

THE
WARRIOR
GODDESS
WAY



Claiming the Woman
You Are Destined to Be

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Hier⊕phantpublishing

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Warrior Goddess Creed

This creed is derived from the ten lessons in *Warrior Goddess Training*. As you enter the realm of *The Warrior Goddess Way*, I invite you to read the Warrior Goddess Creed out loud, as doing so is an outward expression of your inner commitment to be the real you.

I hereby commit to fully embody my Warrior Goddess self.

From this moment forward, I will do my best to:

Love all of my being

Appreciate the beginnings and the endings

Honor my body and mind as a temple

Stay grounded and present

Cultivate my passions and creativity

Own my strength and vulnerability

Open my heart to all of life

Speak my deepest truths

Listen to the wisdom within

Claim my unique path

And walk the Warrior Goddess Way.

Introduction

As you will see in the pages that follow, the Warrior Goddess Way is not a path to instant self-love, enlightenment, or happiness (though all these things could happen in an instant). Nor is it a method to finally finding the partner of your dreams, having the perfect job, or being the perfect specimen of health and vitality (though all of these things could happen to you too).

The Warrior Goddess Way is a pathway of presence, baby steps, and practice. It is a road to reclaiming all of you—your darkest fears and your most precious gifts. The Warrior Goddess Way invites you to bring your compassion, love, and humor to the entirety of your being on your walk to becoming the woman you are meant to be. This is a core rewiring of how you have been trained as a woman, a digging up of the old foundation to replace it, brick by brick, with a new, more solid and resilient structure.

For too many of us, the floor we've built our life on is made up of wobbly blocks of self-judgment, comparison, caretaking, and valuing everyone else's needs before our own. This cracked foundation never allows us to rest into the peacefully joyful and fiery, creative women we are at our essence. Instead, we spend our time with a destabilizing sense (either whispered or

shouted) of not being good enough, not being able to do it “right,” and an abiding need to be liked and approved of.

The Warrior Goddess Way is about changing this paradigm.

Shortly after *Warrior Goddess Training* was published, I began holding Warrior Goddess Wisdom Weekend gatherings as a way to go deeper into the teachings and allow women from all over the world to connect with one another in person. The women who came to these events were hungry to make connections with one another, as many had been unable to share certain aspects of themselves with those in their everyday lives. They yearned for the healing power of community, and the Warrior Goddess Wisdom Weekend events were designed to provide exactly that.

So many women I’ve worked with feel isolated and alone, cut off from other women for support, comfort, and encouragement (even in a world that is more “connected” than ever before). I should also point out that this is a relatively modern phenomenon. In ancient tribal cultures, women worked side by side, singing, talking, and praying as they did. Grinding corn, digging for roots, and making clothes were not considered individual activities; their labor was a community gathering that brought celebration and connection. Even though the work was sometimes hard and often repetitive, our grandmothers’ grandmothers knew they were part of a greater whole that nourished everyone. And so the work was done in joy, mutual support, and a deep sense of belonging.

As you read *The Warrior Goddess Way*, I invite you to consider yourself part of a global tribe of women working together to heal the old collective wounds of the feminine. You are not just doing this inner work for yourself, but for all women. And for all children, alive and still unborn. And for all men,

so we may inspire, support, and insist with love that they do their inner work. And for the planet, our Mother who needs her daughters whole and clear. The truth is that we heal the world by healing ourselves.

I invite you to put down the burdens of trying to fix others and the distractions of comparison and judgment. I invite you to show up as you, for you, knowing that you are every woman. Your devotion to your path is at its core your devotion to all that you love. Make this commitment to yourself, and as you do, feel the web of your Warrior Goddess sisters, working beside you, for the greater good of all. Feel your willingness, courage, tenacity, resilience. You've come this far; let's continue this walk of transformation together.

And don't forget: everything is conspiring to help you claim the woman you are destined to be. What you often label as roadblocks in your life are actually doorways to discovering deeper truths about yourself, because it's often the unplanned or unwanted situations in your life that show you the immense reservoir of strength that resides at the core of your being. May the words contained in this book inspire you to ask yourself the important questions, support you in listening deeply for the answers, and entice you to take new actions to reclaim your joyful, creative, and divine essence.

As for me, before I began doing this inner work I could easily be described as someone who was highly self-judgmental. I constantly worried about what other people thought of me, and, to round things off, I also expected nothing less than perfection from myself in all areas. As you can imagine, this was not a formula for a content and joyful existence.

To make matters worse, instead of attending to my mind and questioning these self-limiting thoughts, I let them run

rampant, like a little kid after way too much sugar. Instead of getting to know who I really was, I fussed about who I wasn't. Instead of inhabiting my body, I thought about my body and why it wasn't tall enough, short enough, skinny enough, or whatever other "enough" I thought I needed to be for myself on that particular day.

Fortunately, I can tell you that this is not how my life is today. That's because after incorporating the ten lessons of *Warrior Goddess Training* into my life, I discovered three additional principles that have guided me further down the path to inner freedom: Wisdom, Authenticity, and Yes! These three principles have helped me become the woman that I am today, and they are the foundation of the Warrior Goddess Way. As you will see in the pages that follow, life is much like the proverbial onion: there are always more translucent, closer-to-the-core layers to peel back.

The good news is that as a result of implementing these three tools into my life, the majority of the time I am highly self-amused, I am clear about who I am and what I want, and I actually enjoy making mistakes and learning from them. I say the majority of the time because there are still moments when I melt down fabulously, get overcome with fear and doubt, or become consumed by what people think of me. But I can tell you that these are *moments* rather than days or extended periods of time, and compared to how I was once, these moments are extremely rare.

You see, the truths I will outline here, the ones that ultimately became the Warrior Goddess Way, were not the result of an overnight one-shot fix, but rather a twenty-five year process of unfolding. There was no cataclysmic event that occurred in my life—no near-death experience, no beings

from other galaxies wanting to be channeled through me to reveal the wisdom of the spirit realm, and I wasn't struck by lightning. As I look back, I can see that my inner Warrior Goddess bubbled forth gradually, like a spring that rises to the surface once the good, strong rains follow a long drought.

I can also see that the potential for awakening was always there. Good guidance from my many dear teachers and friends and some very overworked guardian angels, along with my dogged persistence, laid the foundation for blossom after blossom to unfurl from a once parched landscape. Today, I can honestly say that my spiritual path weaves through and interpenetrates every part of my life. Scrubbing the bathroom floor and communing with God are not separate. People sometimes marvel at how I can fluidly switch between washing dishes, teaching, hanging out with friends, and doing my taxes. It is because, from the Warrior Goddess perspective, they are all ways to connect with the Divine. Yes, even the taxes.

I actually get excited when it is time to figure out our taxes. And go to the dentist. And when I have to answer a difficult email. I'm not a masochist; I just love to enjoy and be fully present with everything. And when I am not enjoying something, I am aware of that and curious about it. How can I be more present with this? What do I need to shift? Sometimes I can shift it immediately; sometimes it takes me a few years. It's all good.

And here is the best part: I am no different from you. You CAN love to enjoy everything too. Your potential for dancing rather than dragging through life is also waiting to be reawakened. It doesn't matter how horrible your childhood was, how bad your ex hurt you, or even how miserable you think your

life is now. Your inner Warrior Goddess is waiting patiently, ready to be freed from your inner tyranny.

You just need to come home . . . to yourself.

That's the path of the Warrior Goddess, and it really is the one less traveled. *The Warrior Goddess Way* is a road map for coming back home to yourself. Fully. How I see the transformation is this: in the old way of being each of us has a physical body, but we live outside of ourselves, putting all our attention on the image of perfection that lives in our minds only. We constantly look to this "perfect" woman we believe we are supposed to be to see where we are not doing it right, where we are falling short, where we should have said or done something else. Instead of living from our center, we relentlessly compare ourselves to this illusion.

In the new way of being we bring all of our compassion, wisdom, presence, and play back into this place and this time. We come back home. We learn to see through our eyes, sense with all of our senses, and stay in this moment with the being that we are. Coming home to ourselves, we suddenly have the power to heal and transform. First ourselves, and then in a widening spiral to all those around us.

Wisdom arises naturally when we learn to listen. Not to the voices in our head, but the voices in our cells. Not to our internal judge, but to our natural discernment. Not to our disaster mind, but to our creative knowing. Everything you need is within. The Warrior Goddess Way will help you come home to your wise woman self.

Authenticity is not something to strive for on the outside; it is something to embrace from the inside. You don't become authentic by being right or good or spiritual. You become authentic by embracing your vulnerability, your silliness, and

owning all your superpowers. You become authentic when you accept and love where you are in the moment, especially in those times that whatever you are experiencing doesn't match the image of what you think "should be." The Warrior Goddess Way shows you how to walk the path of embodied you-ness.

And *Yes!* is about celebrating. Everything. All the time. And that is one serious art not for the faint of heart. Most of us love to celebrate our successes, but what I'm talking about is celebrating even your greatest defeats. This means looking for the gift in every situation, even when something doesn't go your way. Finding joy in your grief. Enthusiastically embracing your shadow. High-fiving yourself when you screw up, and then bringing 100 percent of yourself to the next action.

The good news is that not only have I experienced a profound shift in my own life though practicing these tools, I have witnessed a shift in many others who have traveled the same path. I have a friend and student who has struggled mightily with serious childhood mental, emotional, and sexual abuse. The trauma she experienced early in life weighed heavily on her for years. But after spending time doing this inner work, I am pleased to say that things have changed for her, and it started with a shift in her perception. By being inspired to bring her attention fully to what she needed, she finally started the journey of coming home to herself. Suddenly, the prospect of looking squarely at the abuse she suffered was not a frightening nightmare to be avoided at all costs, but an exciting pathway to transforming her relationship with herself. Because she is walking this path, she is now open to a new world of possibilities. This type of profound shift in thinking and being is what I want for you.

How to Use This Book

I have organized this book into three parts to reflect the three pillars of the Warrior Goddess Way: Wisdom, Authenticity, and Yes! Each chapter contains nutritious, easily digestible, bite-size nuggets of playful practicality. We will explore topics such as forgiveness, respect, and stillness. We will uncover and release your blocks, stuck places, and repetitive habits. We will delve into cleaning, relationships, communication, and the power of conscious beginnings and endings.

Each chapter also contains some practices to help you to integrate the Warrior Goddess Way into the marrow of your bones. You can do one of the practices a week, or one a day, or never do any of them, ever. But remember, each practice is an excellent bridge for taking the black-and-white pages from this book into the colorful fullness of your life. You get to explore how to best integrate what you learn.

Throughout these teachings and exercises I will also share with you one woman's journey to embodying her strength, integrity, and grace while embracing her bouts of shyness, gawkiness, and endless capacity to get lost while driving.

Let us begin the Warrior Goddess Way.

Part One



WISDOM

Wisdom arises naturally when we learn to listen. Not to the voices in our head, but the voices in our cells. Not to our internal judge, but to our natural discernment. Not to our disaster mind, but to our creative knowing. Everything you need is within. *The Warrior Goddess Way* will help you come home to your wise woman self.

When you are in touch with wisdom, you are able to spot and release all the places of comparison, judgment, and worry; all the hard edges of trying to be perfect, trying to do it right, trying to be loved; and all the stuck places where you live in the past or project into the future, consumed by thinking, wanting to figure everything out, trying to understand.

When you release these things through the power of wisdom, what does that leave you with? The truth of the woman you are destined to be—without apology, need to justify, or need to diminish. You will come back home to your natural state of wonder, curiosity, and awe. You will play. You will see the perfection of yourself and others, flaws and all.

As you go deeper into your wisdom, you will uncover layer upon layer of stories, old emotions, and patterns of holding on to things that no longer serve you. Sometimes you will need to bring in the heat of fire to burn away the old, sometimes the softness of water to gently cleanse. Sometimes warrior fierceness, sometimes goddess compassion. Your wisdom will show you which tool is needed for each situation.

ONE

The Wisdom of Presence

Common sense dictates that we evaluate our beliefs on the basis of how they affect us. If they make us more loving, creative, and wise, they are good beliefs. If they make us cruel, jealous, depressed, and sick, they cannot be good beliefs or memes.

—Barbara Marx Hubbard

The center point of the Warrior Goddess Way stems from an invaluable inner treasure: a conscious commitment to loving and respecting your beautiful self, without conditions or exceptions. Here is where you make a stand, saying to all of creation: “I am willing to show up for myself 100 percent, in this moment, in this place. I mark my intent to stand firm in the present, to release both the regret of the past and any fear of the future, and to honor what is true and best for me in the Now.”

I have found again and again that we have to relinquish hoping, wishing, and wanting things to be different in order to show up for ourselves fully. This end to wanting things to be different can be transformed into a commitment to love yourself for who you are, without judgment, comparison, or avoidance. This is the Warrior Goddess Way. When you can say, “This is who I am now” from a place of presence and loving assessment, you reclaim your power to choose who you want to be and who you want to become.

It seems like a bit of a paradox to say, “To change who I am, I begin by accepting myself for who I am now.” Most of us have worked from the self-rejection model of transformation, which says, “To change who I am, I need to punish myself for who I am now.”

Take a moment to notice the energetic difference between these two statements. Say them out loud one at a time, and then close your eyes and notice how they resonate inside of you.

“To change who I am, I need to punish myself for who I am now.”

“To change who I am, I begin by accepting myself for who I am now.”

What do you feel when you speak each of these sentences aloud? For me, when I say that I need to punish myself for who I am now, it’s as if I can feel my body contract, and a sense of hopelessness overwhelms me; but when I make the statement that change begins with acceptance, it’s as if a deep, relaxing energy envelops me.

It’s understandable why so many of us adopted the “self-rejection is necessary to change” model. If you look around the world today, the flawed idea that change begins with self-punishment is presented as fact in many instances. This is especially true for women, who are ridiculed if their bodies don’t look a certain way (social media has provided the latest outlet for this type of misogynist behavior) or if they behave in a manner that is considered “unladylike.”

The messages we receive as women are impossible to live up to. Be nice. Be bold. Be sexy. Be virginal. Take care of everyone else; you are not important. Be supermom. Be everything your partner wants you to be. Be yourself, but don’t be selfish. Don’t rock the boat. Don’t offend others. Hide your

femininity or you'll be harassed. Be feminine or you are not really a woman. All that matters is how you look. Based on these deprecating and contradictory messages, it's no wonder so many of us begin to self-scold because we feel we are not enough or we are not doing it "right."

As a result, bringing total and complete acceptance of where you are *right now* can be one of the most difficult changes to make. But the difference you will feel when you live your life accordingly is radical. Acceptance gently opens the door of creative healing and possibility, whereas punishment closes the door with an angry slam.

I should know, because I used to slam internal doors a lot. I acted more like a resentful drill sergeant than a loving friend to myself. The harsh commands of "you should," "you must," and "you have to" echoed through my mind as I struggled to keep up what I thought it meant to be a "good girl."

This desire to be seen as "good" that plagues so many women often starts when we are very young. At seven years old I remember posing for a photograph and trying to arrange myself so I would be seen as a good girl, which in my mind meant quiet, sweet, small, and pleasing to others. I have no idea where I picked these thoughts up—probably from fairy tales and TV shows and the invisible threads of agreements handed down silently through the experiences of my female ancestors. I didn't want to be myself. I wanted to be the little girl everyone loves all the time. And so I developed a habit of trying and failing to live up to an impossible standard, which meant I was disappointed in myself all the time.

But after years of living from this place of self-judgment and self-punishment, I noticed that nothing really changed in my life. I kept ending up in the same situations, relationships,

and drama, and I didn't feel happy or fulfilled much of the time. This suffering brought me to an epiphany: *real and lasting change cannot be accomplished via self-punishment*. And it was when I experienced this realization that I looked my inner drill sergeant in the eye and handed in my resignation. I was ready to trust that there was a better way to grow than through self-pummeling. In that moment, I made an inner commitment to show up for myself with gratitude and love, rather than with judgment, punishment, and the inner anguish and frustration that accompanies this self-berating habit.

Showing up for yourself begins with letting go of being “good” or “perfect” and accepting where you are now, wherever that happens to be. And this is something that I can tell you from personal experience is much easier said than done. Most of us do pretty well when it comes to accepting the things we like about ourselves, but this changes pretty quickly when it comes to the things we don't like. In my own case, it took more time and inner work to fully befriend myself and to learn to witness rather than to scold myself when I come across areas where I want to make changes. That being said, I can affirm that it was worth all the time and hard labor to uncover and give myself the gift of self-love.

Self-love can sometimes be confused with narcissism or self-centered egotism, so let me take a moment to further define what I mean by this term. Self-love is an action, and you practice it every time you look within yourself, listen to your heart, and honor what you hear. This does not mean you don't give care or concern to the feelings and opinions of others, but it has been my experience that most women don't have a problem in the area of being considerate of others. The problem is that many women I know have a tendency to go

too far in that direction, putting the needs of others ahead of their own, and when we do this, we aren't being considerate of ourselves. Self-love is what allows you to bring balance to your life and your world. You honor your own needs, desires, and choices, giving them at least as much attention as you would those who are close to you.

When Do You Reject and Punish Yourself?

Self-love and self-rejection can't occupy the same space at the same time, so showing up for and loving yourself in every moment means identifying, acknowledging, and releasing the areas that you are still subtly (or not so subtly) beating yourself up for. As you learn to spot and release these negative thoughts the moment they arise, your life becomes immensely more enjoyable, as you are no longer inhibited by false beliefs about what it means to be the real you.

In *Warrior Goddess Training*, I covered many of the overt ways in which we reject and punish ourselves—for instance, when we look in the mirror and criticize ourselves for what we see, or when we try so hard to make another person happy at our own expense, or when an intimate relationship ends and we judge ourselves as being undesirable, flawed, or even unlovable.

Even after we are firmly planted on the Warrior Goddess path, these harsh voices can still come up from time to time. But they are also easier to recognize. This doesn't mean they are easy to release, but they are often the judgments that we deal with first once we begin this inner work, because they scream the loudest.

In addition to spotting and releasing your severest judgments, the Warrior Goddess Way is about going deeper, seeing

the judgments that, although subtler, can be just as harmful to your inner peace. Like when you punish yourself for making a simple mistake, or internally compare yourself to someone else and then judge yourself as inadequate (or superior, which is actually a setup for feeling inadequate in the future). As Sophie recently wrote me,

I've been working toward being more compassionate and patient with myself. For a small mistake, eating that extra cookie, or forgetting someone's name, I can just get so hard on myself and scold myself internally—until I catch myself, take a step back, reevaluate the situation and the severity of the perceived offense, and calm myself down.

Another one of my students, I'll call her Tanya, has struggled with that subtle but nagging belief that she is not beautiful enough, feminine enough, or smart enough to be loved by another in a deeply intimate way. She turned to drugs and alcohol and food addiction when she was young to drown out these voices, which of course did not work and only created more self-hatred. After years of recovery, she realized that she may have stopped the external addictions, but her addiction to comparing herself to other women and binging on self-criticism was running rampant. One day she showed up for class beaming and literally jumping up and down.

HeatherAsh, I finally understand what you have been saying! I have to accept myself first. I've spent my whole life feeling rejected and believing that I was so flawed as a woman no one could even look at

me, much less love me. But that was all me rejecting myself. Yesterday I looked in the mirror and started to judge myself and I was able to stop and just say hello! I accepted this is the body I have, and I chose to love it rather than hate it. I know I still have a ways to go, but this is a new era!

If we are unaware, all the little ways in which we don't accept ourselves can act like the low hum of a refrigerator, continuously buzzing in the background but rarely, if ever, noticed. It is only when we turn to face the noise of our inner negative buzz with compassion and presence that we can see and finally spot and release the damage that we are doing to ourselves, day in and day out.

As women, many of our subtle self-judgments can also be related to the quest for perfectionism, as the messages we hear in society encourage us to be the perfect wife, daughter, friend, boss, mom. The image of perfection for a woman used to be wearing pearls and heels while vacuuming the house and having dinner on the table and a big smile when her kids and husband came home. The modern image of perfection for a woman now involves having a fulfilling and interesting career, being a great soccer mom who does everything for her kids, and doing yoga four days a week in her spare time. The standards we hold ourselves and each other to are so high they make us believe we are never good enough, no matter how much we are doing.

It's interesting that most women I know will readily shake their heads in agreement with the statements "no one's perfect" or "we all make mistakes," yet when it comes to ourselves we have difficulty applying this eternal truth.

And yes, I am writing from personal experience, as I catch myself doing this very thing. Anytime I notice myself utter any variation of the word *should*, either out loud or in my head, that's my cue to pay close attention to my thoughts, because I am often not accepting who and where I am in the present moment, but instead scolding myself for not being the way I think I "should" be. Present moment acceptance, in each and every moment, is the first step in showing up for yourself. Learning to spot, identify, and release any ways in which you are subtly self-judging or self-punishing is the key to this acceptance. As I explored my "shoulds," I also noticed that at times instead of using the word *should* I was using its close cousins, *if* and *would*, because these subtly helped me create a list of conditions that I felt I needed to live up to at all times. Then, I would internally punish myself for not doing so.

In this way, I was making the positive practices and transformative tools of being a Warrior Goddess into whips that could be used for self-scolding. Here are some examples of what I caught myself thinking:

- ◆ If I were a good Warrior Goddess, I would be loving and peaceful all the time.
- ◆ As a good Warrior Goddess, I should never get triggered and react emotionally.
- ◆ If I were a good Warrior Goddess, I would never be afraid.

Consequently, when moments arose where I felt afraid of what people thought of me, got triggered and reacted emotionally, or otherwise behaved less than loving and peaceful at

all times, I would begin to beat myself up internally. One day I caught myself doing this, and it suddenly occurred to me that I had transformed the Warrior Goddess principles into tools to self-flagellate. Oh, the irony of it all!

Of course, I know from talking with others that I am not alone. Many women I have worked with have consciously or unconsciously created a list of perfections that is based on what's important to them as individuals. Think about your own life for a moment. Do you have a list of perfect ideals you try to live up to? Perhaps it's a list of Warrior Goddess perfections like mine, or maybe you can relate to some of the examples from women I have worked with:

- ◆ If I were a good mother, I would never lose my temper with my children.
- ◆ If I were a good boss/employee/coworker, I would never miss a goal or deadline.
- ◆ If I were a good wife or partner, I would always be able to make my partner happy.
- ◆ If I were a good woman, I wouldn't weigh as much as I do.
- ◆ If I were a good friend, I'd always be available.
- ◆ If I were a good daughter, I would let my mom live with us even though we don't get along at all.
- ◆ If I were a good female, I would always be attractive and pleasing.
- ◆ If I were a good Warrior Goddess, I'd be a lot more courageous.

- ♦ As a single mother, I should be strong enough to meet all my kids' needs for both myself and their father.
- ♦ If I were a worthy partner, I should be able to find a compatible mate.

Take a moment to make a list of your perfection ideals and how you judge yourself when you fall short of them. Notice how beliefs such as these set the stage for the old model of “To change who I am, I need to punish myself for who I am now.”

Next, I want you to say this statement out loud: “No one is perfect, including me!” Feel the energy of self-love and self-acceptance when you do so. You can also say, “Everyone is perfect, including me!” because in truth these statements are saying the same thing, as we are all perfectly imperfect. Both statements acknowledge the same truth from different perspectives, like when two people see the same event from opposite sides of the room. Both are true, depending on how you look at them. Which one feels better to you?

The belief that “self-punishment is necessary to change” is so strong that it takes a lot of Warrior Goddess concentration to notice all the ways in which you self-judge or otherwise hold yourself to an impossible standard. We will come back to this a little later in this chapter (and look at how to rewrite your list!), but first let's take a deeper look at the apparatus that makes all of these judgments possible.

The Mind and You

Have you ever noticed that the only place you experience a self-judgment, self-punishment, and any other lack of self-love is in your mind? In other words, your nose does not judge you, your

thighs do not judge you, and your hips don't judge you either. On the contrary, your entire body is supporting you, even when you treat it unkindly. In this way, it's more accurate to say that your body loves you unconditionally.

But that's not the case for your mind, is it?

All of your judgments are thoughts, nothing more. So the problem isn't in your body; it's in your thinking. While the distinction that your mind is the only place that judgment can arise may seem fairly obvious, the implications of realizing this are often overlooked. That's because the thinking mind is held in such high regard in our culture that many of us associate who we really are with the mind rather than contemplating the true immensity of ourselves, of which the mind is just a part.

Many ancient cultures and wisdom traditions understood this, and that's why they use the heart as the physical placeholder where the real you resides rather than the mind. Of course, even the heart is just a metaphor, but it does serve as a good substitute or "re-minder" that the real you is so much more than the mind can understand.

The reality is that your mind is not the entire you, but only a part of you. Despite its insistence to the contrary, your mind cannot contain, describe, or fully understand who you are at the deepest level. Your mind has only a teeny, tiny, itty-bitsy grasp of one aspect of who you are. And not only that, it doesn't do a very good job of describing you accurately, *since it often thinks you should be something else*. In this way, it's like the mind has a huge handicap, because it cannot understand the totality of you.

When we get caught up in the busyness of our lives, we can easily start to believe that we are just our thoughts being

carried around by a body. But you are so much more than your thoughts, or your body. The real you is a perfect blend of spirit and matter, a sacred dance of energy embodied in form. Imagine clearing away the need to understand, label, and control everything around you. That's what the mind likes to do, but your real self doesn't cling to these mind tools. Your real self, who you are at the deepest level, is a pure force of nature, expressed through form, and an amazing, crazy-cool, utterly unique creation of brilliant perfection. Really.

Imagine shedding the need to be right or perfect or anything at all. Imagine looking at the world through the delighted eyes of a child and the quiet wisdom of an elder. Imagine your heart taking the lead and loving all manifestations of experience. When you experience these moments, you touch the real you, the one that can become buried under mind layers of past and future thinking, the endless habit of categorizing people, places, and things, and especially yourself, into good or bad, right or wrong, okay or damaged.

To be sure, the mind is a wonderful tool when tamed, but it can also be a huge block to inner peace when it runs the show. You can spend years in meditation or doing practices to quiet your mind, but if you don't spot and release the mind's habitual judgments—or the distorted perceptions of who it thinks you *should* be—not much will change. Meditation and other calming practices can help your mind relax, but underneath this calmer self will remain a sense of unworthiness and unease.

The good news is that it's been my experience that as you begin to recognize and release the ways in which you judge and punish yourself, you can simultaneously retrain your mind to view the internal self as a magical, multidimensional,

magnificent self, rather than one that is not enough, broken, or that often alternates between thinking you are better than others or worse than others, depending on its mood. Doing so involves the process of learning to love yourself in all your manifestations. Love the scared “me” and the on-top-of-the-world “me” and the I-just-made-a-huge-mistake “me” and the I-just-attained-my-goal “me.”

At the most basic level, a judgment is simply the mind labeling some things as “good” and other things as “bad.” This is a habit of the mind that most of us have adopted. The Warrior Goddess Way is about rewiring the mind and removing the ideas of “good” and “bad” from your thinking when it comes to understanding yourself. In other words, it’s time to stop trying to be good, or enough, or perfect, and just be. And you’re never bad. It’s just that sometimes we all do things that in retrospect we can see didn’t evolve us, or didn’t produce the desired outcome. This is how we learn, and as the wonderful woman Maya Angelou wrote, “When you know better, you do better.”

As we walk further down the path of the Warrior Goddess Way, I invite you to take a different approach to dealing with your mind. When the mind begins to judge you, or label you as either good or bad, or criticize and scold you, rather than take it so seriously, learn to say, “Oh, there’s my mind, doing what it does!” Eventually, you may even laugh at yourself when you hear your mind tell you to try to live up to an impossible way of being!

This is the new habit of self-love. And once you’ve practiced it, you really do become your own best friend, your own fairy godmother, warrior, guru, and goddess all rolled into one luscious package with one destiny: to rescue your precious heart from the judgments of your mind. And the good

news is that you already have everything you need to celebrate exactly who you are and to creatively cultivate (not force or judge or pine for) who you would like to be. Once we fully accept and love ourselves, we realize that everywhere is home. And by owning the uniqueness of our one, we realize we are the many. This is authentic wisdom celebrating itself.

Rewriting the Judgments, Retraining the Mind

Now let's go back to the lists we made a little earlier in this chapter, but with the intent of retraining your mind to love and accept every aspect of you, including the areas where you self-judge or hold yourself to an unattainable standard. I invite you to rewrite the list you created earlier, and as you do so, lean into this statement: "To change, I must first accept where I am right now." Feel the energy of self-love and self-acceptance as you begin to rewrite that list. Below are my rewrites:

- ◆ As a Warrior Goddess, I sometimes make spectacular mistakes, and I trust that everything happens for a reason.
- ◆ As a Warrior Goddess, I sometimes react emotionally, and I am learning to be more loving toward myself and others.
- ◆ As a Warrior Goddess, I sometimes get triggered, and I use these times to learn more about myself and my agreements.
- ◆ As a Warrior Goddess, I sometimes feel afraid, and I'm learning to hold myself with compassion and love through my fears.

Now it's your turn. Take the lists that you wrote earlier and rewrite them. Do so from a place that acknowledges you have ideals you would like to live up to, but that sometimes this won't happen, because that's the reality of it, and that's okay. This is unconditional self-love in action. It's a wonderful practice to set goals and strive to do better in certain areas, but doing so from a place of self-love means that you do so without self-punishment.

Once you have made your new list, write your name at the top with the words "Personal Creed" next to it. I invite you to recite the Warrior Goddess Creed found in the introduction of this book every day, and then follow it up with your own personal creed (what you just wrote) for the next two weeks. This will help you to step into your life present, aware, and in the Warrior Goddess Way, and honor the truth of who you really are.

Wisdom: Presence Resources

Gifts

- ♦ Consciously commit to loving and respecting your beautiful self without conditions or exceptions.
- ♦ Beware of the subtle self-sabotage of using the words *should*, *if*, and *would*.
- ♦ Remember that your mind is a wonderful tool, but it needs serious training away from judgment and toward acceptance.

Explorations

The mind is constantly judging everything it sees (including ourselves) and then telling stories about it. We will take

a deeper look at these stories in the next chapter. But before we move on, let's do an exercise that can take you out of your mind and help you connect with the immensity that you are.

AWARENESS EXPLORATION:
YOU ARE NOT JUST YOUR MIND

Read the following exercise over a few times, then put the book down and do the exercise as best you can from memory. Remember, you don't have to do this perfectly.

Start by getting comfortable and taking a few breaths into your belly. Relax your shoulders and keep your belly soft. Close your eyes.

Bring your awareness to your big toe. Take a few breaths into your toe, sensing your big toe and how it feels. Notice its relation to your shoe or sock or the air. Pay attention to how your toe is connected to your foot. Then move your awareness to the palm of one hand. Breathe into your palm, noticing textures and sensations and temperature.

Now bring your awareness to three other areas in your body, using your breath to drop into the sensations of each spot. You can pick anywhere: throat, top of your head, sacrum, behind your knees, your right ear. The intent is to move your attention from thinking into feeling.

Once you sense that your mind has slowed down a bit, start recalling times in your life when you acted from your heart or your knowing, without your mind needing to understand or comment. It might be a time you were walking and enjoying the birdsong and colors, or were immersed in a creative project, had a strong intuitive knowing, or felt love and gratitude for a child, friend, or beloved. Practice resting into this feeling of connection and notice how you perceive it in

your body. Spend as much time here as possible. If you notice yourself thinking, gently bring yourself back to the feeling sense you are exploring.

When you are ready, open your eyes and look around the room, doing your best to not label or categorize anything around you. Imagine you have never seen any of the things around you before. How would you take them in, not from your mind but from your being? What is the difference between how your mind perceives things and how you experience the world around you without the mind and its stories?

NOTICE AND RELEASE THE SELF-JUDGMENTS

Showing up for yourself 100 percent of the time begins with spotting and releasing all the areas where you self-judge, subtly and not so subtly. Think back over the past few weeks (or the past few hours) and make a list of any areas where you have self-judged or self-punished, or think about the areas where you try to be perfect. These can certainly include the overt examples we covered in *Warrior Goddess Training*, as they likely still come up from time to time, but I'd also like you to notice any sneaky ways you self-judge and self-punish, as these are often more difficult to catch. Here is my list:

- ♦ I got lost driving to an appointment and was late. I scolded myself for being bad with directions, not leaving earlier, and making others wait.
- ♦ I set a goal to do yoga and then got involved in something else. I beat myself up for not following through.
- ♦ I missed a deadline for a project at work and internally berated myself for doing so.

- ◆ I was meditating with a group and forgot to turn my phone off. It rang, and I scolded myself for leaving it on.

Now it's time to rewrite them! Doing so is practice for retraining your mind. As I've gotten better at this over the years, I've begun to replace those thoughts of self-rejection with ones of self-love and self-acceptance. Here are my rewrites:

- ◆ I am learning discipline and the power of being on time, but there are times when I will run late.
- ◆ I commit to doing yoga once or twice a week and supporting myself in my practice, and sometimes I will miss a session.
- ◆ I do my best to meet deadlines at work, but this won't always happen, and that's okay.
- ◆ I am considerate of others and usually remember to turn my phone off when I meditate, except when I forget to.

Now it's your turn. Rewrite your list while leaning into the statement, "To change who I am, I begin by accepting myself for who I am now."