



## MODULE I

This module introduces you to the main concepts in the peace within process, core principles, core tools – and an overview of the modules and how best to work through them. You will learn about the emotional circulatory system, and the dual components of deep breathing and compassionate awareness to bring more peace into your life and relationships.

# 1: THE PEACE WITHIN PROCESS

I was born in the wilds of southwestern Connecticut, an hour out of New York City by train, but surrounded by deep, dense woods that could have come straight out of *The Last of the Mohicans*. Ancient fruit orchards, brooks, and boulders provided fertile ground for my explorations. I left the house for the woods whenever the world became too much for me.

My inner life was always more compelling to me than the outer one. As a child, I often experienced feelings that seemed too large and deep for words. Maybe that's why I didn't speak until I was nearly 3.

During these treks in nature, I sensed something great and ancient around me: I felt connected to a nameless, palpable presence. My breathing slowed, and my heart opened; I was filled with joy and contentment.

In the intuitive way of a child, I was involved in the major components of the *Peace Within* practice— a deep, relaxed breath, a state of meditation that

quieted my mind in focus and contemplation, and a mindfulness that allowed me to experience whatever was before me: a maple tree, a singing bird, or the cloud-filled sky.

It is this deep, joy-filled peace that I want to help you cultivate in your own life – a peace and presence closely akin to the wonder, awe, and mystery we experienced as young children.

### THE EMOTIONAL CIRCULATORY SYSTEM

The *emotional circulatory system* is a concept I've coined to describe the *Peace Within* process at work. The great enemy of inner peace is not emotions themselves, but the way we deal with them. Emotions come and go constantly all day, like the weather. When the emotional circulatory system is working well, we can allow the emotions to move through us, without repressing them or acting them out. The emotions themselves are less the issue than our reaction to them. As the saying goes here on the Florida Gulf Coast, "If you don't like the weather, just wait a minute."

In life, *time* is often all we need to *feel better*.<sup>1</sup>

In this module, I'll provide an overview and road map for the practices we'll be going into more deeply as we explore the emotional circulatory system.

Module 2, *Peace Within the Body*, will focus on working with sensations; Module 3, *Peace Within the Mind*, will focus on working with thoughts in the emotional circulatory system; and Module 4, *Peace Within the Heart*, will explore working with feelings.

### THOUGHTS, FEELINGS AND SENSATIONS

In the human cardiopulmonary circulatory system, there are two main components: the heart and lungs. I like to think of the emotional circulatory system in a similar way. Instead of pumping blood, we are pumping experiences. Instead of oxygenating the blood, we are bringing compassionate, heart-centered awareness to our experiences.<sup>2</sup>

Just as blood is made up of three main components—plasma, red and white blood cells, and platelets—so also are experiences made up of three parts: *thoughts, feelings and sensations*. All you experience and all that passes through your consciousness can be categorized into one of these.<sup>3</sup>

Our physical circulatory system is in constant motion. The rhythm of the heart and lungs circulates in a beautifully orchestrated rhythm. Our lives are also based on flow and circulation. Movement *is* life. It's when we become stuck in one idea about who we are, where we are, and what is happening that we suffer. In order to remain vitally alive, and healthy we must let these elements flow through us.

In meditation, we call becoming stuck *attachment*. Whenever we become attached to an idea, feeling, person, object, or drug we cease to flow. Then the emotional circulatory system becomes unbalanced, and suffering ensues.

*Compassionate awareness* is like oxygen for our emotional hearts and souls. The root of the *peace within process* is learning to move from the imbalance and suffering that occurs from a dysfunctional relationship with your consciousness towards a healthy, natural, regulation of it. This occurs when you learn to allow your feelings, thoughts, and sensations to circulate naturally and effortlessly, while resting in compassionate awareness.<sup>4</sup>

How do we draw oxygen into the blood in order to nourish the constant stream of life? The breath! It is the same with the emotional circulatory system. Deep diaphragmatic breathing helps bring compassionate awareness to our experiences and their accompanying thoughts, feelings, and sensations.

In this way, the two main components of the emotional circulatory system are *compassionate awareness* (the heart of the system) and *diaphragmatic breathing* (the lungs of the system)(See *Diagram 1*).

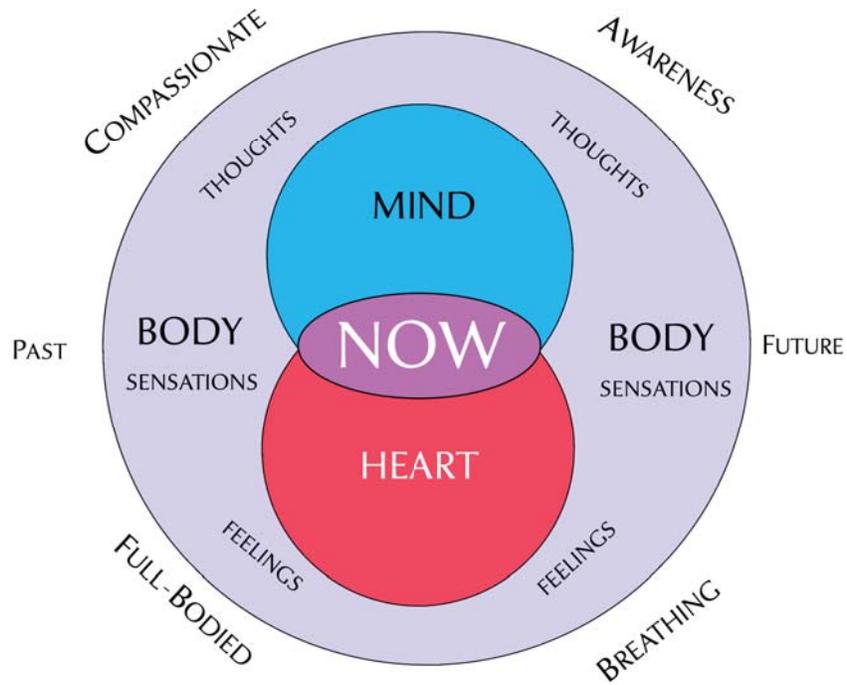
Throughout the modules, I'll introduce you to practices that help the emotional circulatory system run smoothly. There are micro-meditations and exercises, as well as longer guided and unguided meditations. The micro-meditations and exercises can

be done at any time and are meant to punctuate your day with moments of peace.

These practices provide you with immediate tools to quickly quiet the mind, open the heart, and allow experience to flow through you. A quiet mind and open heart in this context does not necessarily mean there are no thoughts or feelings present – only that you are not *attaching* to them and are allowing them to move through you.

As you understand more about how the emotional circulatory system works you'll begin to realize how everything is ceaselessly arising in awareness, passing through it, then dissolving or dropping out of consciousness. This occurs just as the breath rises and falls, the day turns to night, and the seasons of the year come and go. When you begin to focus on the rising and falling and less on the contents of consciousness, you begin to experience the *natural state of peace* that resides within, not the drama the mind creates. Once this has happened, the journey has begun.

### EMOTIONAL CIRCULATORY SYSTEM



The emotional circulatory system improves when we bring compassionate awareness and full-bodied breathing to our moment to moment experience without pushing away the unpleasant, nor clinging to the pleasant.

DIAGRAM 1

## THE CORE TOOLS

Although our goal is to experience a deep inner peace that is not dependent on external circumstances, we initially need to cultivate these practices in a place that helps induce this state. Once we become familiar with shifting our consciousness, becoming mindful and self-compassionate in a quiet, safe space, we can then carry these skills out into the world.

Your *Peace Within* journal and your *Peace Within* space are two core tools in this process.

One way I like to think about this is that before you embark on open-water diving, you typically practice and learn about diving in a shallow swimming pool. In this way, you can become acquainted with the tools of diving, such as the breathing apparatus, the regulator that allows you to breathe underwater, the weight system, and buoyancy control.

The *Peace Within* process ‘pool’ creates a safe, sacred space where you can practice meditations, breathwork, mindfulness, and journaling in a relaxed, safe, and focused way. This is also a place to digitally detox by moving away from your computer, digital tablet, and smartphone. My *Peace Within* space is a walk-in closet, but it could be the corner of a bedroom, or even something portable, such as a yoga or Pilates mat.

## YOUR PEACE WITHIN SPACE

Find a place where you can practice the exercises in this book, as quiet and out of the way as possible. Although a room dedicated to this is ideal, for many this may be unrealistic. The size is less important than having a regular place where you can retreat from the world to practice.

Essential elements include:

1. *A cushion, bolster, or meditation bench for sitting meditation*
2. *Yoga or Pilates mat for lying-down meditation*

Optional elements are:

3. *Objects important from your life journey: photographs, drawings, writings, etc.*
4. *Candle (Be careful with open flames!)*
5. *An MP3 player for playing guided meditations*
6. *Eye pillow or mask to block out light and soothe eyes*

## YOUR PEACE WITHIN JOURNAL

The *Peace Within* journal provides a foundation for your journey and a log of your progress. Reverting to our diving analogy: A diver's 'log' is an indispensable part of training, so the diver can

record her progress as she learns to dive deeper, and use different equipment. It also serves as a priceless personal document.

A typical dive log notes the date, time, number, and location of the dive, the conditions, what equipment was used, depth of the dive and any personal experiences. All of this can be written in your *Peace Within* journal; however, your writing here will be much more than this, because the journal exercises themselves *are* dives!

In fact, the word *journal* comes from the root word *jour*, the same used in journey and French for “day.” At its best, a journal is a journey within. Just as I had people journal when I guided them on vision quests deep into the wilderness, this process is also a journey into your inner nature. You will truly discover who you are beneath conditioned thoughts, and culturally conditioned emotions that come from a lifetime of exposure to mass media, advertising, and corporate culture. At times, you might feel overwhelmed, or disoriented, but the journal will help keep you on track as you document your journey.

The journal will also be a place where you can explore spontaneous, unedited, uncensored writing in exercises to help you identify your own process and let go of emotions. For me, the journal is a critical component of coming to realize you are not your thoughts, feelings, or even the stories you tell yourself. You are the flow itself.

First, you need to acquire an actual journal that appeals to you,

one you'll feel comfortable writing in. It could be as simple as a black composition book, or you may prefer a beautiful leather-bound journal. Whatever you choose, listen to your heart; it will be a wonderful touchstone for you as we journey together.

If you're a techy and want to keep your journal on your computer, that's fine, though it is best to password-protect it. Some people find writing longhand works better for them, particularly when journaling about their meditation practice, but this isn't necessary.

Essential elements include:

1. *Acquire an appealing journal.*
2. *Keep a number of writing utensils handy with your journal for whenever you might feel like writing.*
3. *Write your intention in the front of the journal, then sign and date it. You might even make a copy of your 'commitment contract' and place it in the front of the journal.*
4. *Optional – You might want to decorate the inside or outside of your journal in a way that is pleasing and meaningful to you.*

Both the *Peace Within* space and journal help you create the proper mindset to approach this journey. In doing so, you are honoring your experience and yourself in a way that promotes and fosters your personal healing and growth through this process.

## BREATHWORK

Breath forms the foundation of our lives. It is the first thing we do when we come into the world and the last thing we do before we leave it. In most cultures, breath is synonymous with the soul, as in the words spirit (English) *qi/chi* (Chinese), *prana* (Sanskrit), *psyche* (Greek), *mana* (Polynesian), and *ruach* (Hebrew).

Still, when I first heard the word *breathwork* at the age of 18, it sounded strange. “Isn’t breathing involuntary, the most effortless act in the world? Why should anyone work at it?” I asked myself. As my first meditation class taught me, although we all breathe without thinking about it, few of us breathe correctly. I soon realized how powerful exploring my breath could be. Over the decades, I have learned the extraordinary varieties of breath exercises.

*The breath is  
the  
intersection  
of the body  
and mind.*

—*Thich Nhat  
Hanh*

It is important to begin to develop an ongoing practice of breathwork that helps you breathe deeply and enriches your body with nourishing oxygen. Learning to breathe effectively, will take some effort. Becoming conscious of how you breathe and developing healthier breathing practices helps you take care of your body, while deepening your experience of inner peace.

We all arrive in the world breathing well and deeply. Watch an infant, cat, or dog; they instinctively use a natural, deeper form of respiration called abdominal, diaphragmatic, or belly breathing.

However, once we start school, and spend our days sitting at desks, focusing on our minds, we begin shallow breathing. We become divorced from our natural full-bodied respiration and begin to breathe from our chests. By adulthood, our stress-filled lives have fostered chronic, chest breathing. The good news is that by practicing breathwork, you can train your body to breathe properly through the abdomen.

*When you own  
your breath,  
nobody can steal  
your peace.*

—Unknown

This kind of work involves waking up to the moment-to-moment miracle of breathing. This includes simple breath awareness, deep diaphragmatic breathing, and any other practice that focuses primarily on breathing. Breathing is the one bodily function that is both under voluntary and involuntary control. Its ceaseless contraction and expansion beautifully mirrors the balance that we find throughout nature and our lives—night and day, birth and decay, waking and sleeping, life and death.

Breathing well and mindfully is always the river that takes us back to the ocean of peace that lies inside us. We will explore this in great detail throughout our journey together; however, because it is the epicenter of the *Peace Within* process, it is important to emphasize it from the very start.

As you breathe in at this moment, I want you to be aware of the fact that you are getting to know a bit more about who you really are with each inhale and exhale. What if you were not your body, but the breath that animates the body? How differently would

you explore, touch, connect, and be invested in breathing deeply, well and fully? It is said indigenous people around the world feared white conquerors because they seemed completely unaware of their breathing; that meant they were disconnected from their environment, hearts, and souls. I continue to find this to be true. Many people come into my office or my meditation and yoga classes, and it amazes me how few are really present in their breathing.

Although I'll be guiding you through meditations to formally practice at different times of the day, it's just as important to be aware of your breath and the rising and falling of the belly at all times

## BELLY BREATHING

Belly breathing, also known as abdominal or diaphragmatic breathing, is the way to optimize breathwork and facilitate the proper functioning of both the cardiopulmonary and emotional circulatory systems. The natural present moment awareness we had as children was accompanied by belly breathing—our natural breathing style.

The diaphragm is a large, dome-shaped muscle that lies just below the lungs, the most efficient muscle used in respiration.

Breathing from the chest is a very shallow form of respiration in

which we only use the top portion of our lungs. Most of the blood vessels that provide oxygen to our bodies are in the neglected bottom half of the lungs, so chest breathing takes in less oxygen. This makes us breathe more rapidly and increases the body's stress response. Chest breathing also upsets the body's blood oxygen/carbon dioxide balance and can actually lead to all sorts of physical symptoms, from headaches and fatigue to anxiety and even panic attacks. During my many years of meditating and playing indigenous flute, I have frequently experienced the stress reducing, energizing, and healing power of belly breathing.

Deep breathing encourages complete oxygen exchange. As a result of filling the bottom third of the lungs, which often fail to fill in shallow chest breathing, deep breathing encourages complete oxygen exchange. This outflow of carbon dioxide and inflow of oxygen slows the heart rate and reduces or stabilizes blood pressure. It also interrupts the body's flight-or-flight response, induces natural relaxation responses by turning off the sympathetic nervous system (the body's accelerator), and engages the parasympathetic nervous system (the body's brake).

As a culture we revere 'six-pack abs,' the 'washboard stomach,' which restricts breathing from the belly. The result of all this shallow breathing is increased stress, tension, and anxiety.

Unfortunately, most people I work with only breathe shallowly, particularly those who have been traumatized or who experience

chronic anxiety and stress. Deep breathing, our most natural self-healing technique, simply feels unnatural.

We literally tighten the belly to keep ourselves from allowing feelings to move through us. When we repress feelings and strong emotions, we subconsciously breathe shallowly or, even worse, hold our breath.

One of the primary reasons deep breathing seems so unnatural is the cultural message that we should ‘bottle up’ emotions – particularly strong ones. Women are taught not to express or show anger, and men are often instructed to bottle up grief and to never cry.

This was certainly the case in my own family. My father seldom cried, and could not only be stubborn but also launch into frightening rages that I later understood were related to PTSD from his years at war. Although, he was not supportive of my creative interests, I was always involved in music and particularly enjoyed singing in the church choir. The music director chose beautiful songs for us right out of the early Gregorian chants. I loved this ethereal music, so other-worldly while also touching the heart and the soul.

I was excited about the first concert we were to give to the congregation. It was a mystical night, with the sanctuary lit only by candles giving it the feel of a medieval monastery. As we began singing, I saw my father’s face in the front row streaming with

tears. Of all the things I had ever done, he'd never had that reaction before.

After the concert, his eyes were still moist as he gave me one of the biggest hugs I could remember. He told me he was proud of me and how the singing brought back memories of his childhood in Italy before the war. I felt something deep within me open and breathe in pleasure and relief.

That encounter told me a great deal about him and what innocence he had lost through the war and his move to a new country. I saw that under his rages lay a tender heart, full of great love and feeling. Healing happened for both of us that evening, through the breath and by allowing the tears and feelings to flow freely between us. It was also one of many instances in my life where music served as the midwife for healing.

### BELLY BREATHING EXERCISE

Find a relaxed, quiet, and peaceful place where you can either sit or lie down without being disturbed.

Place one hand on your chest and one on your belly. I like to put my right hand over my heart and the left hand over the belly, but do whatever feels most comfortable (*See Diagram 2*).

Breathing in through the nose, imagine the air coming into your nose, traveling all the way down into your belly and expanding it like a bellows. As you do so, feel the hand on your belly rise. Then breathe out through your mouth or nose, whichever feels more comfortable, and feel the bellows empty and the belly fall. Continue to breathe in this way, then alternate with shallow breathing just from the chest. You'll notice how the shallow chest breath will feel constricted and tense, while belly breathing brings a deep state of relaxation.

Breathing deep, full bodied belly breaths is a wonderful practice to do before any formal meditation, before sleep, or upon awakening. Throughout this book, whenever I refer to taking *deep breaths* or *breathwork*, I am referring to techniques based on this basic component of diaphragmatic breathing.

You are now ready to move onto the second major component of the emotional circulatory system: *mindfulness*.



DIAGRAM 2

## MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness has been my central practice for the last three decades. Even as a child, I practiced it, though I wasn't aware that there was a name for this activity.

As a boy, I was a highly sensitive dreamer, quiet and introverted. My parents used to say I would sit so intently, silently gazing out at the woods and nature, that they would make jokes that I was watching the grass grow. I remember long hours beholding the world from my favorite maple tree that grew in our front yard. I retreated to her (I always thought of this tree as female) whenever the adult world became too much.

Today, the practice of mindfulness is a topic of interest in fields ranging from physics to psychology, even making the cover of *Time Magazine* in February, 2014, which declared the birth of "The Mindful Revolution." Science has revealed how extremely effective mindfulness is in alleviating many physical and emotional disorders, from anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) to depression and drug addiction. I was fortunate to be introduced to the practice in 1980 by one of the world authorities on mindfulness and meditation, Dr. William Mikulas.<sup>5</sup>

Simply put, mindfulness is non-judgmental, present moment awareness of what is. Where meditation usually involves focusing on an object of attention to develop concentration, mindfulness is

simply being present to whatever emotions, thoughts, and sensations are passing through consciousness without judgment. Like breathwork, we will be going into this in greater detail throughout the book. Each practice has a mindfulness component. The more you practice and experience the power of mindfulness, the more you will organically and naturally foster a deep connection with the natural state of peace that is your birthright and truest nature.

### COMPASSIONATE AWARENESS

今  
now  
心  
heart-mind

念

There is an additional component to mindfulness that is often missing in most discussions today: *compassionate awareness*.

In our culture I find it's crucial to include this heart dimension in order to experience a deep well of peace. The Chinese character for mindfulness is actually made up of the character for 'now' and 'heart-mind'.

Because Western culture and languages are primarily thinking oriented, we don't even have an adequate word to capture the depth of the original meaning of mindfulness. So much of meditation and mindfulness practice tends to be thought-based and

intellectual, with the heart left out of the equation. One of the major reasons I wrote this book is to include this heart dimension. In fact, as we progress, you will find that it is the heart dimension, that opens us most readily and directly to the ocean of peace that lies within. In fact, one way to practice compassionate awareness is to say the mantra to yourself: “*Heart-Mind-Now*”.<sup>6</sup>

There are few approaches that deal with our emotional lives, which I believe are at the root of so much violence on the planet. We are not taught in school how to deal skillfully with difficult emotions.

It is my hope that a *Peace Within* process of some kind that incorporates breathwork, meditation, and mindfulness, will one day be an essential part of every child’s education—as important as reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Perhaps in this way as humanity becomes more skillful at cultivating *Peace Within*, we can one day also experience true, genuine, and lasting peace-without.

## MEDITATION

Peace is the absence of conflict. In a world defined by duality, it's a precious commodity. In helping people deal with inner and outer conflicts for over thirty years, I've found that the power of meditation helps bring a deep experience of inner peace, which is also healing to the mind, body, and soul. Modern science has finally discovered what ancient cultures have long known: Meditation can literally change you.

It turns out that the brain isn't a static organ stuck in early adulthood; rather, it is a muscle that never stops changing or losing the ability to form neural connections. Research shows that meditation can change the physical structure of the brain.

Eileen Luders, a researcher at the University of California, and her colleagues compared brain scans of meditators and age-matched non-meditators and found that meditators possessed more gray matter in regions of the brain that are crucial for attention, emotion regulation, and mental flexibility.<sup>7</sup>

When neuroscientist Richard Davidson first began studying compassion, it was with long-term meditators who were monks. The instrument of measurement was an electrode EEG cap. When the monks saw that this cap was to be placed on the head, they all began to chuckle. The researchers believed it was because the cap looked odd, with so many long electrode wires that resembled

wild hair, but that wasn't the reason. Finally, one monk explained what they found so funny: It was that everyone knows that compassion doesn't come from the brain, but the heart.<sup>8</sup>

In many ways, my life has been a meditation on the experience of peace, and how to achieve it, even during the darkest of times. In my work, I have also witnessed individuals, couples, and groups struggle to find serenity within themselves and their relationships. In observing them, I've found that it's the power of meditation that has helped them bring about a deep experience of inner peace, which is healing to mind, body, and soul.

In the next module, I'll put together compassionate awareness with breathwork practices to introduce you to a whole host of meditations—from brief micro-meditations to longer formal meditation practices that are done seated, lying down, standing, or walking. I'll also include suggestions as to how you can utilize music with many of the meditations as you deepen your practice.

The micro-meditations cannot only be used to reset the emotional circulatory system throughout the day to keep it flowing, but they can also be used before each of the more formal meditation and journaling exercises. You will find they will help keep you present, as well as more creative and skillful.

## MODULE 1 – MAIN POINTS

To summarize the main points in Module 1: The *Peace Within* Process.

1. *The emotional circulatory system functions much like our physical circulatory system and is made up of sensations, feelings and thoughts flowing through our awareness.*
2. *The two components of the emotional circulatory system are the breath and mindfulness.*
3. *The emotional circulatory system is optimized through practicing deep belly breathing and compassionate awareness of what is present in the moment.*
4. *The Peace Within process is a set of practices to help keep the emotional circulatory system running smoothly through breathwork, mindfulness practices, meditations, and journaling exercises.*

## MODULE 1 - PEACE WITHIN PRACTICES

1. *Be mindful of your breathing. Encourage yourself to belly breathe whenever you notice yourself becoming anxious, frustrated, or distracted.*
2. *Set up your Peace Within space.*
3. *Acquire your Peace Within journal and begin the first entry.*

4. *Journal about why you are embarking on this program, what you are getting out of it and mark on the calendar when you will finish.*
5. *Print out the core principles and look at them each day and notice how your understanding and feelings about each principle evolves and changes.*
6. *Sign your peace within contract.*