

Exploring fear: A Journaling prompt

What is this? This is an offering to your brave self. It is a very short journaling-based exploration of your relationship to fear.

When? Right now if you have the time and are so inclined. Later if you'd rather. Or never if it is not your cup of tea...

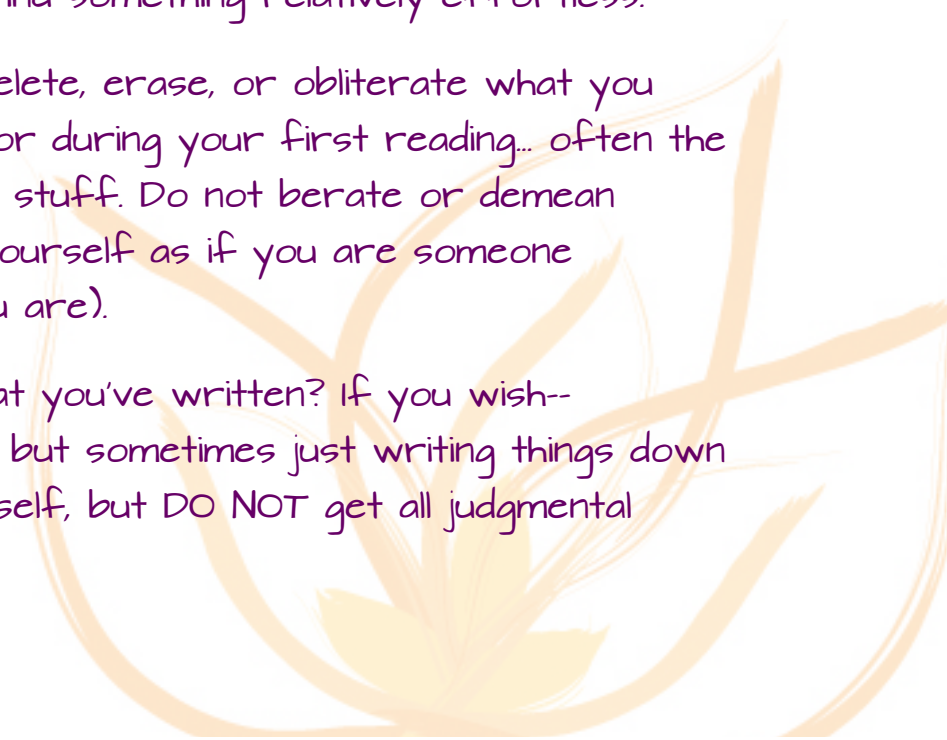
How long will it take? 10 minutes, 15.... or it can be used over and over and over again.

Beginning:

Begin by finding something to write with and something to write on-- try not to choose something that will get in your way-- instead, try to find something relatively effortless.

Rules: Please do not delete, erase, or obliterate what you write as you write it or during your first reading... often the first stuff is the real stuff. Do not berate or demean yourself. Be kind to yourself as if you are someone precious (because you are).

Do you read over what you've written? If you wish-- sometimes it is helpful but sometimes just writing things down is enough-- trust yourself, but DO NOT get all judgmental



about writing, punctuation, spelling, the quality of your thoughts, or the legitimacy of your feelings.

Just write.

The Exercise:

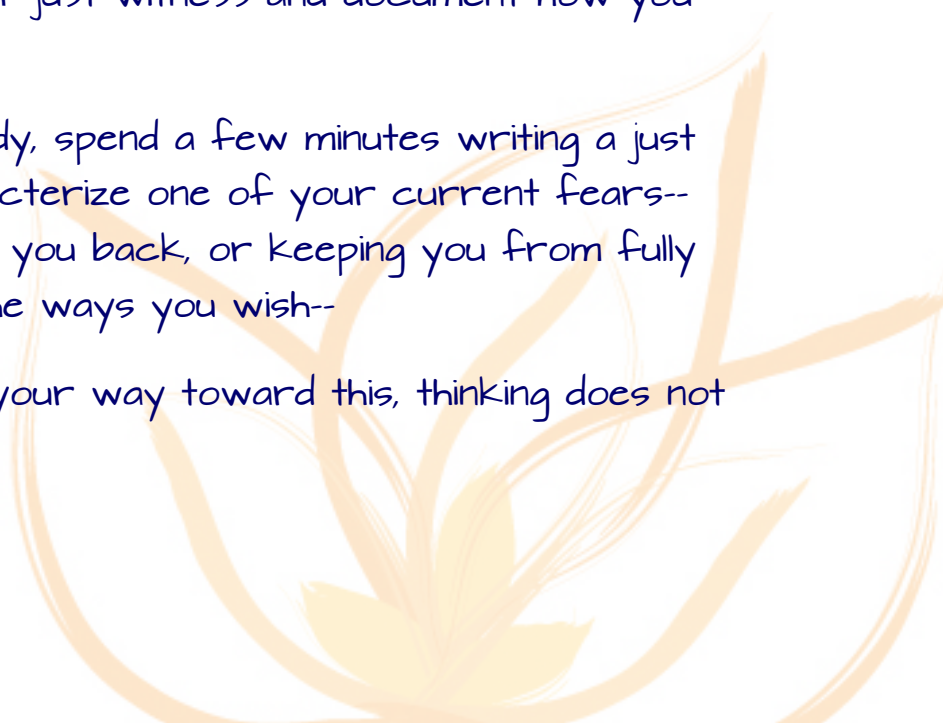
Sit in a place you can think and feel- this may be alone or it may be in the midst of total chaos of kids and dryer and next door neighbor band practice...

Allow yourself a moment to just simply become aware of sitting and breathing and waiting... notice how your body feels (are you relaxed? or tense? if tense, where? how does it feel?), notice how your mind feels (is it quiet? babbly? suspicious? impatient?)

Begin by just writing down how you feel in this moment, a few words, a word list, phrases, broken bits or full sentences... let yourself just witness and document how you feel...

Then, when you're ready, spend a few minutes writing a just few words that characterize one of your current fears-- pick one that is holding you back, or keeping you from fully inhabiting your life in the ways you wish--

You may need to feel your way toward this, thinking does not always get you there--



If you stop short of what you think is possible or come up with nothing, think of this sentence:

I could do anything I wanted if only I was not afraid of

And see what comes up in that blank space...

If nothing yet then think of this:

... every time I try (or think of trying), I stop
because-----

And then look at that blank-- that blank may be the fear that is holding you back (I suck, I don't have the talent, I don't have the time to do it right, there is no point, it is embarrassing...)

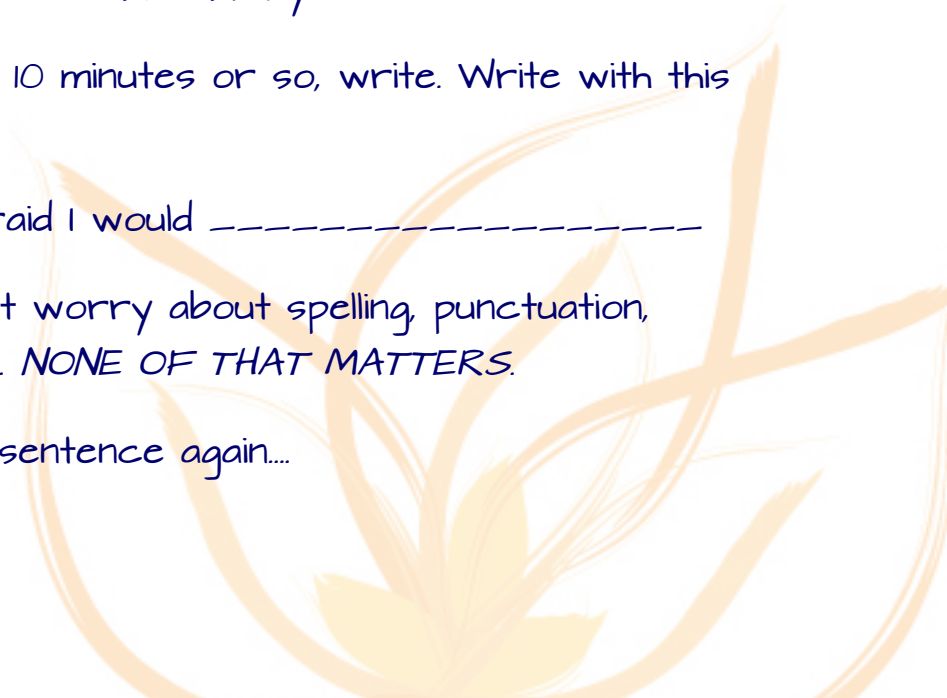
Try to whittle it down to the core of the fear-- is it making an ass of yourself? Maybe, if you look closely enough, you'll realize you are afraid of succeeding. No seriously, I mean it. Maybe success would mean too much potential change, too much would be threatened, including, say, your "someday I'll be happy if only I ----" self story.

And then for the next 10 minutes or so, write. Write with this in mind:

If I were not afraid I would -----

Just simply write. Don't worry about spelling, punctuation, handwriting, structure. **NONE OF THAT MATTERS.**

Get stuck? Begin the sentence again...



If I were not afraid I would_____

I would be able to

I would go

I would do

I would try

I would learn

I would make

I would call

I would create

I would dream

I would say

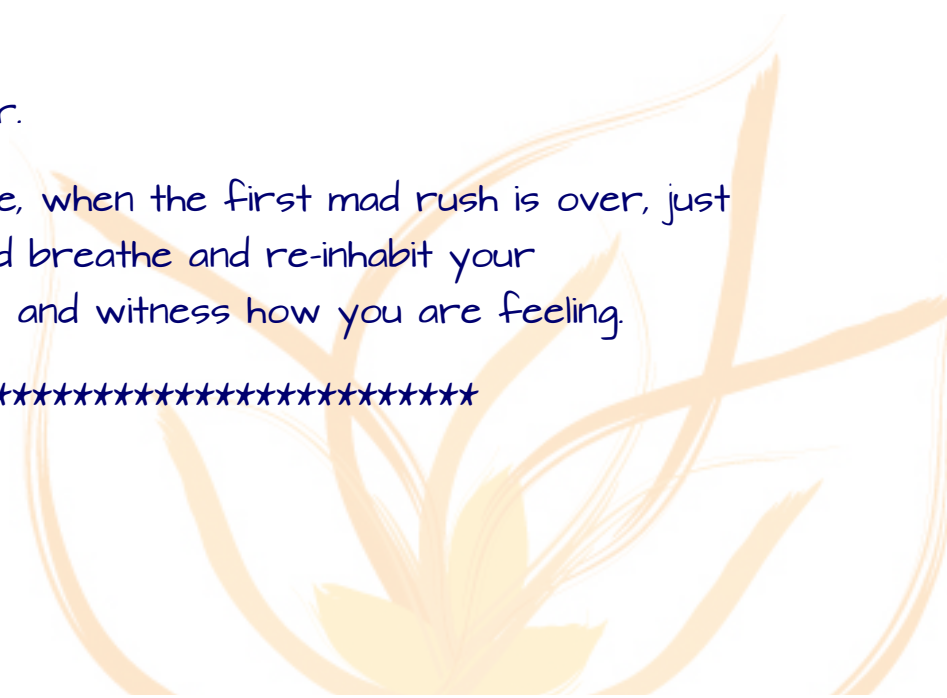
I would

... just see where it takes you.

Let yourself be as honest as you possibly can, but don't get in your way-

See what you discover.

When it feels complete, when the first mad rush is over, just let yourself be. Sit and breathe and re-inhabit your body. Just be mindful, and witness how you are feeling.



Ending:

When you feel this is complete for you, close your notebook, save your file, let it sit. Just see what unfolds.

You don't have to DO anything differently, knowledge does not necessitate action-- action is still a choice, as is change... you are not in danger by self-reflection.

Be kind to yourself over what you have learned. If you wish, write about how you are feeling. Sometimes what we fear can be our teacher, sometimes what we *think* we fear is not the actual thing--sometimes what we fear is change, or exposure, or vulnerability.

If your fears are getting in your way, ask yourself: what small step can I take to move in the direction of my dreams-- in spite of all of my fears and why-nots, is there something I can do, something tangible, to just scoot toward it?

Something small like-- buy a cheap watercolor set, open a new file and begin typing some ideas, call the friend you think will support you with an open heart and just ask him or her to listen, journal about what you wish for or long for, open a book on the subject while standing in the stacks at the library, find out what time the class is and how much it costs, go and sit in the cafe and open your notebook, go ahead and when folks ask what you do say you are a writer, say you are an artist, say you are a teacher, say you are saving the world...find a talisman... wear the crazy scarf that makes you smile, the red socks, the ring that your fingers

find to touch-- you don't have to move very far to
have it count very much...

Your heart is listening.



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