



TRUE NOURISHMENT©

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In our search for happiness and fulfillment, we look in many places for knowledge and nourishment. How do we recognize true nourishment in our lives? What does it mean to nourish ourselves? How do we receive the manna that is continually being offered in the preciousness of our lives as they are now?

Let's begin with what we mean by nourishment. I decided to look up the word *nourishment* and found things like "substances needed for health and growth" and synonyms for *nourish* such as *attend, cherish, comfort, cultivate, encourage, support* and *sustain*. And antonyms, which are the opposite of *nourish*, such as *abandon, deprive* and *starve*.

By themselves, these are pretty powerful—powerful enough to sit with for a while.

It's a very big topic. We could spend days exploring this, looking at nourishment from the point of view of the personal self—which includes our body, our hearts and minds—as well as from the point of view of the impersonal, which we often call spirit.

So, we'll just touch into this today.

Let us begin from the point of view of the personal self, which we also call the individual ego personality. Our relationship with nourishment begins here.

The fundamental matrix of this world is relationship. As individual separate beings, we often forget this truth: we are in an ongoing, continually unfolding relationship of life with life. This relationship of life with life includes our inner world—the world of our feelings, emotions and thoughts—as well as the outer world of other beings.

We are in a mutually interdependent relationship of giving and receiving nourishment.

What is also true is that we long for the 'right' nourishment which will sustain us, heal us, and support us in being and becoming all of who we are. We often feel incapable of giving ourselves this nourishment, which includes the right "thing" that we need in the right moment, as we need it. We struggle with knowing Where am I?, What do I really need right now? and How do I give myself what I need or receive it?



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We struggle with having a whole relationship, which is to say a healing relationship, with our bodies, minds and hearts. It all feels very complex, from the food that we eat and to our relationship with rest and activity to where we live, what we engage in as work, and who we engage with, including our friends and family. We long to receive love and to give love, to learn and to grow, to explore and discover, to understand ourselves, others and the world around us. We long to know that our lives have meaning and purpose and that as an individual human being, our life matters—that we have meaning and purpose in the great scheme of life and of death, in the great questions of Who Am I?, Why do I exist?, What is the purpose of a human life? and so forth.

This is further complicated by the reality that we all have childhoods in which our needs were not met to some degree, in which we longed for and needed specific kinds of nutrients—such as kindness and compassion—and found them to be in short supply. Our memories of these experiences often stand in the way of knowing what we want, asking for what we want and receiving it. Based on our memories, we can be convinced we will be disappointed or be hurt. We often don't allow ourselves to even know what or who we are right now, to know what we need or want, or to realize that what we want is even possible or available to us.

To protect ourselves, we have learned to distance ourselves, not only from the rest of the world (just as we learned to do as children), but also from ourselves. We have cut ourselves off from our very own hearts, minds, and beings. We've learned to laugh when what we really want to do is cry, to say yes when we want to say no, to push ourselves when we just want to sit down, to try to be an idealized version of who we are—instead of being able to accept ourselves, as we are right now, in the moment. We treat ourselves as machines and as objects, instead of living, unfolding, precious processes of being and becoming.

We push ourselves to be an object of perfection or an ideal image that we have in our heads, and then we beat ourselves up for both a) not being this ideal image and b) for being so weak or imperfect, not smart enough, not beautiful enough, not—whatever—enough. . . The list goes on.

We piece together these IDEAL images from our histories, our parents, our schools and our culture, and then we bow down before them. We try so desperately to be IT—this object—this machine, and then we beat ourselves up for not being able to attain or be this THING.



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The ongoing activity of trying to BECOME this ideal image—and judging ourselves for not matching it—is precisely what cuts us off from nourishment, from comfort or from the encouragement and support we most need here and now.

We are so engaged in the activity of trying to be some *thing*, to improve ourselves that we are not really here with our life as it is unfolding, nor do we treasure the process of being and becoming that we really are.

We forget that we created these images to save ourselves from the confusions and pains of growing up and from the lack of encouragement or support that we needed. As children, we needed to do this. It allowed us to go on. As adults, we continue to do this today.

We are not a series of static images left over from our history, nor are we a series of glossy photos to be captured as an ideal future. This same creativity that was used to save our lives can be used to create a new relationship to ourselves that is more nourishing or more whole.

The nourishment we need cannot be found in these images or snapshots or in the activity of questing to be someone else or someplace else. We do not need to cease wanting to be happier or to be more fulfilled. But we do need to be willing to be kind—which means accepting and compassionate—with the one we are now, to enter into a compassionate and thus healing relationship with our imperfections. We want to learn to invite in all of who we are right now and in this activity of compassionate action create a home for ourselves, ALL of ourselves—not just the aspects of ourselves that we like.

In creating this home for ourselves, here and now—we can also know what would be nourishing to us and then ask for it, give it to ourselves, or accept the gift from another.

This affects everything: the work that we do, the people that we surround ourselves with, our homes, how we eat, how we move, how we love and how we are every day, moment to moment.

This is the first important step of nourishment—creating a home, a place, where all of you can exist—this imperfect, crazy, wonderful, tender, vulnerable, childish, grown up, imperfect human being that you are in this moment and in the next moment.



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We are a process of beauty, of being and continually unfolding and becoming. We can only know this by being ourselves, as we are, right now, which is not an image.

This is also an ongoing practice. Again and again, we need to invite in, welcome all of who we are. Here, in the life we have right now, in the one that we are now, is where we receive the nourishment that is available to us, like manna, being offered in the bone and marrow of our own being, in the changing, pulsing movement of our lives. And in this we can ask and receive what we most need in the next step of our unfolding.

I'd like to take this a step further by just peaking a bit into a larger view of reality.

As we've discussed today, most of the elements that we call an *I*—the self—are a series of concepts or images taken from our history. We believe that we are someone, a person, an object, a body, a form. And we are continually engaged in the activity of trying to improve this object, this person, this self.

Now, I'd like to introduce another thought.

For a moment, contemplate this: the house assembles itself. The house I'm referring to is the self.

Now, this is not our usual understanding. Our usual understanding is that each of us, *the personal self*, builds the house. We create ourselves, we grow ourselves, we make ourselves.

This is also true, but one does not negate the other: Reality likes to make itself.

In the MAGI Process, which was created by Jason Shulman, the founder of A Society of Souls, there is a step in the process that says, ". . .The strands of change are freed and the intent of the world—which is to heal—becomes possible." The next line then says, "The world then goes about its business."

These lines are referring to this idea that Reality likes to make itself. Reality is an undivided whole, a process of continually unfolding wholeness, or what we call "the illuminating urge to be."

This is not something that we can understand completely from the point of view of the personal self, and yet it is also true. There is a divine intelligence within us and within all of life.



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We are each made as particular specific divine processes of unfolding light and life. Awakening to this, realizing this, living into this, happens as we learn to invite in, acknowledge and be with ourselves, moment by moment. This is hard work.

It takes effort to be who we already are. This is included in the great mystery.

Perhaps even more mysterious, as we can be who we already are, we awaken ever more fully to this innate wisdom—and we are able to receive it, take it in. This wisdom knows what we need right now, brings us the right nutrients that we need to grow and to become, guides us, tends to us as the flowers and the trees are tended to by the sun and the rain.

The interdependent nature of all of Reality is revealed, as well. We contribute to Life by being who we are, Life contributes to our becoming.

If the earth were missing, flowers could not manifest their beauty. If sunlight were missing, again no beauty. If any piece were missing, this mysterious thing called wholeness would not be there. Even the winter frost, so harsh and deep, helps the trees and the flowers quicken in the earth on their way to the day they arise in beauty.

All of ourselves must be consciously allowed to exist for our wholeness to be born in its fullness of beauty and being. Inviting in who we are, we can invite in all that is being offered to us, freely given—grace and the nourishment of All of Life.

As we say in A Society of Souls, everything that is allowed to exist, exists in light. This means that when we can allow what is here now in our lives to exist in the state that is in right now, it reveals the gifts hidden within and naturally moves itself to the next stage of unfolding wholeness.

It doesn't mean that we don't continue to have challenges and struggles with knowing who we are or what we need. What it does mean is that we are increasingly able to receive the manna or nourishment hidden in our lives, hidden in this moment, even if it is difficult or painful. In receiving life, as it is, we are nourished. Denying life, as it is, we feel starved. We quest but often do not find what we seek.

Choosing life, Life reveals its mysteries to us, nourishing us. The impeccable intelligence built into life reveals itself as ever present preciousness and Beauty. Make a home inside yourself for who you are.



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WELCOMING IN: BEING AND BECOMING

by Brenda Carter Blessings (adapted from Inviting Everything In by Jason Shulman)

Close your eyes for a few minutes. Silently be with your breathing.

The purpose of this meditation is to welcome in all of who you are.

Let us begin by welcoming in different aspects of your personal self.

Say to yourself:

You, the one who forgets to be kind to yourself, come in. You are welcome here.

You, the one, who is frightened and scared or uncertain, come in. You are welcome here.

You, the one who wants to control life and how it appears, come in.

You, the one, who doesn't know how to receive nourishment, come in.

Whatever comes into your mind or heart, whether it is an aspect of yourself that you like or do not like, it does not matter.

You simply want to allow all of these different aspects of you to arise and welcome them in here and now.

(Pause)

Now realize this: the 'who' that you are includes these aspects and is also more than these.

Now, open yourself to the mystery of you. You are a unique unfolding process of beauty, continually being and becoming. Welcome in You.