heavy on "theory" as opposed to action, but I've attempted to provide actionable prompts and exercises for each day.

Please allow me to remind you that these are BIG themes that people have spent their lifetimes working on, so please don't feel the need to retain all of the information here. I'm simply presenting ideas that have been immensely helpful to me in moving ever-closer to the person I want to be. Keep what resonates for you and leave the rest.

Prompt:

What were your experiences during Week 3? Have you maintained your initial goal? Has it been easy or difficult? Did any of the ideas presented in Week 3 prove particularly helpful for you?

Week 4: Going Deep

This is the last full week of your One Month Habit Break. How is it going for you? You've taken in a lot of new information. My hope is that you're enjoying the process, and that you're avoiding the temptation to give yourself a hard time (i.e. to let part of yourself bully another part).

You might think of this as “woo-week” in the Project, and if you're saying that in good humor, that's fine. But I'm asking again that you take this material seriously, as this is precisely the stuff that's been the most helpful for me in altering my habits and in making my life one that I'm truly excited to live.

And, if this is stuff that you engage with every day...yay! I also ask that you read each day's offering and engage with the prompt or exercise because I've attempted to present these ideas in a fresh way that will prove useful for your Habit-Break Project.

Off we go!

Day 22: Calling in BackUp (Your Spirit Guides)

The 1980s sitcom “Mork & Mindy” introduced Robin Williams to the world. In his breakout role, he played Mork, the Orkan who arrived on Earth via an interplanetary egg.

Each episode ended with Mork sitting on the couch repeating, like a mantra, “*Mork calling Orson. Come in, Orson.*” Then we’d zoom quickly into his mind where Mork is decked out in his red and silver space gear, standing in a dark room, continuing his chant: “*Mork calling Orson. Come in, Orson.*”

A voice offstage (presumably that of Orson) would then reply to Mork, and the two would have a conversation about the lessons that Mork had learned that week. That’s sort of how my relationship with my Spirit Guides works.

Bear with me.

My loving, healthy relationship with my Spirit Guides, and thus with my highest self, is the most important thing in my life.

Part of my daily morning ritual is conversing, in writing, with my Guides. I open the dedicated digital journal where I keep our chats and type, “Good morning Beloveds!” and then go from there. What I’m planning to do, my energy level, things I’d like to happen, things I’d like not to happen, etc.

Then I quiet my mind as much as I can and wait for the replies to emerge — not like audible voices, but rather a deep knowing that starts to form; an analog photo in developing fluid. When *the knowing* comes, I start writing. It’s startling how often I’m

utterly surprised by an idea that presents itself to me in those moments. That's where I get the direction that guides my life.

It doesn't bother me when people say, "Leah, that's just part of your brain! It's just you talking to yourself!" Why should it matter? To me, it shouldn't. It doesn't.

When I asked my Guides for a way to explain our relationship to skeptical people, or to people who are simply curious, they instantly said, "Mork calling Orson," and I laughed out loud at the simplicity.

There is never a time when I can't simply tune in to them and feel their guidance and love for me. Except when I was drinking. It's not that they weren't there, I just temporarily lost my ability to be guided. And that's why I've only become acquainted with them in the last few years, since my spiritual rebirth (after I hit rock bottom). I don't think I went more than two consecutive days without drinking for 20 years or more. I was closing myself off to guidance I needed without even knowing it.

Stay open to forces that you may not even be aware of right now. You might be amazed at what comes to your aid once your mind is clear of the habit you're working with.

Think of it this way:

What if...everything that is, ever has been, and ever will be was created in one instant.

That includes your soul.

And part of your soul's creation included the creation of energy that would accompany your soul throughout all time and space, witnessing and assisting your soul whenever it could - the only caveat being that your soul had to be open to that help.

What if that's how it really is, and that energy that came into being to assist your soul is what I'm calling "Spirit Guides." How would that change your life (if it would)? If the result would be beneficial, why not act as if it's true...even just as an experiment for the next week?

Prompt:

Do you have a relationship with your Spirit Guides (if you don't feel comfortable with that term, use "Higher Self" or "Angels" or anything that works for you)? If you do, how can you utilize it in your Habit Break Project? If you don't, act as if you do for a day and see how it feels. Maybe that's how you'll come to know your Guides.

Day 23: Tarot Cards

“The Tarot...is a path of liberation...the Tarot’s purpose (is) to fully bring out the divine spark in us and unite it with our conscious selves, to end the duality of God and human and make them one.” - Rachel Pollack

Maybe you’re thinking it seems odd to include tarot cards in a handbook on breaking a habit - isn’t tarot a divination tool? So, what’s to find out? Will I break my habit or won’t I? I understand the confusion, but Tarot’s (admittedly murky) history shows that divination was not its original purpose.

While they’re often used as a tool of divination in modern times, Tarot cards can also be an incredible resource for studying archetypes in relation to yourself (or selves).

Simply stated, a Tarot deck consists of 78 cards, divided into Major (22 cards) and Minor (56 cards) *Arcanas* (“Arcanas” refers to mysteries or secrets, as in “arcane knowledge”).

The Major Arcana begins with the unnumbered Fool card, then progresses through a series of archetypes from the first (Magician) card, through the 22nd (the World).

The Minor Arcana is divided into 4 suits, not unlike the playing cards you may be more familiar with. In Tarot, the traditional suits are: cups (dealing with emotion), wands (dealing with vital life energy and passion), pentacles (dealing with wealth and the earthly domain), and swords (dealing with ideas). Each suit consists of 14 cards, ranging from Ace to King.

The deck known as the Rider Smith Waite (RSW) is, arguably, the standard from which most other modern decks derive. That being said, the artwork and even “meanings” can deviate from deck to deck, depending on the creator of that deck.

But perhaps the most cogent factor of the Tarot deck for our purposes is how it functions as metaphor and archetype. And that leads us to Carl Jung's thoughts on Tarot.

Tarot expert Mary Greer writes, "Though not a direct focus of his energies, Carl Jung, nevertheless, recognized tarot as depicting archetypes of transformation like those he had found in myths, dreams and alchemy, and as having divinatory characteristics similar to the *I-Ching* and astrology. Most of all, Jung believed a person could use 'an intuitive method' to understand—through tarot's reflecting the collective unconscious into a 'cloud of cognition'—the *meaning* in a present, prevailing condition."¹

We can consider the symbology depicted on Tarot cards as metaphors for situations and inner experiences. Those metaphors can provide a more concrete way to examine your inner world - including your relationship with your habit.

Exercise

Using a physical tarot deck if you have access to one, or a digital tarot card selector (easily found with a Google search) if not, draw a card with the intention that it will offer you wisdom regarding your efforts in this project. What does the image on the card say to you? Does the symbology resonate with you? Write down whatever comes to mind, trying not to edit your thoughts too much. If you want to, look up the traditional meaning of the card, but don't feel obligated. The meaning you take from it is what's most important.

¹ Mary Greer <https://marykgreer.com/2008/03/31/carl-jung-and-tarot/>

Day 24: Astrology

Do you know your “big three” signs in astrology? If your answer is “What? We have more than one astrological sign?” Then you only know your sun sign. And that’s fine! But you’re missing a lot of the (your) story.

My sun sign is Sagittarius, and that never felt quite right or useful for me. But when I discovered that my moon AND rising signs were both Aries, I began to understand more about why I am the way I am.

All three (my sun, moon, and rising signs) are fire signs, meaning they embody the element of fire. Aries is ruled by Mars, the god of war.

My inclination to heat - both literally, physically sweating AND my temper - suddenly made so much more sense to me. As did my thirst for something to quench that internal furnace - namely wine.

You are, of course, perfectly welcome to dismiss astrology and the like as useless. If, however, you’re interested in every possible avenue of self-understanding, I suggest you google “how to find my big 3 zodiac.” You’ll need your birth date AND TIME as well as the city/town in which you were born.

Lots of free sites calculate your big 3 instantly, so don’t pay a site to do it (in all things astrology, I’m partial to Chani.com).

Exercise:

If you don’t already know, find out what time you were born. Then find out what your big 3 astrological signs are (and loads more information) by entering that information into a free astrology site like my personal

favorite, CHANI.com. Read all the material that you get as a result, and consider how it might help you in this Project and beyond.

Day 25: Spells

Whether we're conscious of it or not, we're all casting spells all the time.

What do you want? Spell it out for me.

To spell, to cast a spell, is to assert your intention that something will happen. When, at the start of the Project, you wrote out your intention regarding your habit, you were casting a spell.

When you tell yourself something you want is impossible, you're casting a spell. How many times have you cast a negative spell on yourselves or someone else without being conscious of it?

People who want to dabble in spellcraft will search for a spell that someone, presumably someone "more powerful" than them, has written. Real witches know that the most powerful spell is one they write for themselves from their own aching intention .

"Correspondances" are materials or astrological occurrences that add some oomph and panache to spells. That means planning out your intentions and matching them with corresponding herbs/flowers/stones/crystals and/or auspicious dates in the astrological calendar to perform your spell. It's a wonderful way to strengthen your spells, but I maintain that intention is the most important ingredient of any spell.

Again, I ask, what is it that you want? Spell it out. Be deliberate about it.

Exercise:

Write a spell for the last days of our Project. Cast it.

Day 26: Prayer

To me, affirmations, meditation, spells, and prayer are all different facets of light coming through one prism. They're all tools to help bring ourselves into alignment with the greatest good and with Source, whatever that means to us.

Too many people live in fear of cultivating a relationship with the divine because they don't want to seem goofy or naive. Or they think "prayer" has gotta sound like *"Big Daddy in the sky, Thou art so great and i art so loathsome please forgive me and also let my ball club win. Amen,"* kinda thing.

I'm here to tell you it doesn't.

On Day 22 we talked about Spirit Guides. For me, my prayer is a continual conversation with my Guides. It just goes on in the background for me, pretty much constantly. It's not a transactional conversation - I don't promise to do something in exchange for something from Divine Source. That transactional perspective on our relationship with the Divine has caused a lot of the mess we're in as a species. But I do ask for insight, protection, and patience.

Prompt:

What's your relationship with prayer? If it's not part of your life, could changing your perspective on what prayer means make it more palatable to you? Would it be helpful?

Day 27: Week 4 Review

You've completed the final full week of the project. How do you feel?

Prompt:

What were your experiences during Week 4? Have you maintained your initial goal? Has it been easy or difficult? Have any of the practices presented this week been particularly helpful for you?

Wrapping Up

Day 28: What techniques/habits will be helpful moving forward?

Over the course of the last month, I've presented methods/techniques/ideas to help with your Habit Break and beyond. When we started, I mentioned that they'd fall broadly into several categories: mindfulness/intentionality; polyvagal theory; somatics; Jungian psychology; energy work & metaphysics; and self-directed neuroplasticity.

If you've worked through all the Days, you can probably see how most every method fits nicely under at least one category, and some fit under all.

Here's another way to categorize what we've learned this month.

Physical Activities to help RIGHT NOW

Dancing

Tapping

Shaking

Humming

Bilateral Stimulation

Metaphysical/Energetic Help

Tarot

Astrology

Altars

Reiki

Spirit Guides

Spells

Prayer

Long-term daily practices

Meditation

Breathwork

Morning Ritual

Theories/Ideas/Perspective Changes

Multiple Selves

Housebreaking the Ego

Shadow Work

Soul-Lit

Prompt:

Use the list above to reflect on all that we've covered during the project.

What's been useful for you? Does anything stand out as something you'd like to learn more about? I've included a list of further reading at the back of the book to give you some starting points.

Day 29: How to Proceed

It's the penultimate day of the Program. My hope for you is that you've gotten more clarity on your habit, and on yourself generally, through taking a One Month Habit Break with me.

Our goal for today is to reflect on what you've learned and to consider how you'd like to proceed regarding your habit.

Find the Oath you wrote to yourself on Day 6, then complete the following prompts.

Prompts:

- **For the Project, my intention regarding my habit was to...**
- **As it unfolded, here's how I engaged with my habit during the course of the Project...**
- **Here's what I learned about myself during the Project...**
- **In the future, here's my intention for engaging with my habit (*stop drinking entirely/drink only on weekends/stop gossiping/limit spending to X/etc*)**
- **Here's my plan to fulfill my intention (*learn more about X/start a morning ritual/create an altar/etc*)**

Day 30: Month Review: Letter to Your Selves

It's the last day of your One Month Habit Break! I'm so proud of you. I truly hope you're proud of yourself, and of the discoveries you've made about your own precious self. So let's use what you learned from the Program and from yesterday's prompts to write a sincere letter to yourself as the co-creator of your reality.

Prompt:

Using what you learned over the last month, write a letter to yourself about the month. In the letter, (this is important) express your gratitude to yourself for the effort you put in, however the project ended. Commit to a plan going forward, knowing you will always give yourself grace and that change is the only constant in life. Then sign and date your letter.

Example:

Dear Leah (and all the other selves I am),

I'm so proud of you. You went an entire month without taking a single drink and you weren't sure you could do that. You are so powerful and I feel so much more confident about our future because I've seen what we can do with mindfulness and intention.

Thinking about your ego as a guard dog that we need to spend more time training has been a helpful perspective. We've enjoyed (surprisingly) having a morning ritual and will continue to build on what you've started. We've discovered that our sun, moon, and rising signs are all fire signs, and that helps us understand our constant heat and thirst.

That has helped us give ourselves more grace. We've learned that your nervous system is consistently and very easily dysregulated, and tapping, breathing, and meditation have worked to help us get regulated. We're going to incorporate them into your daily practice.

The intention of all of our selves is to stop drinking entirely, and we'll use our new tools and knowledge to support that intention. Regardless of what the future holds I love and respect you, all of my selves, utterly. Thank you for doing this.

With all my love,

Leah

1/30/24

About the Author

Leah Welborn embraces her identity as “the Mystic Autistic” because fully knowing and falling in love with who she is has been the most empowering move of her life.

Always a quester, Leah chased knowledge relentlessly in her 20s and 30s, earning a BA in English Lit and a Master’s Degree in art history from the University of Texas at Austin, then an MFA in Creative Writing from Antioch University in Los Angeles. She’s also worked in a variety of fields and has managed to be depressed in most of them.

A moment of grace around the time of the onset of the pandemic saved Leah from herself, and sense then she’s recognized her life’s mission to be empowering her magical self and helping others empower their magical selves.

Currently, Leah is sharing a joyful home in Colorado with her mom, the pup Enkidu, and the cats Wolfie and Rosie.

She is the founder and owner of Empower Your Magical Self Reiki and the host of Empower Your Magical Self (the podcast).

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