

## Self-Guided Connection Activity

Psychologist, connection researcher and author Kristine Klussman, PhD., beautifully articulates the essence of self-connection as "a state of being... one in which you regularly tune in to your own emotional, spiritual, and physical needs, and honor [sic] them in your daily actions."

Indeed, this process of tuning into ourselves requires deliberate effort to acknowledge and embrace our innermost thoughts, feelings, and aspirations. With this in mind, the steps for connection with self are as follows:

### 1. Acceptance<sup>1</sup>

Acceptance requires the unconditional embrace of our present state. Our present position is the amalgam of the good, bad, and ugly of our lives to date, whether of our own doing or not. The consequences of our own and others' choices result in where we are today. Without acceptance, genuine connection will always remain out of reach.

### 2. Purpose

Identifying your purpose and goals to achieve same, provides clarity and direction on your journey of self-discovery. By articulating our aspirations and intentions, we create a roadmap for personal growth and fulfilment. Goals serve as beacons of light, guiding us towards our true potential and helping us align our actions with our values.

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<sup>1</sup> It is essential at this point to define acceptance. The word has varied meanings depending on your perspective. For many, including myself, it initially implied responsibility and blame as I struggled to accept my perceived shame of mental illness, suicidal ideation and ill-treatment by others. The definition of acceptance that opened my eyes and removed the shackles of shame was that 'acceptance is nothing more than I don't like it, want it or condone it. It just is or was. It's simply an historical fact.'

### 3. Observation

Observing oneself is arguably what sets humans apart from all other animals. The key to making self-observation useful is to do so without judgment. Observe every part of your being; your thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations with curiosity. Lay/sit/stand quietly and methodically scan your body from tip to toe for aches, feelings, tingles, flinches, rashes, pain, numbness etc. By observing ourselves without attaching labels or criticism, we cultivate a deeper sense of self-awareness and understanding. *'That's interesting...'* is always a good way to start.

### 4. Question

Inquiring into our own thoughts, feelings, and behaviours with curiosity, and compassion brings greater self-understanding and deepens our self-connection. Without judgment, or favouring either positive or negative situations, practice asking yourself questions to interrupt self-talk using phrases like: *'Is it true?' 'Is it really true?' 'If it is true, what of it?' 'Is it helpful?'*

### 5. Action

Noting your present state, guided by your purpose and undertaking introspection with curiosity, answer the single question, *'What do I need right now?'* Then do it. 'It' may be scaling a mountain, silent meditation or anything in between. Whatever 'it' is, ensure you're doing 'it' for you and no one else.

As we navigate the journey of self-connection, we emerge paradoxically not as isolated individuals, but as interconnected beings woven together by the threads of our shared humanity. When we then seek connection with others, the same steps above apply except that 'I' is replaced with 'we', culminating with 'What do we need right now?' Ensure that 'it' is for the team and aligned with shared purpose and values.