



Soul Matters

Living Love Through The Practice of **Repair**



Small Group
November 2024

Welcome to the Practice of Repair

When the cracks come, who doesn't desire - even demand - to restore what once was?

Nothing is more human. We all long to reverse the damage. We all hold tight to the humpty dumpty hope that everything can be put back together again.

But, as our faith teaches us, transition and change dictate the flow of life. The current of time is just too strong for us to swim back.

And so the repair offered us is not that of returning our lives to their original state but working with what remains to make something new. The shards are not pieces of a puzzle waiting to be put perfectly back together, but building blocks waiting to be molded into a yet to be imagined form.

All of which means that there is freedom in the breaking. The cracks, if we can widen our view, become conduits for creativity. That's not to minimize the pain involved. And it's certainly not a way of justifying tragedy as "part of God's plan." Rather, it's a call for us to perceive the broken pieces of our lives as more than just a pile of ruined rubble. "Look closer!" whispers the wisdom within. "That ash, if worked with, can give birth to a Phoenix."

So, what piles of rubble in your life need revisited? What longings for what was do you need to let go of, so a new story can begin?

And how might you break open even further? Because that's part of this too, isn't it? "Your broken pieces are more than rubble" is not the only counterintuitive thing that life wants us to learn about the practice of repair. It also says to us (even though we can barely stand to hear it): "Crack wider!"

As difficult as it is to absorb, it seems we were made to be broken, [broken open](#) to be exact. Remember what the Canadian sage said, "Cracks are how the light gets in."

Broken hearts hurt but they also let in and allow us to connect with the pain of others. Protected hearts may seem safe, but our armor only ends up being a straitjacket. It's one of the most important but paradoxical spiritual truths there is: Broken people end up bigger people. Because of the cracks in our heart, it becomes capable of expanding. Because we've been torn, who we are no longer ends at the barrier of our own skin

It seems this is what it really means to be repaired and made whole.

Our Spiritual Exercises

It's one thing to analyze a theme; it's quite another to experience it. By pulling us out of the space of *thinking* and into the space of *doing*, these exercises invite us to figure out not just what we have to say about life, but also what life has to say *to us*!

Pick the exercise that speaks to you the most. **Come to your group ready to share why you picked the exercise you did, where it surprised you and what gift it gave you.**

Option A

An Overdue Letter to Your Body (Or A Bunch of Highlights for the Sake of our Bodies)

When we think about repairing relationships, our relationships with other people naturally come to mind. But what regularly gets overlooked is the work of repairing our relationship *with our body*. This exercise invites us to begin that important and overdue work. And to help us, we turn to a writing exercise used by the clinical psychologist and author [Hillary McBride](https://hillarymcbride.com). On her blog, Dr. McBride shares a letter she wrote to her body. She used it as a vehicle to better understand and heal her relationship with her body. Here is the link to that letter:

<https://hillarymcbride.com/dear-body-im-sorry-i-love-you/>

Here's your assignment: Use Dr. McBride's letter as a guide to creating your own. Be sure to notice that her letter has two distinct parts. The first half is a bunch of "I'm sorry for..." statements. The second half contains "I love you for..." statements. Both parts or *steps* are important and key to the work of repairing our relationship with our bodies.

Alternative approach: Not all of us are writers, so another way to engage this exercise is to read through Dr. McBride's letter multiple times with a highlighter in hand. As you read her words, identify and highlight those that speak to you and echo your own feelings about your body.

Option B

Repaired For the Sake of Love

One of the most prevalent ways repair shows up in our lives is in the varied and creative ways we repair a treasured object so that we don't have to part with them. With thread, paint, tape, screws, super glue and even solder, we keep bringing our worn-out, beloved objects back to life. It might be a shirt, dress, jacket, blanket, pair of shoes, childhood doll, watch, old lounge chair, or old tool. But while the objects may differ from one of us to the other, the motivation is the same; we repair them for the sake of love. Or to be more specific, we repair them because holding on to them helps us hold on to a beloved memory, insight or person.

With this in mind, here's your assignment:

- Set aside some contemplative time this month to remember as many of these repeatedly repaired objects that have touched your life.
- Also spend some time revisiting what they helped you hold on to.
- Then, narrow things down and focus on **just one** of these repaired objects using these questions: "Which one *wants* my attention?" "Which one has meaning (or a message) for my life today?"
- Come to your group ready to talk about what it felt like to do this exercise, what holding on to the singled-out object helped you hold on to, and why that singled-out object has meaning or a message for your life today.

Option C

The Messages that Left a Mark

One of the biggest reasons we have to repair ourselves is because of harmful cultural messages we are burdened with, in our childhood but also throughout our lives. Each generation has them: well-accepted sayings that reflect societal norms that form - and deform - us in ways that are hard to shake. For example, here are a bunch you might recognize: *“Boys don’t cry.” “Boys will be boys” “No pain. No gain.” “Man up.” “You run like a girl.” “You can’t wear your heart on your sleeve.” “Work hard. Play Hard.” “Children are meant to be seen not heard.” “Women should be seen and not heard.” “Pull yourself up by your own bootstraps.” “America is a melting pot.” “Trust in God’s plan.” “Know your place.” “They are here to steal our jobs.”*

Just reading through that list is likely triggering for many of us. Which is expected. After all, behind these sayings and others like them lies regret, shame, sadness, anger, betrayal, harm done to you, harm you did to others. So, if you pick this exercise, go gently and do what you need to care for yourself.

Here your assignment:

- Set aside your contemplative time this month to think of the one or two outdated and harmful cultural messages that left a mark on you and twisted your experience in some way.
- Also spend some time identifying how you resisted it or blunted its impact/influence on you.
- Then come to your group ready to tell the story of how you overcame (or are overcoming) that harmful cultural message.

Option D

When You Knew You Were Healing

Often we hunger for healing but don’t know what it will take to make our way there. The goal is elusive. The path is unclear. This exercise invites us to plot our way toward healing in the present by remembering what repaired and healed us in the past. And to guide us, we turn to a list created by [Dr. Nicole Lepera](#) as she did her own healing work. She writes,

I knew I was healing when:

- I started responding rather than reacting
- I enjoyed time alone
- I saw my parents as people with their own unresolved trauma
- I set boundaries and when people didn’t respect them, I knew they were clearing space for those who did
- I was ok with being misunderstood

The basic idea is that by teasing out exactly what it took for healing in our past, we are empowered to better identify what we need for healing today.

So for this month’s exercise, take a morning (or a week) to think about your own *past* healing journeys and come up with multiple ways to complete the sentence, “I knew I was healing when...”

The 2nd Part: After coming up with a number of ways to complete the sentence about past healing, your mind will likely start naturally drifting toward a new sentence: **“I will know I am beginning to heal when...”** As the second part of this exercise, turn your attention to completing that sentence. It will be harder than completing the sentence about the past, but your work with the past should break open some insight about today’s healing work and guideposts.

Come to your group ready to share what surprised you about the exercise and the insight you gained from it.

Option E

Try a Meditation Technique

This exercise is for those of us who DON'T meditate. (Of course, you expert meditators are welcome too.) In short, meditation techniques help countless people repair every day. But for many of us, it just never felt like "our thing." But why not give it another try?! That's what this exercise is all about. And to help you give meditation another try, we've assembled a handful of different kinds of meditation techniques for you to try out. We suggest you take a week and try out one each day, but feel free to sample them in any way that feels comfortable. If you find one that resonates with you, spend the remaining time this month researching and trying it with different leaders. Here's our suggest list (click on the hyperlinked titles to access them):

- [Centering Meditation](#)
- [Mindfulness Meditation](#)
- [Loving Kindness Meditation](#)
- [Shaking and Dancing Expressive Meditation](#)
(watch [this introduction](#) first)
- [Five Senses Meditation](#)
- [Bee Breath/Humming Meditation](#)
- Vagus Nerve Reset: [HERE](#) & [HERE](#)
- [Box Breathing](#)
- Meditation for Sleep: [HERE](#) & [HERE](#)

Option F

Ask Them About Repair

One of the best ways to explore our monthly themes is to have conversations about them with people who are close to you. It's also a great way to deepen our relationships! Below is a list of questions to help you on your way. Be sure to let your conversation partner know in advance that this won't be a typical conversation. Telling them a bit about Soul Matters will help set the stage. *Remember to also answer the questions yourself as they are meant to support a conversation, not just a time of quizzing them.*

Repair Questions:

- What wound has been with you the longest?
- What joyful, courageous or healing childhood memory repairs you over and over again?
- Have you ever experienced a time when your body was wiser than your brain?
- Tell me a story about someone who repaired you by reconnecting you to pleasure and/or play? If you were to thank them, what would you say?
- If you could have repaired one of your parent's wounds, which would it be?
- Have you ever lied about or swallowed your grief because others were uncomfortable or unwilling to make room for it? What would you say or do now that you weren't safe to say or do at that time?
- Who first repaired you by not trying to fix you?
- Tell me a story about being healed by a place.

Option G

Which Companion Piece Speaks to You?

Sometimes we come across a quote, song, article or movie and it perfectly captures what's going on for us right now or allows us to view our current circumstances in a new light. With this in mind, spend some time this month going through the *Companion Pieces* section below to **find the one piece that speaks most powerfully to you.**

As you do so, we encourage you to use the same discernment practice as we do with the packet's list of questions: Go through them with an eye for the one that "shimmers" the most.

Your Question

This list of questions is an aid for deep reflection. How you answer them is often less important than the journey they take you on.

So, read through the list of questions 2-3 times until one question sticks out for you and captures your attention, or as some faith traditions say, until one of the questions "[shimmers](#)."

Then reflect on that question using one or all of these questions:

- *What is going on in my life right now that makes this question so pronounced for me?*
- *How might my inner voice be trying to [speak to me](#) through it?*
- *How might Life or my inner voice be trying to offer me a word of comfort or challenge through this question?*



1. Who first repaired you by not trying to fix you?
2. If you could have repaired one of your parent's wounds, which would it be?
3. What loss is still waiting for you to grieve it fully?
4. How would your life change if you committed to giving yourself a dose of joy once-a-week?
5. Is your body telling you it is no longer interested in hiding the pain? Or the fear?
6. Think back to a time when someone repaired you by reconnecting you to pleasure and/or play. If you were to thank them, what would you say?
7. How might your efforts to repair a social ill or injustice be trying to repair you?
8. What joyful, courageous or healing childhood memories repair you over and over again? Are any of them trying to speak to you today?
9. What is your relationship with self-inflicted wounds?
10. Have you been running on empty for so long that you no longer notice?
11. Are some things better left broken? Does everything need to be repaired?
12. Have you ever lied about or swallowed your grief because others were uncomfortable or unwilling to make room for it? What would you say or do now that you weren't safe to say or do at that time?
13. Is there anything in your life that is longing to be fixed rather than [thrown away](#)?
14. Are you [pretending](#) that an old injury hasn't left a mark on you?
15. Nature repairs us. What part of the healing earth is calling you to come back?
16. Are you sure it's not ok to trust them with your pain?
17. **What's your question?** Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to find it.

Companion Pieces

Recommended Resources for Personal Exploration & Reflection

The following resources are not required reading. Nor are they intended to be analyzed in your group. Instead they are here to companion you on your personal journey this month, get you thinking and open you up to new ways of embodying the practice of repair in your life.

Word Roots & Definitions

Repair comes from old French, in which “Re” means back and “parare” means to make ready, which means repair can be a way of making ourselves or parts of our lives ready for what comes next.

Others also point out that the French verb *reparer* is used today in a narrow context, referring to animals burrowing or going to their dens, which suggests the idea of “returning to one’s home or shelter.”

Wise Words

Then it hits me. Maybe we’re the pieces. Maybe that’s it. With what you were talking about before, Tikkun olam. The world being broken. Maybe it isn’t that we’re supposed to find the pieces and put them back together. Maybe we’re the pieces. Maybe, what we’re supposed to do is come together. That’s how we stop the breaking.

[Rachel Cohn and David Levithan](#)

If there happens to be a multitude of griefs upon you, individual and collective, or small and large, add equal parts of these considerations: that perhaps love can only be as large as grief demands. that grief is the growing up of the heart that bursts boundaries like an old skin or a finished life. that grief is gratitude. that water seeks scale, that even your tears seek the recognition of community. that the heart is a front line, and the fight is to feel in a world of distraction.

[adrienne maree brown](#)

She taught me it is enough to sit
with someone who is grieving—
to sit and listen with your whole body
as if eyes could hear as well as ears,
as if a person’s silence is as essential as her words.

[Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer](#)

Have you ever noticed how beautiful a person is after they’ve wept? It’s as if they are made new again by the baptism of tears. Indeed, when something stuck can be released through grief, we are freeing up a greater capacity to love.

[Toko-pa Turner](#)

If I could sum up all my years of clinical training and research in one statement, it would be this: We heal when we can be with what we feel.

[Hillary L. McBride](#)

violence is not special pain is not holy suffering...
abuse defines no one you are more than the things
that hurt you you are more than the people you
have hurt do not make an altar to your
woundedness do not make a fetish out of mine...
tell me about the joy you keep in the hollow spaces
between your bones tell me again how you laughed
when you realized that you were not wholly
unlovable... i will sing you a litany of reasons to be
alive i want to know the songs you wake up for in
the morning...beneath the skin of every history of
trauma there is a love poem waiting deep below

[Kai Cheng Thom](#)

the places in our heart
where the world took bites out of us
may never fully heal
and will likely become
wide open spaces
be careful to not fill them
with just anything or anyone.

[John Roedel](#)

Let us not rush to the language of healing, before
understanding the fullness of the injury and the
depth of the wound.

[Dr. Yolanda Pierce](#)

The times are urgent; let us slow down.

[Bayo Akomolafe](#)

I find that I meet activists on a regular basis who will tell me, I'm so tired. I think that sometimes we're working so much because we know that if we slow down, then we'll have to look at how heartbroken we are about the conditions that we're in.

[adrienne maree brown](#)

This is what I know: the demonization and erasure of grief are really strategic tools of oppressive powers. After all, if you are reduced to positivity—if you are less capable of sensing pain and injustice—whom does that benefit? There are people and systems that have everything to gain from our numbness.

[Cole Arthur Riley](#)

Think about the word destroy. Do you know what it is? De-story. Destroy. Destory. You see. And restore. That's re-story. Do you know that only two things have been proven to help survivors of the Holocaust? Massage is one. Telling their story is another. Being touched and touching. Telling your story is touching. It sets you free.

Francesca Lia Block

When others mess up, we blame their character. When we mess up, we blame the context. No relationship gets mended until we grant others the same grace we grant ourselves. Until we widen our view and notice that there are circumstances wounding us both, the painful gap between us will never heal.

Rev. Scott Tayler

If you see what needs to be repaired and how to repair it, then you have found a piece of the world that God has left for you to complete. But if you only see what is wrong and what is ugly in the world, then it is you yourself that needs repair.

Lubavitcher Rebbe

Character is determined by how we repair it.

Carson Anekeya

It's not forgetting that heals. It's remembering.

Amy Greene

What I've learned is that we do it bit by bit. If everybody does a little bit, we can make the world better... I believe in that. Every day, little by little.

[Kyoko Morgan](#)

Nobody escapes being wounded. We all are wounded people, whether physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually. The main question is not "How can we hide our wounds?" so we don't have to be embarrassed, but "How can we put our woundedness in the service of others?"

[Henri J. M. Nouwen](#)

When the reverberations of shock subside in you, may grace come to restore you to balance. May it shape a new space in your heart to embrace this illness as a teacher who has come to open your life to new worlds. May you find in yourself a courageous hospitality towards what is difficult, painful and unknown.

[John O'Donohue](#)

Videos & Podcasts

Nick Cave on Loss, Yearning & Transcendence

<https://onbeing.org/programs/nick-cave-loss-yearning-transcendence/>

Be Kind (On small acts of repair that mean so much!)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1eKoOoOTvgk&t=16s>

These Three Natural Things Can Repair You...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xPLbcsDOJQ>

The Museum of Broken Relationships

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IMNdTZhQ1TU>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R6Q731asMtg>

How Trauma Lodges in the Body

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tnKxZqObIWK>

Related Video [HERE](#)

Related book [HERE](#)

A New Approach to Reparations

<https://airtable.com/appFzjQs5ggMjoeBU/shrs2E8EnuEMRHlbp/tbl1yqljjggKmMWne>

Repair & Needlework

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EITLA0fvx0I>

On how mending and stitching the clothes outside us repairs what is torn inside us.

Visible Mending

<https://psyche.co/films/a-whimsical-ode-to-the-reparative-power-of-knitting-rendered-in-wool>

Two more needleworkers and knitters testify to creativity's power to help us repair and heal.

Stitching Our Wounds, Andrea Gibson

<https://www.tiktok.com/@andregibsonpoetry/video/7242840039527386414>

The Nutritionist (aka The Madness Vase)

Andrea Gibson

<https://www.tiktok.com/@buttonpoetry/video/7312585097776123182>

Find the text [HERE](#)

trigger warning: mentions depression and suicide

Articles

A Slower Urgency

<https://www.bayoakomolafe.net/post/a-slower-urgency>

"In 'hurrying up' all the time, we often lose sight of the abundance of resources that might help us meet today's most challenging crises..."

Grief is Healing in Motion

<https://toko-pa.com/2019/07/24/grief-is-healing-in-motion/>

"Grief plays an essential role in our coming undone from previous attachments. It is the necessary current we need to carry us into our next becoming..."

The Sounds of Grief

<https://mariandrew.substack.com/p/the-sounds-of-grief>

Might repairing from grief be more about the sounds of grief than the famous five stages?

Want to Fix Your Mind? Let Your Body Talk

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/18/magazine/somatic-therapy.html>

Books

[My Grandmother's Hands](#)

[What It Takes to Heal](#)

[On Repentance and Repair](#)

[My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry](#)

[Maps of Our Spectacular Bodies](#)

Movies & TV

[When They See Us](#) (Netflix)

[Origins](#) (Hulu)

[Severance](#) (Apple TV)

[Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind](#) (Amazon)

[Captain Fantastic](#) (HBO)

[Descending the Mountain](#) (Vimeo)

Music

Click [here](#) for our Spotify playlist on Repair.

Click [here](#) for the YouTube playlist on Repair.

Remember! Our playlists are organized as a journey, so consider listening from beginning to end and using the playlists as musical meditations.



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