

approaching this work. Of course, there will inevitably be overlap. As you engage in expressive arts practices, I hope that you tap into your internal sense of creativity and the potential to bring something to life that wasn't there when you began this work. I view being creative as bringing something to life, and I find this to be empowering for survivors of trauma.

However, too many people I have worked with over the years have gotten hung up on the word *creative*. I've had many clients say, "I'm not very creative," because they received a message along the way that being creative means you must have produced something original. At some point, creativity became associated with originality or radical innovation; so many individuals assume that they cannot possibly be creative. I vividly recall a horrible comment a parent of a former student stated to her face. This happened during one of my episodes as a high school speech and debate coach. I was talking to the student and her parent about the possibility of her entering tournaments in a category called Original Oratory, where the student is challenged to write and deliver a 10-minute informative yet motivational speech. The parent replied in disgust, "Original? She doesn't have an original bone in her body or an original thought in her head. She just knows how to bullshit."

I was too shut down by his crudeness at the time to respond intelligently. To make amends for not being able to defend her birthright as a lovely, creative young woman, I've dedicated my life to empowering others through my work as an expressive arts therapist. I use the words *creative* and *expressive* interchangeably in this book, since I believe that we all have the capacity to birth new creations and we all have something to express. That being said, I discovered in my work with clients that the word *expressive* is much gentler. It doesn't come with the societally programmed messaging that to be creative means you must be the next Steve Jobs or Annie Liebowitz. You can use whichever term helps you approach this work more enthusiastically. I believe that for most of us, who come to this work wrought with hang-ups

and negative belief systems, “expressive” is easier to embrace. I also believe the self-compassion inherent in this term helps to define the field of expressive arts and the approach of expressive arts therapy.

Throughout the book I will largely use the term *expressive arts* to describe the largest possible scope of our field and its work. For instance, even IEATA offers a credential for educators and consultants, suggesting that clinical therapists don’t have the market cornered on using this work. Classroom teachers, wellness instructors, spiritual directors, and pastoral care providers are examples of other professions that can employ the expressive arts as vehicles for teaching and ministry.

My own mentor and primary teacher in the expressive arts, Christine Valters Paintner, holds a Ph.D. in Christian Spirituality and primarily works as a writer and retreat leader. I studied with her even after I had a Ph.D. in Counseling and had authored several books on trauma. I believe I learned just as much, if not more from her, than I did from any of my counseling professors or advanced trauma instructors. The message here is that we can all learn from each other, and the spirit of expressive arts promotes this collaborative exchange. My use of the term expressive arts suggests that we can all approach this work if we feel ready, within or outside of a professional therapeutic context. I may make an odd reference or two to *expressive arts therapy* in the book if what I am discussing is uniquely clinical.

There are two other terms with which I want to familiarize you in this orientation: practice and process. A *practice* is an action that we take to connect with a set intention. Individualized practices throughout the book may include the practice of contemplative photography while on a nature walk or the practice of guided visualization. There is a practice I routinely use called Taking It To The Page, a guided writing exploration that takes various forms depending on the process in which we’re engaged. In expressive arts work, the noun *process* refers to a series of practices using multiple expressive forms in an interactive way. You may find yourself saying, “I’m in process right now.”

In this book the processes are specifically structured for your learning. I generally include six different practices within one process composed along a healing theme like mindfulness or grounding. There is no set time limit within which you must complete a process. You may even find that the process with which I start you out in this book elicits ideas and flows you into other practices you've been introduced to or develop on your own. I encourage you to go with that openness and expansion if it should happen for you. Sometimes I spend months in process with a certain theme and I'm never quite sure when it will wrap up organically or flow to the next process I'm inspired to accept.

The verb *process* is also quite special and a major feature of expressive arts work. Being in process is embracing a spirit of going with the flow of whatever may reveal itself in your practices and not being bound to any set outcome or goal. The mindfulness attitude of non-striving and the yogic concept of non-gripping (*aparigraha*) beautifully encompass what it means to be in process. You may set out to paint a rose and the strokes may not translate from your brain and hand to the canvas as you originally intended. Maybe with a spirit of non-judgment, you keep going with the strokes and what emerges is a beautiful, abstract rainbow-colored dove. What you see on the canvas may not be what you originally intended, yet something inside of you signals that this image is exactly what you were supposed to manifest. That rainbow dove may then lead to you writing a poem or dancing a dance in celebration. Who knows where the path will take you from there? This is the essence and the joy of being in process!

Being in process may be difficult for you, as it is for many survivors of trauma. Going with the flow can come with challenges because somewhere we may have internalized that having a plan and sticking to it is a way to keep ourselves safe. Your home of origin may have been characterized by radical unpredictability, so being in process can feel uneasy at first, especially with all this emphasis placed on not being attached to an outcome. We sometimes believe that if we keep our eyes on the prize of outcome that we

will be more secure. If we develop a contingency plan to respond to every possible *what if*, then we won't get hurt. However, I ask you to consider how many times you have been let down because that intended result doesn't come to fruition, usually due to forces beyond your control.

Knowing that process may be a struggle for you, I've prepared a preliminary set of practices that invites you to explore where you stand with being in process—to effectively dip your toes into the work of this book before diving in fully. This opening process and related practices appear toward the end of this Introduction.

There are fifteen processes of 6-7 practices each, and many of the practices offer significant modifications or bonus practices that you can choose to explore. The processes are divided into three sections, and the choice of three sections is deliberate. In trauma-focused care, most practitioners, regardless of their primary clinical orientation, work within a three-stage model of care. This three-stage model goes all the way back to 1889 and the work of French hypnotherapist Pierre Janet. He recognized that before a person can fully go deep and address the source of what ails them, they must first have a set of tools they can use to calm or soothe themselves, as needed. Janet's work generally refers to this first stage as Stabilization, which corresponds with Section I of *Process Not Perfection*. The stage that Janet called liquidating traumatic memories, or what professionals may call *processing* traumatic memories (notice the expressive arts link) is generally defined by the going deeper, getting to the root of matters. Section II is a companion for this process of going deeper if you feel yourself to be ready (be sure to read Some Safety Tips Before You Begin at the end of this section). The final stage in the Janet model is reintegration with society, which links to Section III of this book. The processes of Section III are designed to help you transition into your daily life now that you've reshaped or at least begun to transform some of the toxic negative core beliefs that have kept you stuck.

I recommend that you work the sections of the book in the order presented for optimal flow and for your own sense of safety. However, if you are working with a professional therapist and they suggest otherwise, please consider their feedback. Moreover, if your own natural process seems to take you in another direction and you end up mixing and matching some of the order, I encourage you to trust your own judgment as long as you keep listening with your body. If you feel like you're pushing yourself too hard emotionally, honor that *edge* and come back to one of your grounding or containing practices. Seek support from others in your network of social and emotional support as you need to.

Please avoid rushing. Take your time with the practices. The other use of the term *express*—as in *express mail* or *express delivery*—does not apply here. You may stumble upon a paradox (as many of us have) that slow savoring through these practices offers the *express* route to deep and full healing, and it may help to expedite the progress you are making in traditional therapy. However, if you make the results and the speed the focus, you may miss the deepest healing gifts along the way.

There is no right or wrong way to engage in the processes and practices. You may elect to take one day each week to be with a new process, or you may work one practice each day as a morning or evening ritual. You may skip weeks in between practice.

To help illuminate many of the practices, I've included sample pieces from members of the Institute for Creative Mindfulness community and other willing readers who have connected with me online. I also feature a few of my own pieces. The inclusion of these pieces in certain practices is to offer you inspiration if you are feeling stuck and to give you a working guide in practices with which you may be unfamiliar. There is no pressure to imitate any of the work you see. This is one of the reasons I elected to use black and white photography throughout the book.

My hope is that you are not too influenced or “colored” by the experiences of others. Although I make the colored versions of many of these pieces accessible to you online, I encourage you not to look at these until you’ve engaged in the practice for yourself first. I have set up an online portal as a supplementary resource for *Process Not Perfection* at:

www.traumamadesimple.com/pnp

In addition to viewing the sample pieces in color, this portal will also give you access to video demonstrations of many of the meditation and movement-based skills that I present in the book.

My final guidance in completing this part of the orientation is to refrain from just reading the material. You will get very little out of this book if you do that. *Do*, experiment, take part in the processes, even if you’ve picked up the book in your role as a teacher or a clinician wanting to share expressive arts with others. I find it difficult to guide others on a journey I have not been on myself. Similarly, unless you’ve taken part in these practices and processes it will be much harder for you to guide others through them.

YOUR GUIDE FOR THE JOURNEY

One of my expressive arts students recently shared, “I came out of the womb with a paint brush in my hand.” I shared in response, “I like it . . . I came out of the womb dancing to ABBA.” Indeed, my mother took disco lessons when she was pregnant with me in the late seventies and I received much of that joy in utero. I adore moving my body in response to any kind of music that comes on, or to the music of my own breath and heartbeat that works within me. Yes, when ABBA comes on, I get extra special happy!

When I was about five years old, I discovered that a way to deal with the feelings I already had amongst my schoolmates that I was somehow different or odd was to dance when I got home. I had a Mickey Mouse Record Player in our basement that allowed me to play Disney versions of pop hits and I would dance and move as if I was on my own private stage. Family

stressors and discord also started around this time and the gifts of dance, singing, and a lot of the dramatics that came with them for me, helped me to deal. Looking back at it now with years of therapeutic hindsight, I believe this practice was critical for me to be able to accept myself and my uniqueness enough to stay afloat in school and at home.

I had the good fortune of receiving lessons in many performing arts practices as a child: music, various types of dance, theater, and I also figure skated for a few years, which combined my interest in dance and theater. Speech and debate tournaments were a big part of my high school experience, and during several periods of my adult life I worked with high school students as a speech coach, primarily in prose-poetry reading and motivational speaking. During my undergraduate years in the American Studies & English department, I developed a love of film and directing. The expressive arts and the multi-modality of them all have been a part of my life from a very young age. It wasn't until I entered my own addiction recovery journey in 2002 that I began to see the therapeutic potential of expressive arts.

I came into my recovery and this field through the back door. I worked in humanitarian aid in Bosnia-Herzegovina from 2000-2003, primarily under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Parish of Medjugorje, a major pilgrimage site near Mostar. My family is Croatian, a main reason the region drew me after the brutal civil war of the 1990s. I learned that in teaching kids English, especially kids that were affected by unspeakable trauma and upheaval, it was much more productive to use songs, movies, skits, and dances than to rely on workbooks. While I worked in Bosnia I also learned how to play the guitar, a nice instrument to have as a vocalist, and after getting empowered with a few chords, I began writing songs about my experiences. My mentor, an American social worker named Janet Leff who helped set me on the path of addiction recovery by attending 12-step meetings, suggested that I go back to graduate school for clinical counseling.

During my first internship, I worked with a supervisor who was a gracious woman and a little too burned out to care what I did as a clinical intervention. I worked at an adolescent residential unit for mental illness. After I told her a little bit about myself she said, “You’re a singer? You play guitar? Do music with them. Dance with them. It’s got to work better than what we’re doing here.” During that experience I had the great privilege of putting my expressive arts teaching methods from Bosnia to use with disenfranchised teenagers. We sang, we danced, we painted, we wrote. To this day one of my proudest accomplishments as a clinician was organizing two concerts that summer that the kids performed for the entire hospital.

As I grew as a clinician interested in working with embodied and holistic methods for healing trauma and addiction, namely EMDR therapy, I always saw a pathway for working in the expressive arts to expand coping skills, as well as vehicles to enhance the other therapies I used. During my own experience as an EMDR client I developed a mindfulness meditation practice and eventually a yoga practice, which led to me creating a program in 2012 called *Dancing Mindfulness*. *Dancing Mindfulness* started as a community network of classes and has developed into a global movement with facilitators trained all around the world. In 2015, I wrote a book (with help from members of our community who shared their stories) that teaches people how to build and to cultivate a personal dancing mindfulness practice for healing, transformation, and wellness.

In 2014, I had the good fortune of meeting Christine Valters Paintner of Abbey of the Arts in Galway, Ireland. Christine, a perpetual student of conscious dance forms, sought me out for training in *Dancing Mindfulness*. Through her I discovered the formal field of expressive arts and expressive arts therapy; these fields provided a framework for what I’ve been blending into my clinical and personal wellness practices since the beginning. I enrolled in some formal retreat and course-based study with Christine and

received my official Registered Expressive Arts Therapist (REAT) credential in 2016, the icing on the cake to celebrate my life-long love of expressive arts.

In my teaching world, I offer courses and retreats that are more technical, such as EMDR therapy and fundamentals of trauma, as well as those that are more expressive, like the *Dancing Mindfulness* facilitator course, and a variety of classes and retreats using the expressive arts as a healing modality. In *Process Not Perfection*, I am delighted to share with you the fruits (or to carry the metaphor, the fruit juices) of my teaching and explorations with clients and students alike.

Rest assured, I have engaged in each of these practices and processes myself and have had many of the doubts you are likely to experience. I long viewed the visual arts as my “weak link,” believing I had no talent in this area. However, starting with a visual art I enjoyed the most (collage), I was able to embrace working with pastels, painting, and contemplative photography in a way I never thought possible. In recent years I’ve even reconnected with the filmmaking passions of my college days that I once brushed aside as a novel dream, and I use YouTube as a way to share many of my teachings and demonstrations with the world. The expressive arts can make it possible for dreams and for growth to come full circle.

SOME SAFETY TIPS BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Honor your limits, both physical and emotional. Although expressive arts can challenge us to explore those areas outside of our comfort zones and beyond, I do not endorse forcing or striving. Develop the art of listening with your body, a process that I explain early in the section on trauma.
- If your body is telling you to stop, honor that. Establish a practice early on in your work that feels safest and most grounding for you and use that as a “retreat” practice if you need it. The opening

practices in Section I are designed to help you cultivate these pauses and retreats, which is why I recommend you go through this book in order.

- If you have a support system or people you identify as safe enough to confide in, let them know that you're engaging in this work. Use them regularly to check-in with as you need to, especially if you are feeling overwhelmed. They may even have a willingness to work through the practices and processes with you. The content of this book lends itself well to a book club or study group. If you have Internet access you are always welcome to connect with the Facebook group, *Dancing Mindfulness* and Expressive Arts Community Forum.
- Physical safety is important. If you choose to engage in some of the movement practices described in the processes, be sure that you've cleared a sufficient amount of space to not bump yourself on anything. If you're dancing on a hardwood floor, avoid wearing socks—either move barefoot or with footwear that has some grip, even shoes will work. Watch your pant length as well. If you have an injury or a chronic illness, I recommend getting clearance from your medical provider before engaging in any physical practices.
- Please don't feel like you must spend a lot of money to do this work. I give you some tips on where to get the materials suggested for many of the practices at lower prices. Most of what I teach can be done with what you may already have in your living space.
- I suggest that you start a fresh journal for this experience. Blank page journals are my favorite because you can mix writing and visual art in a more elegant way. However, if you need lined pages for support or such a notebook is all you have access to, that will work just fine.

PREPARATION PROCESS: IN PROCESS

Please take a moment to read this poem I wrote at the beginning of 2017 called *In Process*. I encourage you to read it slowly, giving yourself some space to practice not rushing. You may find that reading it aloud (rather than to yourself) helps you to slow down. Don't worry, you don't have to read it for anyone, the privacy of your own space works. You are doing this for you! I used to tell my speech students that if you think you're reading it at just the right pace, it's probably too fast. If you feel like you're being a little too deliberate and slow, it's likely just right! As you read, practice what it means to listen with your body. Notice what may feel unsettling or uncomfortable and where or how you experience that in your physical body. Notice which lines may spark some of that instant, intuitive knowing and pay deliberate attention to how you experience that knowing in your physical body.

Take a breath . . . and let's begin!

In Process

Works of art in gestation
Are often called
Works in progress
The slogans and inspirational
Clichés call for
Progress not perfection
We judge students and employees
With the metric of a
Progress report

What if we were to change
Every use of the work *progress*
With the word *process*?
What if works of art in
Gestation are called
Works in process?
What if we encouraged
People to focus on
Process not perfection?
What if our metrics of
Evaluation took on the tone of
Process report?
What if we were to live our lives in process?

All life could transform
Into a journey of art making,
Fueled by the expressive spirit
We could refrain from
Judging ourselves so harshly
And instead savor the unknown
From the unknown and yes,
Even from our mistakes
We can discover a new way of being
From what we once labeled failures
We may unearth a new solution,
A new way to solve a problem
By creating in the moment and
Not forcing the big picture
May we encounter the essence of meaning.

After you've slowly read the poem, aloud or to yourself, take out a journal or something to write with and free write on the following questions. Your responses do not have to be neat or organized. Challenge yourself to write at least a paragraph although you are certainly free to write more.

- What was it like to *listen with my body* as I read this poem?
- What challenges do I see myself encountering with the approaching expressive arts work as a *process*?
- Knowing myself, what internal or external resources can I use to help me embrace this challenge with an open mind and an open heart?

In trauma work, a resource is anything tangible or intangible that you can use in the service of your recovery, to help you along the way. Examples of resources include certain prayers, meditation strategies, people in your support system, existing coping skills, songs, hobbies, pets, or even fictional characters or historical figures from which you draw strength.

You may already have noticed that it would feel more natural for you to draw or to collage your resources for this journey of becoming more comfortable with being *in process*. I am going to encourage you to make your resources visual now—either through drawing or through making a collage. With collage work, use some of the magazines or scraps that you may have hanging around and notice which images speak to you—reminding you of or directly describing your resources. As a cost-saving hint, many public libraries are willing to discard of their old magazines to the general public. Also, consider making use of some of the scraps that we often end up throwing away in your living or workspace as well. They may take on new purpose in a collage.

Notice what comes up for you during this visual process, continuing in the same spirit of non-judgment. You can do this work in silence or play some of your favorite music. Music can be both an anchoring and inspiring resource in expressive arts work, and I will invite you to work with music as a

final practice in this process. Either before or after you work with the visual practice, consider making a playlist (if you know how to use this technology on one of your devices) that represents your resources and the positive qualities (both internal and external) in your life right now. The music can be spiritual–inspirational or Heavy Metal Rock . . . or both. Our tastes and our needs are varied. Make this playlist and listen to it, and if you’re so inclined, dance/move to it as you do the visual work or afterwards. If you do not know how to make a playlist, putting on your favorite radio station or one of your trusted CDs/cassette tapes can also do the trick. As long as you select this music with the intention of it being a resource or support in your journey, you are in the spirit of this process.

Notice that I gave some clear direction at the beginning of this process to get you started and then I offered some options for blending other practices. This flexibility is designed to ease you into the art of process by offering you some choices. In this preparatory process we worked with the practices of poetry reading, body reflection, writing, collage or other art making, and identifying music. What are you noticing now that you’ve dipped your toes into this work? Congratulations for taking the risk and responding to the invitation!

The other processes in this book are taught with more direction and detail. The teaching is intended to guide you through the specific practices in the order they are presented. Although I encourage you to follow this order and flow, you may mix and match practices if the flow of your own process dictates it or it feels safer to do so. I ask that you not just skip over practices because you don’t feel like doing them. If that resistance arises, notice it, and maybe spend some more time in the previous practice to inspire you to move forward.

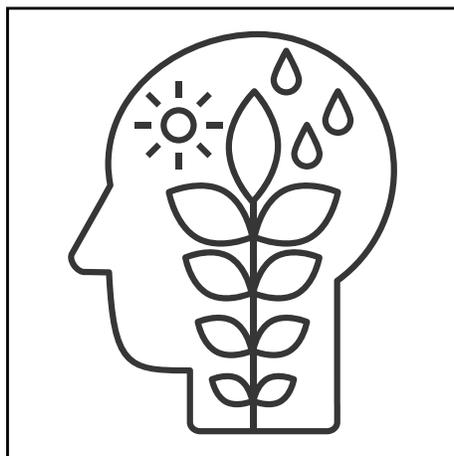
PROCESS NOT PERFECTION

Section 1:

PREPARING

JAMIE MARICH, PhD

PROCESS NOT PERFECTION



Process one

GROUNDING

If you have ever been in therapy or treatment before, you've likely heard your provider talk about *grounding*, a vital skill in trauma recovery, mental health recovery, and addiction recovery. It's also very likely that at one time or another you looked at your treatment provider with a sense of confusion about what the word means! Let's discuss some ideas and definitions, including some insights on why grounding is such an important part of any recovery path, before launching into our first formal process.

While noticing the literal ground below can be a good place to start exploring the meaning of this skill, that definition may be incomplete for you. There can be times when you literally look down at your feet and know,

at least in a rational sense, that you are in the here and now. However, other parts of your experience may be pulling you into the past or projecting you into the future. One of my favorite, comprehensive definitions of grounding comes from Margaret Postlewaite: *Coming into the here and now by using our bodily sensations*.²

In this process, we will explore many sensory channels and their combinations as we work through the various practices. It will be useful for you to observe and take notice of which senses, which experiences, and which practices are most powerful in bringing you home into the present moment. Keep an open mind and an open heart as experiences that resonate for you on one day or during one season of your life may change over time.

There are several reasons why the skill of grounding is vital to recovery, regardless of which path of recovery you are pursuing. Depending on where you are at in your journey, learning the skill of grounding and becoming familiar with it may feel like big, important work in and of itself. If that is where you are today and you are not concerned about going deeper yet, embrace where you are right now and focus on grounding. Even if you already know that deeper work is going to be required sooner rather than later to help you to reach your health, wellness, and recovery goals, having the ability to use a combination of senses and experiences to come back into the here and now, to return to equilibrium, is crucial. So many clients and students alike have expressed trepidation about feeling emotions and diving into trauma work because they fear it will overwhelm them or it may suck them in so completely, they won't be able to come back.

Therefore, we learn grounding first. More than that, we practice grounding in daily life to develop the confidence that no matter how many stressors may come at us, we can find our ground in the reality of the present moment. Join me on this discovery in the practices that follow.

³ Postlewaite, M. (2016). "Grounding: Coming into the here and now by using our bodily sensations." In Scott Simon Fehr (Ed.), *101 interventions in Group Therapy* (2nd ed.) New York: Routledge, pp. 78-80.



PRACTICE ONE

GROUNDING TREE VISUALIZATION

A famous quote attributed to the late martial artist Bruce Lee teaches, “Notice that the stiffest tree is most easily cracked, while the bamboo or willow survives by bending with the wind.” Trees can be powerful, metaphorical experiences for the practice of grounding. You may learn in your own experience with these first several practices, including the *Grounding Tree Visualization*, that trees have many lessons to teach us. Are you willing to listen?

- Whether you are sitting or standing, notice the connection of your feet to the ground below you. Take a few moments here. Maybe pump your feet back and forth a few times and then let them come to stillness. Really notice the connection.
- If this works for you, imagine that roots are coming out of your feet and shooting into the earth below you, like the roots of a tree.
- Notice the roots moving deep, deep, deep into the earth, through all of the different layers. Take a moment to just be with this experience. Think of yourself being firmly rooted in the earth, in the here-and-now.

MODIFICATION NOTES:

- ✓ You can name what kind of tree you are, such as an oak, a banyan, an elm, or a pine tree. This might make the process even more real for you!
- ✓ If you have earth elements around your office, such as essential oils like Cedarwood or Pine, or even a Mason jar full of dirt (try it, it smells like the “good earth”), consider bringing those in to this practice—it can add to the grounding experience.
- ✓ If you need a guided audio/video experience to help deepen your connection to this practice, go to: www.traumamadesimple.com/pnp



PRACTICE TWO

TREE POSE

In Hatha Yoga (the yoga of deliberate, physical postures), tree pose is one of the classic postures taught to develop balance. If you are already judging yourself along the lines of “I have terrible balance,” rest assured, you have to start somewhere. When I began my own yoga practice over ten years ago, even after having been a figure skater in my youth, I was shocked by how poor my balance was. Over time, through staying patient and non-judgmental with myself and the process, I acquired a much better sense of balance.

Some days the quality of the balance can still feel challenged, and that’s okay. Practicing yoga poses is never about being perfect. Rather, allow the poses to teach you about life and how you relate to life. In that spirit, please be gentle with yourself and give tree pose a try:

- Begin in a posture of standing meditation, preferably keeping your eyes open. Notice the connection of your feet to the ground below you. If you can, think about an energetic connection moving up from the ground into your feet, up your legs, and through the rest of your body, keeping you in the here-and-now.
- As you feel ready, shift the weight slightly to your right leg. You can use a chair or a wall to help you for balance at any point in this pose. You can also use your arms in whatever way works for you to help with balance.

- Once you experience reasonable steadiness on the right leg, turn the left foot out, placing the left heel on your right ankle. Your left knee also turns out slightly, moving away from your body.
- You can keep the pose here or if you want more challenge, you can also place the left foot against the side of your right lower leg. The knee is still turned away from the body. Continue to use the wall or chair for balance as needed. If you try the pose at this “setting” and become frustrated, go back to the lower setting with the foot against the ankle or give yourself permission to use the chair or wall. Using these assists does not diminish the value of the pose.
- For maximum challenge you can place the left foot against the right inner thigh, keeping the knee turned out. It is very important not to place the foot directly against the knee—if you can’t bring the foot to the upper leg; it’s perfectly fine to keep it at the lower position.
- Repeat the same process, using the left leg as your foundation. Notice any differences you may experience shifting sides. It’s completely normal for the experience to feel different on the other side.
- Starting with one attempt at the pose on each side of your body is fabulous. As you become more familiar with the pose, see if you can work up to three attempts, alternating right and left sides.

MODIFICATION NOTES:

- ✓ If standing up and doing this exercise feels too much to you at first (or if injury or disability inhibits you from standing up), you can achieve the same tree-shape posture laying down on a yoga mat or even in your bed. Laying down, keep one leg straight, as if you were standing, and turn the knee of the other leg out, bringing the sole of your foot to your ankle, calf, or thigh.
- ✓ See the photos that follow for additional guidance as needed.
- ✓ If you need additional instruction and require more visual cuing, go to: www.traumamadesimple.com/pnp

TREE POSE VARIATIONS



Tree Pose: Ankle Variation



Tree Pose: Thigh Variation



Tree Pose: Calf Variation



Tree Pose: Half Lotus Variation

JAMIE MARICH, PhD



PRACTICE THREE

MOVING THE BRANCHES

American naturalist John Muir once observed, “I never met a discontented tree. They grip the ground as though they liked it, and though fast rooted they travel about as far as we do. They go wandering forth in all directions with every wind, going and coming like ourselves, traveling with us around the sun two million miles a day, and through space, heaven knows how fast and how far.”⁴

In this next practice, let us continue to work with the wisdom of the tree as we play with the concept of moving the branches. Perhaps think of your arms, head, and other limbs as branches of the tree meeting the winds of life. Notice what you notice about how you may respond to the reality of the wind, a powerful metaphor for the flow of life and all that it brings.

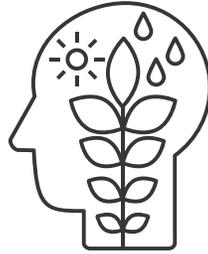
- In this *Dancing Mindfulness*-inspired practice, we’ll first start in tree pose, at whatever level or setting you can comfortably maintain.
- Deliberately start with the arms in a steady position (e.g., hands together at heart’s center/prayer, hands gently at the sides, hands in “okay” position at the sides)
- As you feel steadier, begin to move the arms away from the body or above the head. If you are using the wall or a chair for balance, keep one arm on the wall and begin moving the free arm.

⁴ Wolfe, L.N. (1979). *John of the Mountains: The Unpublished Journals of John Muir*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, p. 321.

- Think of what it means for branches to grow and to sway—if possible, let yourself embody that experience.
- If you like, put on music—music/sound that conjures up associations to nature settings with trees can be nice. You may even have music on hand that directly references trees.
- Continue with the process of moving the branches and if it feels organic, begin to move through space, letting a dance or other creative movement unfold.
- Focus on the sensation of still being grounded and connected to the earth, even while moving.
- Notice your experience, knowing that you can come back to standard tree pose or standing meditation at any time.

M O D I F I C A T I O N N O T E :

- ✓ This practice can be done standing up, sitting, or lying down. If you need to lie down for the practice, move your arms/branches above you so that your field of vision can notice what you are doing with your movement.



PRACTICE FOUR

GUSH ART

Before you engage with this next practice, it may be useful to take a few moments and silently think about what the word *gush* may mean to you.

For me, it means not having any deliberate direction or expectation. It is the pure art form of just *going with it*, literally making art outside of the lines. Just as we cannot predict where the flow of the wind or the breezes of life will take us, neither can we predict where the flow of our art is going to take us, or what it is going to teach us, if we let ourselves surrender to this process.

- *Gush art* is a term used in expressive arts therapy to suggest uncensored creation with art—notice what the word “gush” means for you and allow that to unfurl on the page using materials you have available (crayons, markers, pastels, paints, etc.). That is the only prompt you are going to receive for this practice: Get out the materials and go! Gush!
- As is the case with many forms of meditation, it can be useful to set a timer for the gush art experience. This can help you keep your focus on the process of the experience instead of the outcome. When the timer expires, check in and notice whatever it is you notice about the experience and/or move along to the next practice.
- *Gush art* can be done without much direction as a pure stream-of-consciousness activity, or you can set a theme to the experience.

In this case, working with the theme of tree or grounding for a set period of time is a nice option. Setting the timer can keep us from being too outcome oriented with this or other practices. When the timer rings, as they say on many of the cooking shows: Put it down and walk away. Observe that what you express in the set period is what the creation is meant to be in this moment.

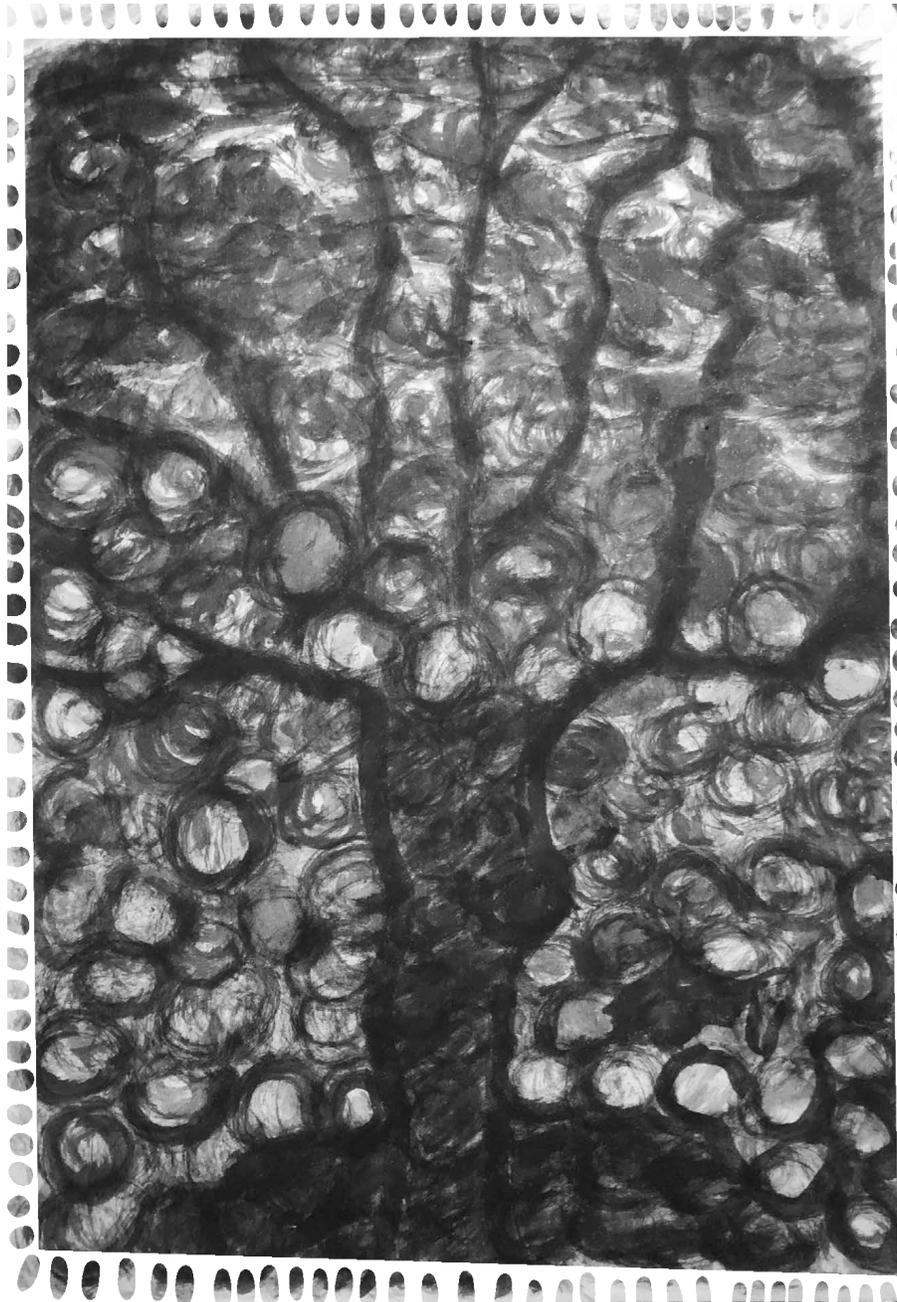
- If you are inspired to continue it later, you may, although know that it's not a requirement. What you *gush* in this process may simply be meant to exist as an imprint of this present moment.

MODIFICATION NOTE:

- ✓ If the thought of “gushing” with all available materials feels too much for you at first, pick one medium or implement (crayons, colored pencils, or markers, etc.). Starting smaller may give you the extra comfort you need while still giving yourself sufficient challenge.

PROCESS NOT PERFECTION

GUSH ART EXAMPLES



~ DR. JAMIE (PRAGYA) **MARICH**



~ ALEXIS RAE **BURROW**